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Deployment of army at EC on polls day

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Troops will be deployed to strengthen security in and around the Election Commission Secretariat at Sher-e-Bangla Nagar in the city on the day of voting.

The Election Commission (EC) at a review meeting yesterday decided on deployment of troops around the Election Commission complex in addition to police and BDR personnel to avert untoward incidents, according to EC sources.

They, however, did not specify the number of army personnel to be deployed there.

"The (Election) Commission fears an increase in the incidents of violence in the days to come and it may be the target of possible assaults," said a top official, who attended the meeting, on condition of anonymity.

Meanwhile, the EC has urged the political parties and candidates concerned not to allow any wanted criminal to act as their respective polling agents. "The commission would go for legal action if such persons are found as polling agent," it said in an announcement yesterday.

Directives have already sent to the returning officers concerned.

AL grand election rally in city today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League will hold a grand election rally in the city this afternoon.

Sheikh Hasina is scheduled to chair and address the rally at Paltan Maidan at 3 pm.

The rally, just two days ahead of the October 1 parliamentary polls, is considered to be an important one where AL chief will seek people's mandate for another term in the government.

Earlier, Sheikh Hasina addressed a series of projection meetings throughout the country over the last one month. She addressed rallies in 200 out of the total 300 constituencies and introduced the AL candidates to the voters.

Dengue claims two more

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two persons died of dengue haemorrhagic fever (DHF) while 66 more were infected during last 72 hours ending at 6pm yesterday, official sources said.

According to the Directorate of Health, Abdul Hye, 30, and Mahbub Alam, 6, died of DHF at Dhaka Medical College Hospital. Hye was admitted there on Monday and died at 6:45 next morning, while Alam was admitted on Tuesday and died at 4:00 next morning.

Twenty-one people, infected with dengue, were admitted to different city hospitals three each at Dhaka Medical College Hospital and Holy Family Red Crescent Hospital, six at Dhaka Shishu Hospital, five at BIRDEM Hospital and four at Mirford General Hospital.

Besides, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University Hospital, and Ibn Sina and All Care clinics treated two, three and four patients respectively.

As many as 1089 people have so far been admitted to different hospitals and private clinics across the country since the outbreak of dengue fever in May this year.

EC asks for special steps to ensure minority voting

134 constituencies singled out

NAZRUL ISLAM

The Election Commission (EC) has asked the home ministry to take special measures in 134 parliamentary constituencies where the minority community is reportedly threatened by certain political quarters to stop them from exercising their franchise.

The Commission at a meeting yesterday reviewed the latest situation across the country and asked the ministry to ensure peaceful holding of the ensuing general election.

Chaired by Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) MA Syed, the meeting underscored further beefing up security throughout the country to check growing incidents of violence.

Later on the day, a three-member delegation of the European Union who met the CEC at his office also expressed concern over the incidents of attack and intimidation of the minority community and urged the Commission to take immediate steps to stop this.

Earlier, Awami League (AL) had lodged complaints with the EC that BNP and four-party alliance led by it is making attacks on the minority community, known as AL's vote bank, so that they do not turn up at polling centres on the election day.

Meanwhile, an EC source said the CEC has proposed to the caretaker government to further strengthen his security during the election period. It could not be officially confirmed.

When asked, an Election Commissioner said he is not aware of this. "But nothing is unlikely as the CEC takes decisions in a secret way." He however preferred not to be named.

After the EC meeting, the CEC met Chief Advisor of the caretaker government Latifur Rahman at his office and apprised him of last minute preparations for the election. Details of the meeting were not available.

Sources said the EC which met yesterday after three days also took up issues including inconsistencies in voter list, printing and sending of ballot papers to Returning Officers (ROs) and announcement of election result.

The meeting discussed measures to be taken on the voting in case of violence and rigging. "Polling will be stopped immediately if violence and rigging take place in any polling station and re-polling will be arranged," an official told this correspondent quoting the meeting's decisions.

Regarding inconsistencies in the voter list, the Commission asked officials concerned to follow the list finalised on October 26 last year. It also decided not to include new names in the list, excepting special cases.

EC sources said, sending of ballot papers to the ROs was completed yesterday. This time nearly 7.5 crore ballot papers were printed.

Meanwhile, the EC corrected the voter list following complaints. According to available statistics, it received

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Suspension of ETV broadcast SC stays HC rule till Oct 4

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Supreme Court yesterday stayed till October 4 a High Court order suspending broadcast by Ekushey Television (ETV).

Chamber Judge of the Vacation Bench of Supreme Court Justice Mohammad Ruhul Amin gave the stay order after lawyers for ETV and the government pleaded that the private TV station should be allowed to continue its broadcast for the sake of transparency in announcement of election results.

This will give ETV a breathing time till October 4 and prepare for an "intense legal battle", sources said.

The High Court on Wednesday ordered ETV to suspend its broadcast within 24 hours. The order followed filing of a writ petition on September 19.

The High Court had issued showcause notices on ETV and the information secretary as to why the agreement of March 9, 1999 between the information ministry and ETV Chairman A.S Mahmud should not be declared to have been made without lawful authority and with no legal effect.

The HC had initially ordered ETV to suspend its broadcast with immediate effect and to continue the suspension till disposal of the showcase notices. The HC

Bench however stayed the order for a day following a provisional prayer for leave to appeal, filed by the Attorney General and lawyers for ETV.

They said that ETV got permission from the Election Commission to broadcast election results along with state-run Bangladesh Television (BTV).

The Appellate Division is likely to hear the case on October 4 to decide whether the appeal will be accepted.

Prof Chowdhury Mohammad Hossain of Pharmacy Department and Prof Abdur Rob of Geography Department of Dhaka University and President of a faction of Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalists (BFUJ) Gias Kamal Chowdhury jointly filed the writ petition.

The petitioners in their petition yesterday said the HC gave the ad-interim order after a long hearing.

They also said ETV has nothing to do as regards transparency in announcement of election results because there was no ETV during the last two elections in 1991 and 1996 when BTV broadcast results credibly.

The petitioners said international bids were invited in 1998 for setting up a private television station in the country. ETV was one of the bidders. But after scrutiny, the tender evaluation committee on July 9, 1998 sent a

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Taliban invite Jackson to broker peace talks

Pakistan to jointly track down Laden with US, to send new delegation to Kabul

AFP, Washington

US civil rights leader Rev. Jesse Jackson emerged as a possible mediator yesterday between the United States and Afghanistan's ruling Taliban, as US investigators tightened the intelligence noose around Osama bin Laden.

US experts who after three days of talks struck a deal with Pakistan to jointly track down bin Laden were heading back "with a whole range of information on bin Laden, his network and his support bases in Pakistan", an Islamabad intelligence source said.

Pakistani and Taliban sources said

Islamabad would send a new official delegation, including religious scholars, to Taliban leader Mullah Mohammad Omar in Kandahar on Friday for fresh talks on the crisis.

Jackson, a one-time US presidential candidate and a veteran of several past - and often successful - mediation missions between the United States and its adversaries, said he was "surprised" to hear from the Taliban.

He told US television that he received a call Wednesday from Mohammed Shaheen, a spokesman for the Taliban embassy in Pakistan, who suggested Jackson lead a peace delegation and meet members of the Afghan regime.

"I really don't want to go," Jackson said, stressing that if he did, it would be with "a very credible delegation with sufficient intelligence".

Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage said the United States did not support a peace mission.

"We're not interested in a dialogue," he said. "We're interested in action and no negotiation. The demands are not subject to dialogue."

In Islamabad, Abdul Salam Zaeef, the Taliban ambassador to Pakistan, confirmed that Jackson would be welcome, but said he had volunteered.

"He offered to mediate, and our leader,

Mullah Mohammad Omar, has accepted this offer," Zaeef told the Afghan Islamic Press (AIP), a Pakistan-based, pro-Taliban news agency.

"He (Mullah Omar) has ordered the authorities to extend cooperation if Jesse Jackson visits Afghanistan. We will have no objection," Zaeef said.

His statement came as Washington took its plan to starve terrorists of cash by closing financial loopholes used to launder money and fund illicit operations to the United Nations, where diplomats said the UN

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Air, sea ports put on alert

Dhaka for duty- and quota-free access of goods to US

M ANWARUL HAQ

Security has been beefed up considerably around the country's key-point installations (KPI), especially airports and seaports.

The government has asked relevant agencies to maintain intense vigilance and security at the country's strategic installations, sources said.

The measures have been adopted keeping in view the October 1 election and the government decision to let the United States use the country's airspace, refuelling facilities, airports and seaports should "any need arise" for a coalition-led attack on "terrorist havens" in the region.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh is learnt to be weighing the possible US requests related to its contingency plans and the modalities that need to be worked out in the event any of the country's strategic facilities is required during a coalition-led attack.

While the officials remained tight-lipped, it was learnt that details were yet to be discussed or the government was yet to receive any specific request from the US in this regard. Sources indicated that specific US requests were likely to be made "in course of time" after the election was over and an elected government was in place.

A government taskforce is holding "strategy sessions" to "suggest remedial and necessary measures".

It is already monitoring global situation following the terror strikes in the US.

On Wednesday, US Ambassador Mary Ann Peters called on CM Shaif Sami, special aide to the chief advisor on foreign affairs, at his office. They had crucial discussions on bilateral relations against the backdrop of the September 11 terrorist strikes in New York and Washington.

Foreign Secretary Mohsin Ali Khan, Director General of America-Pacific Desk at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Nasim Ferdous and other senior officials were present at the meeting. Discussions and contacts between officials of the two countries are also learnt to be taking place at various other levels.

Duty- and quota-free access Dhaka is learnt to have asked that Washington consider offering a number of trade-related facilities to Bangladesh in view of "very cordial and friendly" relations between the two countries.

Bangladesh has reiterated its principled stand on fighting terrorism, an observer said. In extending permission to the US-led efforts for a coalition to fight terrorism, Dhaka has not only expressed its solidarity with the US victims of September 11 but also "risked" reprisals from terrorist groups in the region.

Dhaka feels strongly that the US should reciprocate this act by

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LOCATION OF BAF BASES



Armed man storms Swiss regional assembly, kills 14

AFP, Zug, Switzerland

A man armed with an automatic rifle burst into a regional parliament in central Switzerland yesterday and opened fire, killing 14 people including three deputies, before committing suicide, officials and police said.

The attacker, said to have a grievance with the local authorities, wore a policeman's uniform when he burst into the parliament's chamber at about 10:30am (0830 GMT) in Zug, near Lucerne, local media reports said.

Police in Zug said ten people were wounded in the rampage during which the man emptied five magazines from the automatic rifle before turning the weapon on himself.

They also found a letter that referred to a "day of reckoning for



Rescue workers attend to a person injured in the shooting.

Bush authorises shooting down of commercial plane, if needed

AFP, Washington

US President George W. Bush has given two mid-level Air Force generals the authority to shoot down commercial airliners that threaten US cities without first checking with him, The New York Times reported yesterday.

Air Force General Ralph Eberhart, who heads the North

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Bomb scare at ZIA

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A telephonic bomb threat sent out a wave of panic among employees and passengers at the Zia International Airport (ZIA) yesterday afternoon.

An unidentified caller informed a PABX operator that a bomb had been planted at the airport premises and would go off between 3:00 p.m. and 3:30 p.m.

After the phone call, three additional platoons of police were deployed at the airport; army personnel were called in for investigation, and a dog squad was taken to the ZIA. At 6:00 p.m., all together went on a massive hunt in different key point installations of the airport, but failed to find out any explosives.

The hoax phone call led the ZIA authorities to beef up security at the airport premises.

Another hoax telephone call alarmed students and teachers of the Viharunnisa School and College

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US citizens asked to keep low profile

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

The US State Department yesterday said its Dhaka Mission will remain closed for three days next week due to elections in Bangladesh and advised its citizens to keep a low profile.

In a public announcement, it said: "Politically-motivated violence has been widespread during the campaign and will likely continue on election day and possibly a few days afterwards."

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8 powerful blasts kill 81 in last 30 months

SHAIKH NAZRUL ISLAM

Eight incidents of powerful bomb explosion in different areas across the country claimed 81 lives in the last 30 months, six of them this year killing 62 people.

Besides, over 360 people were injured in the seven incidents, many of them disabled for life.

The two latest incidents left six people killed, four including an eight-year boy, in an explosion at the Upazila Health Complex quarters in Shulla upazila of Sunamganj on Wednesday afternoon, and the rest in an explosion at a house in Sylhet town at about 8:30 p.m., the same day.

The two explosions at a public meeting of Awami League at Mollarhat in Bagerhat district on Sunday left at least nine persons killed and more than 30 injured.

It took place when a special drive by police is going on across the country for recovery of arms and arrest of criminals. Two of the four other incidents of bomb explosion this year also took place while a similar drive was being conducted in June.

Such incidents create panic among people but the investigation agencies have miserably failed to unearth the motive behind those. Their failure has kept people in dark as to why these are happening,

creating a sense of insecurity among them.

In most of the cases, the agencies apparently made progress in their probe at the initial stage but as time passed, the pace of progress slowed down and came to a halt.

Most of the time, investigators used to say 'culprits will be nabbed soon' or 'we are very close to the fact'.

CID investigation into bomb explosions at a Kadiani mosque in

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The Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation brought out a colourful procession in the city on the occasion of World Tourism Day yesterday.