

Mohiuddin heads for win

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around 9:00pm as they collected results from their agents, which showed a clear lead for Mohiuddin.

The AL and Nagorik Committee leaders exerted pressure on the RO's office set up at the Gymnasium Complex of the MA Aziz Stadium to be prompt in announcing the election results. They also enquired about the reason for the delay in announcing the results.

AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil along with senior party leaders last night met the EC officials in Dhaka and asked them to direct the RO's office in Chittagong to expedite the results announcement.

Law-enforcers cordoned off Mir Nasir's house opposite to Chittagong Circuit House as thousands of Mohiuddin supporters were parading down the nearby roads in Kazir Dewri Mor, Chittagong Club and Tiger Pass.

The Nagorik Committee supporters were chanting slogans in small processions in different parts of the city until 1:00am.

THE VOTING

Earlier, the voting was held amid tight security with some stray incidents of violence and allegations of falseballoting.

The polls were marked by baton charge by the police and army, clash between supporters of the two main mayoral aspirants and capture of more than a dozen polling stations.

The voters complained of slow pace of polling and harassment of voters in various centres, which they blamed on the inefficiency of the polling officers.

The supporters of Mir Nasir threw stones at the vehicle of Mohiuddin in city's Solokbahar area in the afternoon. Mohiuddin, however, left the scene unhurt amid cracker blasts by the alliance men.

The Nagorik Committee filed a complaint with the returning officer about rigging in 84 centres, while the ruling alliance said 71 centres witnessed such irregularities.

The Election Commission, however, denied the allegation of large-scale irregularities and said the election was held peacefully and in a free and fair manner.

The BNP-Jamaat dominated Chawkbazar, Polytechnic Institute, Nasirabad and Chandgaon areas witnessed incidents of violence. The ruling alliance's hooligans allegedly wrested control of at least 10-12 centres by 12:00 noon and cast fake votes there.

The election for picking a mayor, 11 ward commissioners and 14 women commissioners for the reserved seats was held under unprecedented security arrangement with 16,000 police and Ansar stationed at the centres. The army and BDR patrolled the city.

At least five people were arrested on charges of casting fake votes at different centres and sentenced to five to 30 days' imprisonment by the magistrates on the spot.

An elderly man was injured when the army clubbed and dispersed the warring supporters of two commissioner candidates at Municipal School centre at about 12:45pm.

People stood up in long queues in almost all polling centres since the beginning of the ballot at 8:00am. But many voters, mainly women, could not cast votes due to slow process of voting and left polling centres waiting for hours on end.

The election observers found false voting in a number of centres. Janipop and International Republican Institution (IRI) in a primary observation report said many polling stations witnessed a disturbing amount of false voting. These two observer groups fielded 13 teams to monitor 130 polling centres.

"Despite strong presence of law-enforcers, party hoodlums assembled outside the polling centres, for either intimidating genuine voters or soliciting false voters, many of whom were women," said a joint statement of Janipop and IRI.

In many centres The Daily Star correspondents also found gangs of marauding youths backed by ruling alliance candidates. Voters alleged the hoodlums helped outsiders to cast fake votes in favour of their candidates in their strongholds.

Witnesses also raised allegations of false voting by the supporters of Nagorik Committee in a few centres. **CAPTURE OF POLLING CENTRES** Mohiuddin in a written complaint to the returning officer alleged that his rival's hooligans rigged polls in no fewer than 84 centres. They drove out his polling agents from 24 centres, he alleged.

The opposition-backed candidate also alleged that a number of ministers and ruling party lawmakers moved freely in different polling stations and interfered in the polling process.

Mohiuddin said the agents of Mir Nasir ousted his agents and captured the Polytechnic Institute centre. When Mohiuddin complained to the presiding officer at about 11:00am, the army took measures to ensure the presence of his agents.

On the other hand, supporters of Mir Nasir alleged that Nagorik Committee men captured Kusum Kumari Girls High School, JI Madrasa, Char Chaktai High School and Forest Research Institute centres and herded Nasir's agents out. **OUTSIDERS IN GUISE OF VOTERS** Witnesses said hundreds of Jamaat-e-Islami and Islami Chhatra Shibir activists arrived in Chittagong from outside the city and rushed to the

polling centres in the morning to cast fake votes especially in the areas dominated by Jamaat.

Allegations are there that fake voters from Satkania, Lohagara, Chandanaish, Chittagong University and Chakoria areas cast votes in the early hours of polling.

False balloting was also found in many centres including Mohsin College, Chittagong Government High School, Kajem Ali High School, Abdul Jalil Primary School and Dr Khastagir Girls School.

MINORITIES INTIMIDATED
At 11:35am, Tinku Das (voter no 1229) came to Kasheful Ulum Madrasa centre in Sholokbahar (ward no 8) but he could not cast his vote as a JCD activist stopped him and tried to drag him out of the centre, witnesses said.

A few minutes later, some JCD activists chased Minu Barua (voter no 2773) at the entrance to the centre, alleging that she had already cast her vote. They pulled at her saree and harassed her, the witnesses said.

The unruly JCD activists led by its Chittagong City unit Assistant General Secretary Kamrul Islam attacked police Inspector Ataur Rahman and an Ansar man when they came to the rescue of the woman. They also barred photo-journalists from taking snaps of the incident.

The policemen on duty were found totally helpless at the main gate of the polling centre as the JCD men took control of it and were obstructing voters.

After a few minutes, the cops clubbed the JCD activists and dispersed them. They took Mina Barua to a safe place. Magistrate Khalil Ahmad then asked the police inspector to call the army to tackle the situation.

"How could we run election in such a situation?" the magistrate said when Inspector Ataur told him that he did not have walkie-talkie to call in the army.

Mina Barua under the magistrate's custody burst into tears and said, "I do not want to cast my vote anymore. Please help me go back home."

Finally, a contingent of army arrived at the centre after 45 minutes. **FALSE VOTING, COCKTAIL BLASTS**

Allegations of fake voting, intimidation and chase and counter chase marked the polling in Chittagong Polytechnic and Technical Training centres in East Sholokshahar (ward no 6) despite presence of a large number of police, army and BDR.

When Nagorik Committee candidate Mohiuddin accompanied by several journalists reached the Polytechnic centre at 8:10am, his supporters and many voters rushed to him and raised scores of allegations.

Voters Minu Rani Dey and her husband Banshi Muhuri, Nagorik Committee polling agents Yasmin Akhtar and Jahangir complained that they had been prevented by the ruling party men from entering the centres.

The ruling party supporters misbehaved with daily Amar Desh's photographer Morshed Alam and stopped him from taking snaps at the centre.

Rahima Khatun, another voter, alleged the ruling party cadres forced her out of the centre.

At booth no 5 of this centre, journalists found all the four women agents belonged to Mir Nasir. One of them (Senowara Begum) claimed to be the agent of Mohiuddin but he said he could not identify her.

Presiding Officer of the centre Sirajuddin Sarker dismissed all these allegations. Mohiuddin then called Officer-in-Charge of Khulshi Police Station Abdul Matin and asked for his help to control the situation. "My supporters are being intimidated here. I need your cooperation," he told the OC.

At around 9:45am, some ruling party cadres led by one Sayeed hurried five to six crackers at Abdul Jalil Primary School centre located in Sholokshahar area, close to Mohiuddin's residence. The mayor is number-1 voter in this centre.

The cocktail blasts created panic among the voters but the polling was not hampered. Presiding Officer Abu Sufian said he heard some blasts. **NASIR COMPLAINS OF SLOW CASTING**

At 9:17am, Mir Nasir visited Fateyabad City Corporation Girls High School centre. He wanted to know from Presiding Officer Rafiq Anwar why the casting was so slow. "Why are you making delay in voting," he said.

Rafiq said 33 votes out of 400 in that booth were taken in the first one hour.

Mir Nasir talking to journalists said the voting atmosphere was nice and fair.

After visiting Laliarhat Hossainiya Senior Madrasa in South Pahartali (ward no 1) at 9:50am, Mir Nasir entered a phone-fax shop and phoned general officer commanding (GOC) of Chittagong Cantonment.

He told the GOC that his supporters were being barred from coming to a local polling centre. As he asked for the GOC's cooperation, an army jeep arrived there in a few minutes.

BDR CHASES BNP MP
BDR chased ruling BNP lawmaker Mofazzal Hossain Kaikobad at Ameer Forkania Madrasa polling

centre in Bakolia in the morning when he tried to enter the centre with dozens of followers.

The situation at Kattali Nurul Haque Chowdhury Primary School polling centre in Pahartali at noon was tense as around 50 people were chanting slogans with allegation of fake vote casting inside the centre.

The magistrate went inside the centre and called striking force of the army that were patrolling the streets. Within a few minutes, army personnel in three vehicles arrived at the spot. They charged batons on the protesters to disperse them.

MOHIUDDIN'S DAUGHTER FAILS TO VOTE

Fauzia Sultana Tumpa, daughter of Mohiuddin, and Nusrat Naushin, his niece, came to Polytechnic centre at around 8:15am to cast vote but failed.

They alleged that they had faced obstruction by the BNP and JCD cadres. They raised the allegation when journalists visited the centre, known as a stronghold of JCD, the student wing of ruling BNP.

INTERRUPTION IN VOTING
Polling was suspended for about 10 minutes at booth no 1 of Panchlaish High School centre from 11:05am for the absence of Assistant Presiding Officer AKM Obaidur Rahman. Voting resumed after he came back to the centre.

Obaidur defended himself saying, "I went to the presiding officer's room to collect fresh ballot books, the first ballot book was used up."

Vote casting in this centre was too slow, alleged some voters.

SB man

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wrong statistics from the Election Commission about four-party candidate Mir Mohammad Nasir Uddin's "lead" in the CCC election.

Witnesses and AL leaders said Inspector Tofazzal Hossain of city Special Branch (SB) was informing the SB headquarters by his walkie-talkie that Mir Nasir polled 315,000 votes and ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury 200,000 in 208 centres.

The actual number of votes polled by Mohiuddin Chowdhury at that time was 124,288 while his nearest rival Mir Nasir bagged 87,400.

The AL leaders handed him over to EC officials, who later allowed him to leave the control room as he sought apology.

10-yr girl

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school broke up at 1:30pm, the youth spoke with a school guard, she added.

After the girl came home with serious injuries, her mother rushed her to a nearby clinic. As her condition deteriorated, she was admitted to DMCH.

The girl was bleeding and her condition serious, doctors told reporters.

No case was filed in this connection as of 7:30pm.

11 AL men given

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swopped on AL leaders and activists while local lawmaker Tanjim Ahmed Soheli was addressing a rally on the court premises, expressing his dissatisfaction over the judgement at about 12:30pm.

The convicts are Singhsree Union Parishad Chairman Ashraf Uddin Khan, Sajal, Shafiq Kaiya, Huzul, Romel, Mukul, Kashem, Montaz Morol, Khokon, Swapan and Farhad Hossain.

The court acquitted 11 others on the charges brought against them were not proved.

Judge AR Masud of the Speedy Trial Tribunal-4 handed down the verdict in a packed courtroom in the presence of the convicts.

Earlier, the prosecution and the defence completed their arguments and the court recorded statements of 14 prosecution witnesses.

According to the prosecution, Mohammad Moktar Hossain, 30, of Hariadi under Kapasia upazila of Gazipur, was killed by a group of miscreants, led by Ashraf Uddin Khan, at Koriadi on October 5, 2001 while on his way to Singhsree bazar.

The victim's brother, Mokbul Hossain, filed a murder case against 21 people, including Ashraf, with the Kapasia Police Station two days after the incident.

The investigation officer (IO), pressed charges against Ashraf and 21 others on June 12, 2002 and the court framed charges against the accused on January 9 last year.

Special Public Prosecutor Aminul Islam appeared for the state while advocates Mahbub Abir, Rezaul Karim and Rafiqul Islam defended the accused.

Later, at a press briefing at the Dhaka Reporters' Unity, Soheli, who was named as the prime accused in the case but was later dropped from the chargesheet, alleged the case was politically motivated and that all witnesses in the case were not genuine.

"Police along with local BNP leader Brigadier General (Retd) Hannan Shah and his 30 hired cadres attacked me and other AL leaders and activists when I was seeing off my party leaders," Soheli said, adding that the police attacked him despite his identifying himself to them.

Soheli said his party activists were injured when they tried to save him from the attack by the BNP cadres.

He alleged, "The court premises are also not safe now either for commoners or even for an MP."

He said he would file a case in this connection.

Chargesheet in blast

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the grenade, which was used in the incident that killed AL lawmaker Kibria and four other AL men on January 27.

But the court rejected the appeal as well as the prayer for bail of the eight accused and issued warrants of arrest against the two absconding accused.

The eight accused were produced before the Special Tribunal-1 under strict security at around 11:30 am. They are principal accused Abdul Kaiyum, Shahed Ali, Jamir Ali, Joinal Abedin Momin, Aiat Ali, Selim Ahmed Joinal Abedin Jalal and Tajul Islam.

In his appeal, complainant Mohamad Azizul Islam, told the court the investigating officer (IO) in the explosive case mentioned that the grenade used in the January 27 incident was brought from Chunaraghat. But the IO in the charge sheet did not mention from whom the grenade was collected.

Azizul Islam termed it a failure of the IO and expressed his apprehension that lack of such information would not bring justice.

He also mentioned, "If the source of grenade is disclosed, the mystery behind the grenade attack and the killing will come to light."

CEC terms it fair

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On allegations made by Dr Kamal and Jalil, the CEC said, "They have raised some good points."

He said it was a local body election, not any national polls, and everyone should grasp the reality.

The allegations, however, have been referred to the field-level for necessary actions, the CEC added.

EC sources said on receiving the complaints from the opposition leaders and Nagorik Committee's candidate, the CEC contacted the Returning Officer (RO) Golam Qudus and inquired about the election situation. Qudus assured the CEC that the situation was under control and voting was being held peacefully.

Assistant Returning Officer Mahbub Kabir in a report at about 2:30 pm informed the EC that nothing untoward has taken place. The EC did not receive any allegation from the ruling alliance candidate. The polling officials too did not complain of any irregularity.

BNP lawmaker Zahir Uddin Swapan lodged a complaint on behalf of Mir Nasir Uddin with the RO of irregularities in 71 centres. The allegations include capturing polling stations, ousting the polling agents of Mir Nasir by the supporters of Mohiuddin Chowdhury.

Besides, the complaint said that activists of BCL, the student wing of AL, assaulted ruling BNP lawmaker Mofazzal Hossain Kaykobad, and two magistrates and eight police officials.

As soon as the polling began at 8:00am, complaints on behalf of the Committee candidate started to pour in at the control room of the Returning Officer in Chittagong. The allegations included ousting of agents, supporters and workers of Mohiuddin Chowdhury from different centres, casting fake votes and inconsistencies among the voter lists.

Awami League leader Nurul

Pointing at the allegation of the complainant against the IO, lawyer of Abdul Kaiyum, principal accused in the case, prayed for the bail and pleaded before the court that a fresh investigation would find no involvement of his client in the brutal incident of January 27.

Altaf blank

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"It seems that some technical issues, which were blocking the negotiations, are nearing solution. This would mean substantial breakthrough by July this year," reported Pak Tribune.

Replying to queries, Altaf said, "Higher tariffs will be cut more than lower ones," -- the only statement from him on the issue.

As many as 30 trade ministers of the WTO member states attended the meeting and focused on several issues.

The issues include service rules and regulations including trade facilities to agriculture and non-agriculture markets globally for finding a solution before the scheduled WTO meeting in Hong Kong in December this year.

Observers

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Islam BSc met the RO at about 4:00pm, and raised a number of allegations. He pointed out to the RO the differences between the voter list sent to Polytechnic Institute and the original copy in the Election Commission.

Helal Nizami, another leader of Nagorik Committee, lodged complaints of irregularities in 24 centres. Earlier, complaints about irregular practices at 56 centres were filed with the RO office.

Man killed

FROM PAGE 16
Ibrahimpur Bazar and arranged treatment for some pellet wounds in his head.

He quoted Benazir as saying that a gang was in a mugging spree, waylaying at least five rickshaws near the China-Bangladesh Friendship Conference Centre at about 8:30pm Sunday. They snatched a cellphone set from his passenger Soheli. After that the police team arrived at the scene. But the muggers fled hurling bombs at them.

"The police held my passenger, though I told them that he had hired my rickshaw to go to Monipurpara and was innocent. They warned me not to get involved," Halim quoted Benazir as saying.

Benazir handed over some documents of a car that Soheli was carrying and left in the rickshaw to Halim.

Soheli's father said, "There was not even a general diary filed against my son." He said Soheli had been working for the last 15 years at the house of Shamsul Islam, a businessman, at 17/E, Monipurpara.

Milton, son of Soheli's employer, told reporters at the DMCH that he sent Soheli to Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA) office at Mirpur for some paperwork for his wife's private car.

On completing the job at BRTA, he visited his aunt's house at Mirpur and was returning to Monipurpara in a rickshaw.

Duty Officer of Kalpur Police Station Sub-Inspector Alimuzzaman confirmed that there is no case against Soheli.

Referring to the claim of the victim's father, Alimuzzaman said whenever a criminal dies, family members describe him as innocent.

He said Saiful Islam, one of the victims of Sunday night's mugging, filed a case against four people with the police station, but he did not name any of the accused.

Morgue sources said Soheli was shot from a point blank range.

BDB demands

FROM PAGE 16
Chowdhury made the call speaking as the chair at a meeting organised to celebrate the occasion at the Institution of Engineers, Bangladesh auditorium in the city.

He launched a broadside against the four-party alliance government for "extra-judicial killings in the name of crossfire by Rapid Action Battalion", saying, "One day they will have to account before the nation for this."

Badruddoza, a former president, urged the opposition camp members to work together to unseat what he termed the 'present autocratic and failed government'.

Jatiya Oikya Mancha President Dr Kamal Hossain, Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal President Hasanul Huq Inu, Awami League Organising Secretary Mahmudur Rahman Manna, Krishak Samik Janata League President Abdul Kader Siddique, BDB Secretary General Abdul Mannan, former whip Abdur Rouf and BDB Organising Secretary Mahi B Chowdhury also spoke at the meeting.

Dr Kamal lambasted the government for letting in an excessive price hike of essentials and deterioration of law and order. He also echoed the BDB chief's call to the opposition school to step up movement to topple the ruling coalition.

Khaleda is expected to hold bilateral talks with Ameer of Qatar Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al-Thani on the sidelines of the summit. The Ameer had paid an official visit to Bangladesh recently.

The city

FROM PAGE 1
He said it would be very unfair if Mohiuddin's victory is snatched away by the ruling alliance candidate through unfair means.

People's fury, however, subsided as the RO's office resumed declaring the election results after one and half an hour, at about 11:30pm.

When the election officials were declaring results of different centres slowly one by one, tens of thousands were demonstrating outside the RO's office.

Still, several lakh enthusiastic people waited in the area until late night and stood guard around the RO's office. "Normally, I close my shop at 10:30pm but tonight I am yet to down the shutters as people are still buying goods," said Shahjahan, a shopkeeper at Kazir Dewry at 1:30am today.

Like him, many shopkeepers in the area also kept their shops open until early this morning. The markets, hotels, restaurants, flower corners, tea stalls and other private establishments in areas close to the RO's office also did not turn off the light.

Thousands of people in the residential areas also spent a sleepless night, sitting before TV sets to watch the latest election bulletins by private channels.

The unprecedented gathering kept the government election office under siege until 2:30 this morning. The police and security personnel cordoned off the house and election office of Mir Nasir in nearby Kazir Dewry area.

People also entered the nearby Chittagong Circuit House complex and chanted slogans in favour of Mohiuddin's election symbol hurricane. "Never before in my life have I seen such enthusiasm among the people," said Bachchu Mia, a rickshaw-puller.

The sheer number of people out on the streets to throw their weight behind Mohiuddin took outsiders and election observers alike by surprise.

Until 2:00am, small processions were marching down the streets and senior leaders of the Nagorik Committee were addressing spontaneous rallies, urging the people not to return home without final results.

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Two killed

FROM PAGE 16
party men at Babuganj upazila of Barisal district at about 4:15am yesterday.

Captain Iftekhar, commander of the Barisal Rab camp, said Jalal Bepari was arrested from the Gowlapara Khal area under Agorpur union of Babuganj upazila on Sunday morning.

On the basis of information prised out of him about arms and his men, the Rab took Jalal to Brahmandia of Babuganj in the early hours yesterday, the Rab sources said.

When the Rab team reached near the Gowlapara Khal at Brahmandia, the associates of Jalal attacked them in a bid to free Jalal. A 20-minute gunfight ensued as the Rab also fired back.

Jalal was killed in the "crossfire" while trying to flee.

The Rab recovered one pipe gun with three rounds of ammunition from the area after the miscreants fled.