

Fresh fighting at Taj, siege over at Jewish centre, Oberoi

Five hostages killed at Jewish centre, over 500 freed, death toll crosses 150, ISI chief to visit India to help probe

AP, AFP, PTI, Mumbai

Commandos who stormed the Mumbai headquarters of an ultra-orthodox Jewish group found the bodies of five hostages inside as a fresh battle raged at the luxury Taj Mahal hotel and other Indian forces ended a siege at another five-star hotel.

More than 150 people have been killed since gunmen attacked 10 sites across India's financial capital starting Wednesday night, including 22 foreigners two of them Americans, officials said.

The dead include three Germans, and one person each from Japan, Canada, Britain and Australia. The nationalities of

other victims were not known.

The injured include five from Britain, three Germans, two Americans, two from Oman and one each from Norway, Spain, Canada, Finland, Philippines, Australia, Italy and China. Two more were unknown.

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Indian commandos emerged from a besieged Jewish centre with rifles raised in an apparent sign of victory after a daylong siege that saw a team rappel from helicopters and a series of explosions and fire rock the building and blow gaping holes in the wall. The fighting comes two

days after a chain of militant attacks across India's financial centre that began Wednesday night.

Indian news reports say five hostages and two gunmen were killed in the Mumbai headquarters of an ultra-orthodox Jewish group. In Jerusalem, the Israeli rescue service confirmed the deaths at the centre.

A spokeswoman with the Synchronicity Foundation in Virginia said Friday that Alan Scherr and his 13-year-old daughter were killed while they were in a cafe in Mumbai. By Friday evening, at least nine gunmen had been killed, one had been

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BNP, allies yet to finalise seat sharing

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Even after a series of meetings, BNP has yet to reach an agreement with its partners in the four-party alliance on seat sharing for the December 29 parliamentary polls.

Though the deadline for submitting nominations ends tomorrow, leaders of its allies did not know as of last night which seats they are going to contest for.

"We are worried as we didn't yet get any response from the BNP leadership," Abdul Latif Nazami, secretary general of Islami Oikya Jote (IOJ), told The Daily Star yesterday evening.

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BNP ends interviews but tightlipped on candidates

RAKIB HASNET SUMAN and RASHIDUL HASAN

BNP completed interviewing its nomination hopefuls yesterday, but did not disclose names of the candidates to avoid intra-party rift.

Sources said the party's parliamentary board has already settled on candidates for at least 150 seats. But the names were not disclosed fearing those who have been denied nominations might create problems and some even stand for election as independent candidates.

However, they added, the high-ups have told some candidates that they would be issued formal letters soon after meetings of the standing committee and four-party alliance.

The meetings scheduled for last night were to seal seat sharing among the allies.

The candidates who were yet to receive letters gathered at the chairperson's Gulshan

office last night. They said things would be quite difficult for them if the party delays further when only two days are left for them to file nomination.

"It takes at least nine hours to go to my constituency. As I haven't yet got the letter, it will be pretty hard for me to submit nomination in time," Khandaker Mahbub Hossain, who has been selected for Barguna-2, told reporters at the chairperson's office.

Motahar Hossain Chowdhury of Naogan-6 told reporters that the secretary general had told them that the party would announce nominee list at the last possible moment to avoid hassles and wrath of the disgruntled leaders.

Sources said besides some new faces and the chairperson's counsels, most of the pro-reform leaders have secured party nomination.

Rizvi Ahmed, BNP office secretary, last night said the party would decide when and how to

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PHOTO: STAR

Fireworks illuminate the evening sky over Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban yesterday as a three-year-long celebration of 400 years of Dhaka city is inaugurated.

PURBACHAL HOUSING PROJECT

Handing over of a few plots begins in March

HELEMUL ALAM

The Rajdhani Unnayan Karttripakkha (Rajuk) will start handing over a small number of plots among the allottees in Purbachal New Town Project from March next year although its development work needs over three years to be completed.

"We've done 80 percent earth filling and 35 percent other work so far in the Narayanganj part of the Purbachal housing project," said Project Director ABM Rafiqul Islam Khan.

"We'll start to transfer some plots from March 2009 as some areas will be developed by then," he added.

Development work is going on in 4,500 acres of land in the 6,150-acre Narayanganj portion,

which is divided into 30 sectors, he said.

Rajuk on Tuesday invited applications for about 6,000 plots in Kaliganj in Gazipur but has yet to invite applications from the Adibashi (living in the project area for long) and the affected people.

"We have invited applications for about 6,000 more plots (3 katha, 5 katha, 7.5 katha and 10 katha) in Purbachal as we won the legal battle on Sunday over 1,129 acres land in Kaliganj in Gazipur under the project," said Rajuk Chairman Md Shafiqul Islam.

However, a good number of aspirant applicants could not get the application forms yesterday as Rajuk has not printed it yet. Officials say they will start form distribution from today.

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Make Dhaka habitable, urges CA

3-year programme on 400yrs of city begins

UNB, Dhaka

Chief Adviser (CA) Fakhruddin Ahmed yesterday called for saving the Buriganga, Dhaleshwari, Shitalakha and Turag rivers to save Dhaka, as the rivers surround the sprawling city.

He made the call while inaugurating a three-year programme marking the completion of 400 years of Dhaka as a capital.

Cultural affairs ministry organised the opening ceremony at South Plaza of the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban in the

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Emergency a bar to holding fair polls

Says EU observer mission but praises some positive factors

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The European Union Election Observation Mission (EUEOM) yesterday said the state of emergency is a negative factor for a free and fair election but hoped that the authorities will lift the emergency prior to the polls and ensure security to all concerned.

It, however, said the positive factors for this year's elections are that the Election Commission is now more independent and people have confidence in the voter list.

Speaking at a press conference at Hotel Sheraton, chief observer of the mission Alexander Graf Lambsdorff said the role of the army is non-existent and they can be

called for the sake of security reasons only if the authorities decide to do so.

"Generally of course, it is not ideal to begin the electoral process with the state of emergency. We feel that emergency was restricting the right to assembly and the freedom of expression. We hope that the state of emergency can be lifted at some point before election day," Alexander said.

An important point, however, is that any law enforcement agency must respect that the election environment is free from any sort of intimidation during campaigns, he told newsmen.

Terming vulnerable communities and polling stations a very important issue, he

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Indigenous Cultural Festival 2008



Weave Our Hearts Together
With A Thousand Colourful Threads



Indigenous Handicrafts
Exhibition & Sale

30 Nov (12 pm to 8 pm)
1 & 2 Dec (10 am to 8 pm)

Indigenous Cultural Show

30 Nov & 2 Dec
(6:30 pm to 8:30 pm)
Hall of Fame, BCFCC



Venue: Bangladesh China Friendship Conference Centre
Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, Dhaka-1207



Chittagong Hill Tracts Development Facility
A project funded by the European Union



Talking polls and beyond

Party in power has to bring opposition to JS

Says Rokia Afzal Rahman

SHAMIM ASHRAF and WASIM BIN HABIB

Former caretaker government adviser Rokia Afzal Rahman has said the responsibility of making the next parliament effective falls to a great extent on the party that will form the government.

"It would be the duty of the next elected government to attract the opposition parties to parliament for making the House effective," she said in an interview with The Daily Star.

She said whichever party comes to power it should not show the winner-takes-all attitude and the government can be considered successful only when it would be able to bring the opposition to parliament.

The former adviser thinks debates among the top leaders of political parties on future strategies can be a great way to resolve the existing political crises in the country.

"We have become politically bankrupt because of the political turmoil the country has been witnessing for quite

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Find details of the interview on page 11