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The road to the Jatiya Sangsad... with the election to the eighth Jatiya Sangsad hours away, there were last-minute touch-ups to electoral preparations in the city as elsewhere in the country. (From 2nd L to 2nd R) ballot boxes are taken to a polling centre; paramilitary Bangladesh Rifles personnel station themselves at another; Bangladesh Army troops keep close vigil on a major city thoroughfare. The city, meanwhile, wore a deserted look with many leaving for the countryside to exercise their franchise.

Who casts vote where in city

STAR REPORT

The President, Chief Adviser of the caretaker government, Chief Election Commissioner, Awami League president and BNP chairperson will cast their votes in the city in the early hours of voting. Voting starts at 8 am.

President Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed will cast his vote at the Banghabhaban Government Primary School polling centre (Dhaka-6).

Chief Adviser Justice Latifur Rahman will cast his vote at Vigarunessa Girls School centre (Dhaka-10).

Chief Election Commissioner M A Syed will cast his vote at Gulshan Model High School polling centre (Dhaka-5).

Awami League President and immediate past prime minister Sheikh Hasina will cast her vote at the Gonobhaban Government Primary School (Dhaka-10) centre at about 8 am.

BNP Chairperson and former prime minister Khaleda Zia will cast her vote at Adamjee Cantonment College polling centre (Dhaka-5) at 11 am.

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Nation goes to polls amid tight security

STAR REPORT

The country goes to polls today to elect a new parliament, the eighth in the nation's 30-year history, and the third in a row and second under a non-party caretaker administration.

Polling at 29,848 centres in 299 constituencies across the country, the fifth largest democracy in the world, begins at 8:00am and will continue till 4:00pm without break. Election to the Cox's Bazar-3 constituency has been deferred due to the death of a candidate on Friday.

The day is a public holiday.

The battle of ballots will provide some 74.7 million eligible voters the opportunity to elect candidates of their choice. It will also see participation of nearly 15 million first-time voters, who constitute 23.42 per cent of the

electorate. Citizens aged 18 or above can exercise their adult franchise, an age-limit defined by the constitution.

Women have played a dominant role in politics as leaders and in elections as voters.

Sheikh Hasina and Khaleda Zia have held the reins of the country's two major political parties since the fall of the autocratic regime in 1990, alternately holding the positions of Leader of the House and of the Opposition.

Women make up nearly half of the electorate (48.45 per cent). The election to the eighth Jatiya Sangsad will also see a record number of female candidates - 37 - in the fray. There will be separate booths for female voters at every polling centre.

The number of polling booths across the country is 148,711. A total of 475,981 polling personnel, including presiding officers, assistant presiding officers, returning

officers and polling officers, will conduct the election.

In the biggest peacetime security operations in the country's history, more than 510,000 military, paramilitary and law enforcement personnel have been deployed to keep the election violence free.

The number of contestants in these elections is 1,933, with 1,449 running on the tickets of 52 political parties.

However, according to political analysts, the electoral battle will be and large be confined to the Awami League (AL) and the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP).

Many believe that the Jatiya Party faction, loyal to former president HM Ershad, which has forged an alliance with the Islamic Shshahanttra Andolan and some other small parties,

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Mobile phones Rain unlikely to go dead for 24 hours

STAR REPORT

Mobile telephone service providers in the country have been asked to keep their transmission networks closed for 24 hours from 6 am today to 6 am tomorrow, an official hand-out said yesterday.

The government has taken the decision to ensure a congenial atmosphere for holding of the parliamentary election. It wants to see that 'none can jeopardise security and safety of the people through exchange of misleading information over mobile phones,' the handout said.

Government officials said the step is aimed at reducing contacts among crime syndicates and intimidators.

Earlier, special drives launched by law enforcing agencies, in some

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Rain unlikely to reign

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

There is a possibility of light to moderate rains in different areas of the country today 'but that would not last long,' weather officials said.

Light to moderate thunder-shower accompanied by temporary gusty wind is likely to occur at a few places in Dhaka, Chittagong, Khulna, Barisal and Rajshahi divisions and at one or two places in Sylhet Division.

The officials however said this would not create any problem for people to come to polling centres to cast votes.

Local cautionary signal number 3 for sea and river ports which was hoisted during a low in the Bay will continue today as the sky may remain cloudy.

Sea going ships and engine boats have been asked to move cautiously and remain in safe

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US asks if Laden has assets in Bangladesh

STAR REPORT

As part of the US government's worldwide hunt for Osama bin Laden, the US embassy in Dhaka has asked the finance ministry whether the alleged Saudi terrorist has any assets or bank accounts in Bangladesh.

The embassy in a letter to the finance ministry also wanted to know what the government was going to do if any assets of Laden existed in Bangladesh.

The finance ministry has referred the letter to the foreign ministry and

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Go to polling centres without fear: CA

UNB, Dhaka

With the entire machinery of his caretaker government set for performing its prime task, Chief Adviser Latifur Rahman yesterday urged voters to go to polling centres today without fear and vote freely for the candidates of their choice.

"You should remain alert so that black money, illegal pressure and various evil propaganda cannot mislead you," he said in his address to the nation over Radio and Television last night.

Latif reminded that all the people of the country, irrespective of caste, creed and gender are citizens of Bangladesh. "We all in this country have equal rights."

"Let us make election to the 8th Parliament a success through the exercise of our voting right, which is a civic duty," he said calling upon all voters to cast their vote for the success of democracy and for future development of the nation.

As the election is being held against the backdrop of intense political rivalries, mainly between the two former ruling parties, the



Chief Adviser Latifur Rahman

chief adviser noted that in the democratic form of governance there is no permanent winner or loser sovereignty of the people is supreme.

"So the victor and the vanquished will have to find their standing among the people and try to earn their faith and respect through transparency of their activities," he said.

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CEC firm to hold free, fair & peaceful polls

UNB, Dhaka

Chief Election Commissioner M A Syed said the Election Commission under his stewardship would fulfil the commitment to a free, fair, impartial and peaceful election to be held today.

"Holding the election peacefully is our commitment. We'll fulfil the commitment at any cost," he said in a televised speech on the eve of the national election billed as crucial for the country's journey on its next course with a lot of landmark tasks ahead.

The CEC noted that the common people always take the election as a national festival, but some "mastans and terrorists patronised by a section of politicians" often dash hopes and expectations of the simple and innocent people.

"These terrorists are weak not only organisationally but also mentally. I believe if they do not get the patronage of the influential, the common people would not have to suffer much," he said in his pre-election address aired on the state-run Bangladesh Television and



CEC M A Syed

Bangladesh Betar.

Assuring the electorate that the EC had taken administrative measures to prevent anti-social elements from coming to the polling centres, CEC Syed sought people's spontaneous cooperation in making the polls a success.

"You must remain alert about those who will try to create chaos and irregularities in the voting. I

SEE PAGE 11 COL 3

Caretaker govt 'tried its best'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The caretaker government has said it has 'tried its best' to ensure a congenial atmosphere for free and fair elections today and assured that it has taken special measures so that female voters and members of the minority community can cast votes without any fear.

"I call upon all to extend unequivocal support and cooperation in holding a free, fair and impartial election," Advisor of the caretaker administration Barrister Ishfaq Ahmed said at a press briefing yesterday.

Advisors Maj Gen (Rtd) Moinul Hossain Chowdhury, Abdul Mueyed Chowdhury and Rokia A Rahman replied to various questions from newsmen about the election.

Dispelling speculations that female voters and minority community people might not feel safe to go to polling centres, Moinul Hossain Chowdhury said, "We are quiet hopeful that things won't be as bad as some people are fearing."

Rokia Rahman hoped that turn

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Leaders promised us a lot, but not the two we wanted most

MAHFUZ ANAM

Throughout the campaign we eagerly waited to hear those promises. They did not come. They were not in their party manifestos either. Nor did they find any place in the last address to the voters by Sheikh Hasina and Khaleda Zia last Sunday night. We are of course referring to: 1) a promise not to boycott the parliament; and 2) not to call hartals in the future. Two simple but vital demands of the people.

What crippled our democratic experiment and our nascent parliament in the last 10 years? The boycott of the parliament by the opposition parties of the day - first the Awami League (AL) and then the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP). What crippled our economy in the last decade? Continuous hartals, again by the opposition parties of the day - first by the AL and

then by the BNP.

Both parties know fully well that their boycott and their hartals were extremely damaging to our country. Just recall what they said when they were in power. Khaleda Zia, as the prime minister, called the hartals and the boycott of the parliament acts of the 'enemies' of the country and the people. Yet she relentlessly subjected the nation to both, while in opposition. Sheikh Hasina was full of condemnation for hartals and parliament boycott as the PM, conveniently forgetting that it was she and her party that subjected the nation to the longest and the most destructive hartal ever.

Forgiving as we are as a people, we have been quite ready to overlook what happened in the past as the birth pangs of our own brand of democratic system. Wanting to look forward we had hoped that at least

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Hossain Zillur Rahman

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Two and half page special supplement on the 52nd Founding Anniversary of the People's Republic of China

Special service for online-readers

The Daily Star will post the hourly results of the Eighth Jatiya Sangsad election from 6 pm today. Log on to <http://www.dailystarnews.com>.

	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
Oct 1	4-45	5-56 pm
Oct 2	5-51 am	

Prayer Timings

	Azan	Jamaat
Oct 1		
Fajr	4-45	5-20
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-30	4-45
Maghrib	5-57	6-04
Esha	7-45	8-15

Source: Islamic Foundation

6 killed, 48 injured in pre-election violence

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least six persons were killed and 48 injured in pre-election violence in different parts of the country yesterday.

Of them, two were killed in Comilla and one each in Gazipur, Chittagong, Mymensingh and Barisal districts.

Our Comilla correspondent adds: Two brothers were killed when the bomb they were allegedly making exploded at Godua village under Barura thana in the district.

They were identified as Harichandra Bhoomik, 45, and Madan Bhoomik, 35, reportedly supporters of Awami League candidate for Comilla-7 constituency Abdul Hakim.

Police and villagers said the powerful bomb went off at about 1

pm when they were making it in a bamboo bush.

Hearing a big bang, local people rushed to the spot and found the two disfigured bodies in a pool of blood.

Police recovered the bodies and took those Barura police station. Later, the mutilated bodies were handed over to their family.

Our Chittagong correspondent says: One youth was shot dead at Maitbhanga in Sandwip yesterday evening.

Sources said, the youth, identified as Pintu, 23, reportedly a BCL activist, was shot dead by some miscreants, Sandwip (Chittagong-3) is one of the most vulnerable constituencies in Chittagong.

Pintu is the son of upazila Awami League Vice-president Abdul

Our Staff correspondent from Barisal adds: A Jubo Dal worker was killed on the spot and another injured seriously when a bomb exploded near the BNP office in BSCIC area in the town last night.

The dead was identified as Altaf alias Mamun, 30, reportedly a Jubo Dal worker.

One hand of Altaf was blown off in the explosion, witnesses said.

Injured Joynal, 35, was rushed to Barisal Sher-e-Bangla Medical College Hospital in a critical condition, hospital sources said.

UNB adds: A clash between supporters of Awami League and BNP at Dullalpur bazaar at Kapasia upazila in Dhaka district on Saturday night left one person killed and 10 injured.

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Hasina faces 27 rivals, Khaleda 32

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina is facing 27 contestants while BNP chief Khaleda Zia has been pitted against 32 candidates in today's general election. And the two former prime ministers are seeking election from five parliamentary seats each.

Hasina is contesting from Gopalganj-3, Narail-1 and 2, Barguna-3 and Rangpur-6 constituencies. The seats BNP leader Khaleda Zia is gunning for are Feni-1, Laxmipur-2, Khulna-2, Bogra-6 and 7.

In fact, the constituencies the two top leaders have chosen to contest from are traditional strongholds of their parties. Except for one seat each, both leaders are unlikely to face any stiff resistance in all other seats.

Hasina's strongest rival appears

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