

All set for polls as campaign ends at midnight tonight

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Electioneering for Monday's parliamentary polls ends at midnight tonight amidst hectic campaign by political parties and candidates.

The formal campaign that began on September 7 under a restrictive code of conduct witnessed meetings, rallies and processions throughout the country.

During the period, AL chief Sheikh Hasina and BNP chief Khaleda Zia and 146 other candidates were served with warning notices for violation of the election code.

Awami League concluded its campaign yesterday through a huge gathering at Paltan Maidan in the city. Party chief Sheikh Hasina addressed the rally, seeking vote for nouka (boat), AL's election symbol.

BNP chief Khaleda Zia is also scheduled to address her last projection meeting in front of the party's central office at Naya Paltan this afternoon.

The two leaders travelled most areas of the country and addressed hundreds of projection meetings in favour of candidates of their parties. Of the 64 districts in the country, Hasina toured 58 and Khaleda 48.

Former president HM Ershad, disqualified from contesting the election,



Sheikh Hasina



Khaleda Zia

also addressed several hundred projection meetings, seeking vote for candidates of Jatiya Party and the alliance led by it.

Preparations for the country's eighth parliamentary election are almost complete. The Election Commission is now working for issuing accreditation cards to local and foreign journalists and polls observers.

Setting up of a makeshift television studio at the conference room of the EC Secretariat for announcement of preliminary results is likely to be completed today.

Nearly 7.5 crore ballot papers and some three lakh postal ballots have been sent to 68 Returning

Officers (ROs).

Appointment of Presiding Officers and Polling Officers have also been completed. The candidates are now busy selecting their polling agents.

According to EC officials, more than 5,00,000 officials and employees would be engaged in election duty.

Nearly 1.1 lakh members of law enforcing agencies will be deployed throughout the country to ensure a peaceful atmosphere during and after the election.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 6



Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina, flanked by her sister Sheikh Rehana and former MP Saber Hossain Chowdhury, waves at cheering crowd during her last election projection meeting at Paltan Maidan in the city yesterday.

Biggest ever security operation

Over half a million being deployed for Monday's polls

M ANWARU HAQ

More than half a million security personnel from the armed forces and law enforcing agencies are being deployed throughout the country for ensuring peaceful holding of the parliamentary election on Monday, sources said.

Such a massive field level mobilisation of a combination of military, paramilitary, police, coast guard and other personnel is seen as the biggest ever security operation in the country during peace time.

The security personnel will number around 5,10,000 as against some 7,50,00,000 voters who will cast votes at 29,978 polling centres across the country. For every 150 voters, there will be one security personnel. Nearly 1,20,000 trained female guards would be on vigilance on the election day.

Large contingents of Bangladesh Army, Navy, Air Force, B

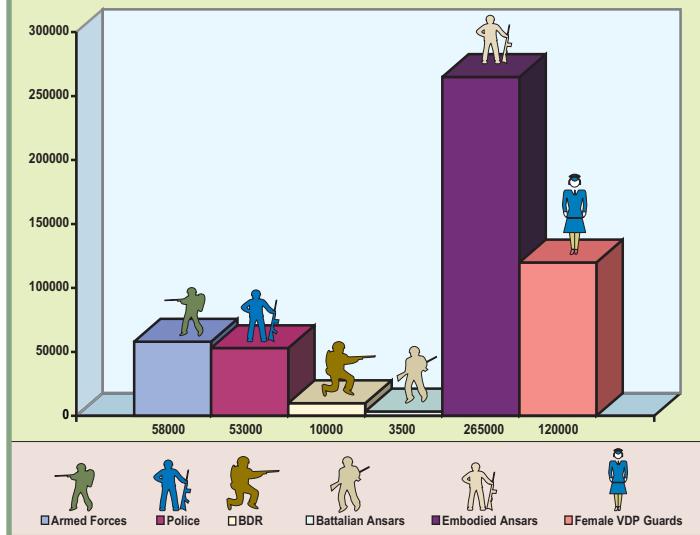
SEE PAGE 11 COL 4



Elite commandos of the Army carrying light machine guns and wearing black bandanas patrol city points as part of election duty.

GRAPHICS: STAR

DEPLOYMENT OF SECURITY FORCES DURING ELECTION



Threat to minority voters: Hasina draws President's attention

UNB, Dhaka

Awami League Chief Sheikh Hasina yesterday requested President Shahabuddin Ahmed to utilise his good offices for holding the forthcoming election in a free, fair and peaceful manner.

Meeting the president at Bangabhaban, the immediate-past prime minister complained that the opponent political parties were "harassing" many of her party workers at various places across the country.

A Bangabhaban release said she also drew attention of the president to "threats against the minority voters."

President Shahabuddin told Hasina that "all political parties should cooperate in holding the election peacefully and fairly." He also hoped that the election would be held peacefully.

Confusion over reported 54-hr ban on vehicular movement

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Widespread confusion has been created among people following reports in some newspapers regarding a 54-hour ban on movement of all kinds of motorised vehicles from midnight tonight.

There was no official order or government handout regarding the ban. When contacted last night, government officials could not say anything about such a ban.

"We have seen the news in some newspapers. But we are yet to get any order from the government," he said adding that such a ban was never imposed during previous elections.

Earlier, movement of vehicles was banned only in areas surround-

ing the Dhaka Divisional Commissioner. But he was not available over telephone.

Home Secretary Dr Sadat Hossain also could not be reached as nobody picked up the telephone at his residence last night.

Enayetullah, General Secretary of Bangladesh Sarak Paribahan Samity, also could not say anything about such a ban.

"We have seen the news in some newspapers. But we are yet to get any order from the government," he said adding that such a ban was never imposed during previous elections.

Earlier, movement of vehicles was banned only in areas surround-

ing polling centers, he recalled.

Some people also telephoned The Daily Star office and wanted to know about such a ban.

They said normal life, export-import business and other economic activities throughout the country will come to a standstill if such a ban is imposed.

If necessary, ban can be imposed in areas near polling centres, they said.

Expressing concern, a voter at Uttara who recently shifted his house to Kalabagan in the city said, "How shall cast my vote if there is no transport?"

Some garments exporters said

SEE PAGE 11 COL 6

BDR firing kills one in Fatikchhari

Violence leaves 8 killed, 140 injured at different places

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Eight people were killed and 140 injured in incidents of violence at different places of the country yesterday and on Thursday night.

Of the eight, four were shot dead, one each in Fatikchhari, Sandwip, Banskhali and Rauzan in Chittagong district.

Two others were killed in Khagrachhari and one each in Pabna and Gopalganj.

Our staff correspondent from Chittagong says: A young man, Samar Das, 25, died on the spot as

BDR opened fire at Heyanko Bazar in Fatikchhari when Awami League activists clashed with BDR and police while they were returning to the local thana with arrested Rustam Ali, a 'listed terrorist' wanted in a number of criminal cases.

At least ten others were bullet-hitted. Police said, three of them were in critical condition and were being treated at the local health complex.

Rustum Ali is chairman of No. 1 Bagan Bazar Union Parishad.

As the news of his arrest spread, local AL activists went on rampage in the area, barricaded the

Chittagong-Khagrachhari road and attacked the BDR-police team with brick bats, police and witnesses said.

Road communication between Chittagong and Khagrachhari remained suspended till filing of this report at 7:30 pm yesterday.

A tense situation was prevailing in the area.

Local AL leaders claimed that Samar Das was their party activist.

In another incident, one Tafir Uddin, 27, reportedly a BNP activist, was shot dead and five others were

SEE PAGE 11 COL 7

US commandos search for Laden in Afghanistan?

REUTERS, Washington

US special forces have been in Afghanistan for two weeks searching for Osama bin Laden, the prime suspect in the airborne assaults on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, USA Today reported yesterday.

Citing unidentified senior US and Pakistani officials, the newspaper said US commandos arrived in Pakistan on Sept 13 -- two days after the attacks -- and began moving into Afghanistan with orders to capture or

routing Taliban to hand over Osama Bin Laden after the Saudi-born militant reportedly vowed that his holy war with the United States would continue even if he is killed.

The delegation, composed mainly of Islamic clerics but accompanied by Pakistani military intelligence chief General Mahmood Ahmed, met with Taliban supreme leader Mullah Mohammad Omar in

the militia's southern stronghold of Kandahar.

Their day-long talks ended with no immediate word on the outcome.

A senior member of the delegation said the talks were over and the delegation was on the way home.

Their mission coincided with the publication in Pakistan of an interview with bin Laden in which he reportedly issued a fresh denial of

any involvement in the September 11 attacks on New York and Washington for which he has been blamed by the United States.

"As a Muslim, I will not lie," bin Laden said in the interview with the Urdu-language Ummat daily, the veracity of which could not be confirmed.

The paper said it had received written responses to its questions

from bin Laden through contacts with Taliban leaders.

"I was neither aware of these attacks, nor would I support killings of innocent men, women and children," bin Laden was quoted as saying.

He went on to add that jihad, or holy war, he declared in 1998 against "anti-Islamic" countries like the United States and Israel would survive his own death or capture.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 4

Alliance's last polls rally in city today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The BNP-led four-party alliance will hold its last election meeting in front of BNP central office at Naya Paltan in the city at 3 pm today.

BNP chairperson Khaleda Zia will address the meeting as chief guest while Jamaat-e-Islami's Matir Rahman Nizami, Jatiya Party (N-F) chairman Nazir Rahman Manzur and Islami Oikya Jote chair

SEE PAGE 11 COL 3

INSIDE TODAY

Article 4
Understanding the USA, the lone superpower
KM Shehabuddin

Literature 9
Book review: Re-reading history; and if your memories serve you well...