

Hasina promises 'govt of consensus' if re-elected

UNB, Dhaka

Expressing her firm conviction for forming the next government with absolute majority, Awami League president Sheikh Hasina called for allowing people to cast their vote freely and fairly on October 1.

"I hereby appeal to all involved in the election process to make sure that no evil force foil people's electoral mandate," she said in an election speech over radio and television last night.

Hasina said a mass wave has been created across the country for boat and "Inshallah, we will be able to form the government with absolute majority."

She appealed to police, BDR and armed forces to discharge their

duties neutrally in protecting people's fundamental right to vote.

The former prime minister promised to form a "government of consensus" if reelected and put an end to corruption, terrorism, hunger and illiteracy for establishing a modern and developed Bangladesh imbued with the spirit of independence war.

Address to nation

Outlining her plans based on the 21-point election manifesto, Hasina said if elected, her government would give top priority to combating terrorism and corruption and alleviating poverty.

She once again begged votes from people to give her another opportunity to form the government

and serve the nation.

"I've lost everything, I've nothing to gain, I only want to remain with your weal and woes and dedicate my life like my father to bringing smile to the downtrodden," Hasina said in emotion-charged voice.

Referring to her opponents, she said when the people are dreaming of a bright future, "killers of '71 ganged up with the killers of '75 and vote dacoits of '96" to destroy the prospects of the nation.

"Shaking hands with the communal forces, they want to push the nation towards an era of darkness again," Hasina said, urging the pro-liberation and democratic forces to stand united for democracy, devel

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Longest police drive yields least result

SHAIKH NAZRUL ISLAM

The longest ever police drive involving the maximum number of manpower is nearing its end without any significant result.

The drive under the caretaker government was launched on July 17 to recover illegal firearms and arrest terrorists and criminals for holding a free, fair and peaceful election.

But the listed terrorists netted and illegal firearms recovered so far are insignificant compared to their estimated figures given by officials earlier.

Out of estimated 2.5 lakh illegal arms, police and BDR recovered only 4,816 so far, according to official sources. This is only 1.93 of the total illegal firearms in possession of terrorists and criminals in the country.

Only 6,500 licensed firearms out of about two lakh have been deposited to police.

In the city, no member of top terrorist gangs including those led by Subrata Bain, Kala Jahangir, Pichhi Kamal, Pichhi Hannan and Molla Masud could be arrested. Sources seeking anonymity claimed that most of them are in the city for "use" by their political godfathers on the election day and after that.

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Khaleda pledges to root out terrorism, corruption

UNB, Dhaka

BNP chairperson Khaleda Zia yesterday pledged to root out terrorism and corruption that have tainted the nation during the last five years of Awami League rule.

Addressing the nation over state-run Radio and Television network marking an end to formal election campaign, she appealed to all to vote for the four-party alliance to end the untold sufferings of the people under Awami rule.

Reminding all that AL's team was marked by misrule, horrifying incidents and oppression, she said, "Vote for BNP and four-party alliance and we will present you a society free from terrorism."

Making a pointed reference to explosions in public meetings and killings during the five-years rules of Awami League, Khaleda said the world was taking the issue of terrorism very seriously.

Khaleda began her address paying respect to martyrs of the liberation war, language movement,

Address to nation

democratic struggle and national leaders including Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Sher-e-Bangla AK Fazlul Haq, Hussein Shaheed Suhrawardy, Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhashani and General Osmany.

She also recalled the role of Ziaur Rahman in the liberation war and

lashed out at those who had tried to malign the party he founded.

Khaleda hoped the poll would be peaceful and fair. She made a fervent appeal to the people to go to the voting centres and cast their votes even in face of intimidation and inclement weather.

"Remember, responsibility of initiating a silent revolution in the country depends on you, cast your vote on October 1," she told the people in her address.

The BNP chairperson also pledged to restore non-communal democratic society.

"Through our unstinted devotion to law, honesty and integrity of the administration and sincerity of

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ICC Bangladesh President Mahubur Rahman (3rd from left) addressing the ICC-EU Roundtable yesterday. Antonio de Souza Menezes, Ambassador, Commission of the European Communities and Latifur Rahman, Vice President ICC Bangladesh, are seen on his right while Joaquim Miranda Da Silva, Chief Observer, EU Election Observation Mission in Bangladesh is on his left. Story on page 1

Bagerhat AL leader held while setting houses of minority people afire

QUAZI AMANULLAH, Khulna

Idris Ali Kotal, president of Awami League unit in Badhal union in Kachua upazilla of Bagerhat district, was arrested on Friday on charge of setting fire to some houses of minority community people.

Mohammad Shajahan Sharif, OC of Bagerhat DB police, said that Idris Ali was caught red handed but his associates escaped.

The OC said the Awami League leader was arrested soon after

receiving a complaint from some people of the minority community in Badhal union.

Kachua upazila is under Bagerhat-2 constituency from where AL candidate Sheikh Helaluddin and BNP leader AHM Selim are contesting, among others.

On Friday in the afternoon, 18 people were injured, seven of them bullet-hit, when a four-party alliance procession at Kauarpole village in Chitalamari upazilla under

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Pre-election situation reviewed

UNB, Dhaka

A meeting of the chiefs of different agencies, with Chief Advisor Latifur Rahman in the chair, yesterday reviewed overall situation and measures taken by the caretaker government for holding the general election on October 1 in a free, fair, impartial and peaceful atmosphere.

Held at Chief Advisor's office in the afternoon, the meeting discussed matters of deployment of armed forces in maintaining peace and discipline during the pre-election, election and post-election periods.

Advisors Major General (Retd) Mainul Hossain Chowdhury and ASM Shahjahan, Chief Election Commissioner MA Syed, Chief of Army Staff Lt General M Harun or Rashid, Chief of Naval Staff Rear Admiral A Taher, Chief of Air Staff Air Vice Marshal Mohammad Rafiqul Islam, Director General of BDR Major General Mohammad Abu Ishaq Ibrahim, Director General of Ansar and VDP Maj General Jamil D Ahsan and Inspector General of Police Muhammad Nurul Huda attended the meeting.

Earlier, a high-level meeting chaired by Chief Advisor reviewed the overall law and order situation in the country.

The meeting directed authorities concerned engaged in election duty to discharge their responsibility with utmost sincerity and neutrality.

'CEC won't talk on election preparation'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) MA Syed will not meet the press to inform its preparation for the election.

Spokesman to the Election Commission Khairuzzaman Chowdhury told newsmen that the CEC said "no", when they asked him whether the CEC would formally address the press and reply to election-related queries.

Conventionally, the past chief election commissioners replied to newsmen's queries ahead of the polls.

Although Syed talks about transparency of the EC, he has refused to talk to the press this time. Nor will he give interview to any of the media.

Earlier, the CEC designated the EC additional secretary for briefing the media personnel on the day's development a week earlier. But abruptly, the EC spokesman refused to take any question from the press, making the regular briefing a hoax.

The CEC tonight, the day before the polls, will address the nation over the state-run Bangladesh Television (BTV) and the Bangladesh Betar.