

## Polls will be peaceful though atmosphere not better than that of '96: Ishtiaq

### STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Advisor of the caretaker government Barrister Ishtiaq Ahmed has expressed the hope that Monday's national election would be free, fair and peaceful though the polls atmosphere is not better than that during the previous one.

"The prevailing situation is not better than that during the earlier parliamentary election as the number of criminals and illegal arms are much more now than at that time," he said addressing a press conference at the home yesterday.

Ishtiaq said the caretaker government is making relentless efforts to ensure security of the people. Law and order has improved and criminal activities have decreased.

He mentioned that 93 people were killed and 1,018 injured during the tenure of caretaker government. Of them, 70 were killed in political violence, six in incidents of dacoity and 17 in other incidents. Some 209 cases were also filed in connection with the incidents.

## A different Hasina

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corruption. Also, she expressed her gratitude for the people who elected her party in 1996 while seeking fresh mandate.

The AL leader outwitted her bitter BNP rival Khaleda Zia as regards the latter's curses on boat, the AL election symbol. "How could the BNP leader damn boat which would well ferry her supporters to polling stations in many rural areas in this rainy season?" Hasina quipped.

The AL's rich history, successes of her government and the election pledges featured high in the brief address that touched upon all major points of the ongoing campaign.

The public gathering at the Paltan Maidan was a massive as it was organised the day before the party chief's whirlwind campaign comes to an end. People in their thousands from far and wide flocked to the sprawling venue, a witness of many historic events. They sang, danced and pranced while shouting slogans for boat.

The jubilant crowd packed the spacious venue pushing thousands others on to the adjacent Bangabandhu Avenue and the Rajuk Avenue. The rejoicing crowd that burst into frequent slogans held colourful replicas of boat high. Several huge replicas of boat even carried supporters posing boatmen. Banners and placards apart, the national and the party flags too did galore.

Some unique processions also

## Khaleda

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elections symbol, sheaf of paddy.

Khaleda Zia said people of Narayanganj had been held hostage at the hands of terrorists and the top terrorist still remains untouched. Demanding immediate release of JCD leader Zakir Khan, she said the identified terrorists of the port town must be taken into custody immediately. If voted to power, all terrorists, including the top one of Narayanganj will be taken to task, she asserted.

AL had also announced an election meeting in front of Poura Library in support of AL candidate SM Akram and Mayor of Dhaka City Corporation Mohammad Hanif was scheduled to address it. The district administration, however, did not allow them to hold the meeting apprehending clashes.

Jatiya Jute Sanghat leader of Siddhiganj joined BNP along with a good number of his followers.

AL supporters had put up barricades on Dhaka-Narayanganj Link Road and also at the main gate of Adamjee Jute Mills to disrupt movement of vehicular traffic carrying people to the venue but a large number of people ignoring the barricade reached the meeting venue on foot.

## Families of war heroes

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Mohiuddin Jahangir).

Jatiya Sammoyon Committee in the meeting called upon the people to reject those they termed as supporters of Razakar, AL Bader (collaborators) and Taliban in the October 1 parliamentary elections and cast their vote for Awami League candidates.

Addressing the meeting they raised their voice against the Razakars regardless of their party affiliation.

Sammoyon Committee leaders also bitterly criticised the caretaker government for what they said its failure to maintain neutrality. "The caretaker government paved the way for the war criminals and their collaborators to capture power."

They also resented that the caretaker government was freeing from jail those terrorists who are affiliated with political parties.

In the meeting, the Nirmul Committee informed newsmen that they had conducted massive campaigns in 40 constituencies – 31 of Jamaat-e-Islami, seven of the Islami Oikya Jote and two of Salauddin Qader Chowdhury and Gias Uddin Qader Chowdhury – urging people to reject the Pakistani collaborators in the October 1 polls.

It will form a human chain today in the capital as part of its "Razakar Hotao Desh Bachao" programme.

## 2700 sued in Ctg for not depositing legal arms

**UNB, Ctg**

About 2,700 legal firearms holders have been sued in the district under Arms Act as they failed to deposit their arms within the deadline, September 25.

Sources said the cases were recorded with different police stations in the district including the port city upon an instruction from the Home Ministry.

Arms cases were filed against 902 people in 12 thanas of the city while 1,794 others in 14 thanas of the district. Process is underway to file cases against many more.

Over 200 political leaders and workers and 300 businessmen were among those who were sued.

Of the total 6,000 licensed revolvers and pistols in the district, only 1,282 were deposited after the government asked to surrender those as a pre-poll safety measure.

Replying to a question, he said a total of 5,841 arms and 14,233 bullets were recovered and 1,574 people were arrested during the police drive from July 16 to September 23. Besides, about 8,000 licensed revolvers and pistols out of a total of 24,000 have so far been deposited with police stations.

Inspector General of Police (IGP), IGP (prison) and chiefs of BDR and Ansar were also present at the press conference.

**People leaving**

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were in a hurry to leave for home.

The traffic in the capital was thinner than normal days as many transport owners were reluctant to bring out their vehicles during the last hour of campaign anticipating violence.

However, no untoward incident was reported yesterday.

The number of vehicles was also less following their requisition by law-enforcing agencies to use them during the election. Many transport owners did not bring out their vehicles on the street to avoid requisition.

A holiday mood is prevailing in the capital from yesterday as many business and educational institutions have already announced their closure till October 3.

## Alliance's rally

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man Azizul Haq as special guests.

City BNP president Sadeque Hossain Khoka, who is contesting the election from Dhaka-7 constituency, will preside over the meeting.

Khaleda Zia, who concluded her month-long electioneering across the country yesterday, will seek vote for 'sheaf of paddy' and the alliance candidates at today's rally.

Party sources said BNP has instructed all the eight party candidates in the city to join today's central meeting along with party activists and supporters of their respective constituencies.

They said the party has also instructed its thana committees and front organisations in the city to ensure maximum attendance at the rally.

## Address to nation

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Immediate-past prime minister and AL President Sheikh Hasina will address the nation at 8:30pm.

Country's first woman prime minister, BNP Chairperson and four-party alliance leader Khaleda Zia will deliver her speech to the nation at 9:15pm, said a party press release.

Both groups chased each other and locked in clashes again spreading to surrounding areas, including Kaptan Bazar and Alu Bazar.

Panic gripped the areas and traffic came to a halt.

Angry BNP men later encircled the Mayor Bhaban for a while and blamed Sayed Khokon for the "attacks".

Following the clash, Sayed Khokon staged a protest rally at the Paltan crossing while Khoka held a rally in front of the Press Club.

Condemning the "attacks" Khoka demanded immediate sacking of Kotwali OC and SI Arman and blamed Mayor Mohammad Hanif, father of Sayed, for "patronising terrorists misusing his chair."

On the other hand, Khokon blamed "BNP-backed terrorists for launching attack" on his procession.

**C'wealth summit**

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said his country was keen to host the meeting early next year.

Speaking with reporters in Australia before the announcement, Howard said a cancellation would be "incredibly regrettable." But added: "It's not something we can control."

Britain's Queen Elizabeth II and 53 leaders of former British colonies and dependencies had been expected to attend the meeting scheduled to take place Oct 6-9 – including representatives from Canada, India, Pakistan, a range of Pacific and Caribbean Island nations and many African nations.

The day after the terrorist attacks in the United States, Queensland Police Commissioner Bob Atkinson said security for the summit would be reviewed in light of the US attacks, but insisted Australian authorities would be able to protect the leaders who attended the summit.

The meeting is not the first international summit to be affected, in the wake of the suicide hijackings in the United States.

The UN General Assembly postponed the UN children's summit, which would have brought 75 ministers and prime ministers to New York this month.

The General Assembly also postponed its annual gathering of world leaders last week because of security difficulties in the wake of the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon.

The home ministry is learnt to have categorised only upazilas and not constituencies on the basis of their vulnerability or sensitivity. They



PHOTO: PID  
Awami League president and former prime minister Sheikh Hasina called on President Shahabuddin Ahmed at Bangabhaban in the city yesterday.

## US commandos search for Laden

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"Jihad will continue even if I am not around," he said.

Pak foreign ministry spokesman Riaz Mohammad Khan said the clerics had their own agenda, but stressed that intelligence chief Ahmed was carrying no new proposals from Islamabad.

In another development, Saudi Arabia has signalled it will allow US troops and aircraft stationed on Saudi soil to participate in military action against bin Laden and his protectors in Afghanistan, The Washington Post reported yesterday.

The newspaper, which earlier reported the Saudis were resisting a US request to use a new command centre on the Prince Sultan Air Base, said the new Saudi assurances allowed US officials to drop plans to organise an alternate command centre elsewhere in the Gulf.

AP from Washington adds: The FBI released photos Thursday of the 19 suspected suicide hijackers with a plea for citizens to help with identities of some that are still in custody. Director Robert Mueller said some attackers had been linked to Osama bin Laden's network.

Separately, more arrests were made of Middle Eastern men who obtained bogus licenses to haul hazardous materials. The FBI said those men were not connected to the hijackers, who crashed planes into the World Trade Center and the Pentagon.

The FBI isn't certain about the identities of all the hijackers.

"It is our hope that the release of these photos will prompt others who

may have seen the hijackers to contact the FBI with any information they may have that would be helpful to the investigation," said Attorney General John Ashcroft.

Terrorists involved in the Sept 11 hijackings left behind copies of a document in Arabic giving them step-by-step instructions for their suicide mission and preparing themselves spiritually for death, a law enforcement official said yesterday.

A copy of the document was found in luggage left behind by Mohamed Atta, suspected of organising the attacks and flying into one of the World Trade Center towers, said the official.

Another was found in the wreckage of a United Airlines jet that crashed in rural Pennsylvania and a third in another hijacker's car, the official said.

The document contained a mission checklist and instructions for mental and spiritual preparation, the official said, speaking on condition of anonymity. The official was unable to provide further details.

In New Delhi, after a day in hiding, the chief of a militant Muslim students' group that backs Laden was arrested Thursday, following a ban on the organisation that provoked arrests across India and violence that killed three people.

The Students Islamic Movement of India, which the federal government said was "working for an international Islamic order" was outlawed Wednesday. Ten states demanded the ban due to the organisation's alleged links with Islamic guerrillas, interior ministry officials said.

However, vehicles of candidates and their agents, local and foreign poll observers and journalists having identity cards, vehicles of election officials, law enforcement agencies and emergency services like fire service, power, gas and postal department will not come under the restriction, UNB said.

## Confusion

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they will face problem in making shipments timely.

Passengers landing at Zia International Airport and awaiting flights will also face sufferings.

UNB news agency earlier reported that movement of all kinds of motorised vehicles has been banned for 54 hours from zero hours on Saturday.

The government imposed the ban under the Motor Vehicle Ordinance of 1983 to facilitate holding of free and fair election, it said.

However, vehicles of candidates and their agents, local and foreign poll observers and journalists having identity cards, vehicles of election officials, law enforcement agencies and emergency services like fire service, power, gas and postal department will not come under the restriction, UNB said.



PHOTO: STAR  
Cars and other vehicles parked in front of different offices in Motijheel area occupy nearly half of the road, adding to the traffic jam in the area.

## Biggest ever security operation

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have been identified as most vulnerable, highly vulnerable, generally vulnerable and normal. However, different security agencies are drawing up their own lists based on field assessments, sources said.

On the election day, each polling centre will have a minimum of 12 Ansar or VDP personnel and one policeman. Three or four of the Ansars and VDP personnel will carry arms.

It is planned that at least four trained female VDP members wearing uniform will be posted at every polling centre. Deployment of female law enforcement personnel have been emphasised this time considering the fact that nearly half of the voters are women.

Deployment of Ansar began on Wednesday and they will be in the field till October 3 along with police.

Amed Forces and BDR deployment began on September 22.

The officers and soldiers of the army who have moved out of their garrisons have already set up camps in designated areas and started patrolling, surveillance and reconnoitering activities in a bid to make their presence felt, and thereby deter all types of trouble makers.

Army has set up camps at 373 upazilas and BDR at 87 upazilas mainly in bordering districts. Navy

has made their presence in coastal regions.

Besides election duties, Air Force has also deployed officers and airmen for security at the airfields. They will provide transport aircraft and helicopter services for military deployment and election purposes.

Some 3000 army personnel including commandos along with several hundred BDR men are maintaining vigilance in the capital.

Army will have at least two platoons of soldiers at each district headquarters. Each platoon likely to have 35 to 45 soldiers. Besides, a reserve company (three platoons) will also be available for contingencies in the districts.

At each upazila, two platoons of army troops will be stationed.

An officer of the rank of Lt Colonel will head the army personnel at district level while each platoon at every place is likely to have at least one officer, army sources said.

Coordination and control cells will be set up in cooperation with the DC at district level and the TNO at upazila level. These will have one representative from each of the forces.

Out of the 52 political parties

## Violence: 8 killed

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injured during a clash between AL and BNP activists in Sandip Thana yesterday. Tafsiur died on the spot.

According to sources, the clash erupted when a group of BNP activists on their way home after attending a BNP rally at Shantinagar came under attack