

Post-polls violence

FROM PAGE 16
under Pabna Sadar upazila was hacked to death by rivals.

Union Parishad member (UP) member Tokai Member, 40, died of heart attack at the sight of his elder brother Abul Kalam Azad being assaulted allegedly by some AL activists at Udaypur in Sujaganagar upazila of Pabna in the morning. Azad is a local BNP leader.

Our staff correspondent in Chittagong reports: Police recovered the body of Rahim Badsha near his house yesterday morning.

Sources said a few men called Rahim, who was a polling agent of an AL candidate in Sitakunda area, out of his house early yesterday and stabbed him. Rahim died instantly.

Locals said Rahim might have been killed by his rivals following a brawl with them at a polling centre during Monday's parliamentary elections.

Our correspondent in Pabna reports: Shahab Ali was hacked to death allegedly by his rivals over a feud relating to the parliamentary polls.

At least 25 people were injured in separate post-election clashes between Awami League and BNP activists at different places in the capital yesterday, our staff correspondent reports.

Of the injured, over 15 were admitted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) while the others were taken to Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU) and a few other city hospitals.

Ten people were wounded in a clash between activists of AL and BNP at Gabtoli Sweepers' Colony around 8:00pm. They clashed following a feud over the control of the colony.

In Banga Bazar, at least five people were wounded in a clash between two groups of Juba League activists around 8:30pm over dominance over a human-hauler stop.

Six flower vendors in Shahbagh were injured when allegedly AL activists attacked them. The victims said the attackers swooped on them following a feud over flower prices.

Around four people were injured when Chhatra League activists attacked students of a madrasa at Teigaon Railway Station area in the afternoon.

Our Khulna correspondent reports: At least seven supporters of Awami League were wounded as activists of BNP-Jamaat attacked them in Terokhada upazila of Khulna

Monday night.

Terokhada police arrested two Jamaat activists in this connection.

In Noakhali, at least 30 people were injured in two separate incidents of violence at Noakhali Sadar and Sonaimuri upazilas yesterday.

Of them, 20 people were injured when followers of local BNP leader Enam Mollah and AL leader Hafiz of Vatrtek Char Shulukia village of Noakhali Sadar upazila clashed over election results. Of them, 16 were admitted to Noakhali General Hospital.

At Bargoon village under Sonaimuri upazila, 10 people were injured in a clash between the AL and BNP activists.

A correspondent in Benapole reports: Seven BNP activists were injured when AL activists at Jhikorgachha, Chowgachha, Sharsa and Manirampur upazilas of Jessore allegedly attacked them.

Uphill task

FROM PAGE 16
with just two deliveries left before the lunch, the latter unnecessarily fell victim to a runout for 13.

Zunaed Siddiqui joined Tamim to repair the damage but Tamim ended his promising 53-ball 47 by playing a rash shot against pacer Dhammika Prasad. The opener hit eight boundaries.

Zunaed, who scored 37, was the first victim of Muttiah Muralidaran, who also picked up the wickets of Rokibul Hasan and Mehrab Hossain, both failing to carry on after getting good starts.

Earlier, Sri Lanka resumed the day on 291-4 and rode on Jayawardene's highest score against Bangladesh to take the match away from the home side.

Jayawardene reached his ninth 150-plus knock steering the ball to third man but got a little too cheeky against the left-arm spin of Mehrab Hossain, top-edging a reverse sweep to first slip. His 269-ball stay was laced with 19 fours and six sixes.

Left-arm spinner Shakib took the other wicket when he had Tillakaratne Dilshan caught behind by Mushfiqur Rahim on 47.

Sri Lanka declared shortly afterwards, giving Bangladesh eight overs to negotiate before lunch.

Women cruise

FROM PAGE 16
the women candidates for their performance and expressed hopes that they will be able to play an active role in politics in the days to come.

Other women who have won the Monday's election apart from the two former premiers are AL leaders Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury in Faridpur-2, Matia Chowdhury in Sherpur-2, advocate Shahara Khatun in Dhaka-4, Sanjida Khanam in Dhaka-4, Dr Dipu Moni in Chandpur-3, Nilufar Zafar Ullah in Faridpur-4, Sara Begum Kobori in Narayanganj-4, Meher Afroz Chumki in Gazipur-5, Sagufta Yasmin in Munshiganj-2, Rebeka Momin in Netrakona-4, Begum Monnujan Sufian in Khulna-3, Habibur Nahar in Bagerhat-3, Sultana Tarun in Kushtia-4 and Mahbub Ara Begum Gini in Gaibandha-4, and BNP candidates Rumana Mahmud in Sirajganj-2 and Hasina Ahmed in Cox's Bazar-1.

In the October 2001 parliamentary polls, 41 female candidates contested in 50 constituencies with Hasina and Khaleda in five each. They won in 13 seats with Khaleda in five and Hasina in four. It means, apart from the two top leaders, only four female candidates were able to win in the polls.

In the June 12, 1996 parliamentary election, only five candidates won in 11 seats. Khaleda won in five seats while Hasina in three. Three other fortunate women elected in that election are AL's Matia Chowdhury, BNP's Khurshid Jahan Haque and JP's Rowshan Ershad. In that election 36 female candidates contested in 48 seats.

A total of 46 women candidates took part in the fifth parliamentary polls held in February 1991. Of them, only four came out victorious. BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia won in five seats while AL President Sheikh Hasina, AL leaders Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury and Matia Chowdhury won in one seat each.

"We want to believe that Awami League knows it secured such a landslide victory because most people believed in the party's commitment," said businessman S Chowdhury.

He strongly advocates forming a cabinet with new blood that would help materialise the visions laid out in the AL manifestos.

"It should also be open to the opinions of the opposition before making any major decision," he said, stressing the need for curbing the price of essentials and prioritising the energy sector.

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AL-led alliance

FROM PAGE 1
Commissioner M Sohul Hussain said the gazette will be published tomorrow.

After the new members of parliament are sworn in, the AL-led alliance is to convene a meeting of its parliamentary caucus where the members-elect will elect their leader of the house.

President Iajuddin Ahmed will then invite the winning alliance to a meeting where he will administer the oath of the new government's cabinet members, who are supposed to be designated by them.

It should not take more than 7 to 10 days to handover power," LGRD Adviser to the Caretaker Government Anwarul Iqbal told reporters in Bangladesh Secretariat yesterday.

An official of the parliament secretariat said the new parliament must be in its first session within a month of the publication of the gazette of election results, according to the law.

Asked to comment on the fairness of the election and its results, Anwarul Iqbal said, "A fair and neutral election took place and the people made their choices. This is a good sign."

People want to see

FROM PAGE 1
political reward.

Another early vital indication would be how the AL prevents its party-men from 'capturing' market places, educational institutions, tender processes and other places from where they could make money through extortion and intimidation.

Besides, common expectations from the next government include bringing down the price of essentials, keeping the ports or economic facilities free from politicisation and improvement of the existing power supply.

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Welcoming the people's verdict yesterday, another adviser to the interim government Maj Gen (retd) MA Matin said the voters rejected corruptionists and voted for democracy.

"The people had never made mistakes in taking decisions in the past, and this time around too they did the same," said the home adviser.

Speaking to reporters in his secretariat office, he hoped that the winners will fulfil their election pledges.

Earlier on December 23, Adviser Hossain Zillur Rahman said the caretaker government will have fresh parleys with the two top politicians of the country, Sheikh Hasina and Khaleda Zia, for smooth handover of power.

About the upazila polls scheduled for January 22 during the interim period, Election Commissioner Sohul Hussain said the polls will be held on schedule.

Replying to a question, he said the candidates participating in the upcoming upzila elections will be allowed to start their campaigns on January 1 after publication of official results of the national election in the government gazette.

Hasina wants

FROM PAGE 1
reporters that the AL chief wants cooperation from the opposition parties in efforts to taken-then-forward.

The UN mission chief said they would convey the AL president's message to the opposition.

The visiting polls observers said they hope the ruling and the opposition parties will work together in the interests of the nation.

Imam, also a former cabinet secretary, added that the UN team expressed satisfaction at the free and fair conduct of the general election.

Meanwhile, AL might form government on January 10, the homecoming day of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, said party sources.

It yesterday urged the Election Commission (EC) to take immediate measures to publish gazette of the election results. It also requested extension of the time limit for withdrawal of candidacy in the upzila election set for January 22. Today is the closing date for withdrawing from the local polls.

A wami League Parliamentary Board will meet to elect the leader of parliament soon after its lawmakers-elect take oath," Imam said at a press briefing at Sudha Sadan.

The 11-member parliamentary board is comprised of party chief Sheikh Hasina, General Secretary Abdul Jalil, presidium members Zillur Rahman, Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury, Amir Hossain Amu, Abdur Razzak, Tofail Ahmed and Suranjit Sengupta, acting general secretary Syed Ashraful Islam, Joint General Secretary Obaidul Quader and Dr Alauddin Ahmad.

Hasina will address a press conference today at 11:00am at Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre in the capital.

It will be her first after the election in which the AL-led grand alliance swept to power by a landslide.

Her scheduled meet with journalists at the Jatiya Press Club yesterday was postponed for reasons unexplained.

SONIAGREETS HASINA
President of the Indian National Congress Sonia Gandhi yesterday congratulated Sheikh Hasina on the grand alliance's winning a whopping 262 seats in the ninth parliamentary polls.

In a telephone conversation with the AL chief in the evening, the Congress leader said she hopes the relations between the two countries will grow even stronger in the days to come.

She also wished Hasina good health as well as success in her next role, Mahbusul Haque Shakil, deputy press secretary to AL president, told the reporters.

Hasina, poised to become the leader of the house and prime minister for the second time, thanked the Congress chief for the call.

LAWMAKERS-ELECT MEETHASINA
Hasina spent most of her time yesterday talking to party colleagues and a cross section of people who went to greet her at Sudha Sadan.

Workers Party President Rashed Khan Menon who won from Dhaka-8 constituency, Tanjim Ahmed Sohul, Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal, Meher Afroz Chumki, Rahmat Ali, AKM Rahmatullah and Mukul Bose, among others, exchanged greetings with her.

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Jets pound Hamas

FROM PAGE 16
resumed nearly two months ago, toward the end of a recently expired truce.

Over 363 Palestinians have been killed, most of them members of Hamas security forces but at least 64 of them civilians, according to the United Nations. The toll includes two sisters, aged 4 and 11, who perished in an airstrike on a rocket squad in northern Gaza on Tuesday.

Militants, battered but unbowed, have pressed on with their rocket and mortar assaults, killing three Israeli civilians and a soldier and bringing a widening circle of targets into their sights with an arsenal of longer-range missiles.

"Zionists, wait for more from the resistance," Hamas spokesman Ismail Radwan said in a text message to reporters, referring to militants' armed struggle against Israel.

The military estimated that nearly 10 percent of Israel's population of 7 million people is now within rocket range, shifting the battles closer to Israel's heartland. Of the four Israelis killed since the operation began Saturday, all but one were in areas that had not suffered fatalities before.

Fires blazed across the Gaza Strip's main city, Gaza City, where five government buildings were badly damaged in air attacks Tuesday. Rescue workers said 40 people were injured when warplanes dropped more than a dozen bombs on the government compound. It wasn't clear whether anyone was buried under the debris.

The campaign began Saturday when the air force hammered security facilities, then broadened to weapons-making and storage facilities, the homes of militant field operatives and government buildings that are the symbols of Hamas' power.

The initial wave of airstrikes took Gaza by surprise, targeting militants and Hamas security forces at key installations, often located in the midst of tiny Gaza's densely populated towns and cities.

But the government buildings targeted later were empty, as Gazans became fearful of venturing out into the streets. For Ziad Koraz, whose nearby home was damaged in the attack on the government compound Tuesday, that violence gratuitously put Gaza civilians at risk.

"More than 17 missiles were directed at an empty government compound, without regard for civilians who lived nearby," Koraz said. "We are people who live in peace and want to live in

peace. If someone committed a crime, they should go after him, not after an entire nation."

The offensive began eight days after a six-month truce between Israel and the militants expired amid a barrage of Palestinian rocket fire. The offensive comes on top of an Israeli blockade of Gaza that has largely kept all but essential goods from entering the coastal territory since Hamas violently seized control June 2007.

Israel agreed to allow 100 trucks of humanitarian aid into Gaza on Tuesday, as well as five ambulances from Turkey, defense officials said. A Jordanian diplomat said 21 Jordanian army doctors and four field hospitals would be allowed to enter on Wednesday, though Israeli officials could not immediately confirm that.

Israel's navy on Tuesday turned back a boat of pro-Palestinian protesters who had hoped to enter Gaza to demonstrate against the Israeli blockade.

So far, warplanes and unmanned drones have dominated Israel's military operation. But the military has moved up thousands of infantry soldiers, dozens of tanks and artillery pieces. With the air force knocking off target after target, the big question looming over the operation is whether it will expand to include ground forces. The border area was declared a closed military zone on Monday, drawing a thick fog over operations in the area.

Olmert spokesman Mark Regev wouldn't comment on the prospects for a ground operation but said Israel would "continue keeping the pressure up on the Hamas military machine."

"This operation will continue until a new security reality can be created in the south, and those hundreds of thousands of Israelis who live in fear of Hamas rockets no longer have to live in that fear," Regev said.

Short of reoccupying Gaza, however, it was unlikely any amount of Israeli firepower could permanently stop rocket attacks. Past operations all failed to do so.

The militants have fired even while under the barrage of Israeli bombs and missiles, demonstrating with deadly effect the widening threat that is making larger cities farther inside Israel vulnerable. On Monday, a missile crashed into a bus stop in Ashdod, 37 kilometres from Gaza and only 40 kilometres from Israel's heartland in Tel Aviv.

The city of 200,000 is the largest in southern Israel.

Soul-searching

FROM PAGE 16
interrupted by it, and was still going on at the time filing this report at 10:30pm.

Party standing committee members Saifur Rahman, Chowdhury Tanbir Ahmed Siddiqui, Dr R A Ghani, Dr Khandaker Mosharruf Hossain, M Shamsul Islam, and Secretary General Khandaker Delwar Hossain were also in the meeting.

The party office yesterday was rather quiet with only a few leaders and activists milling around there wearing despondent looks.

Party insiders said although misrule and corruption of BNP-led four-party alliance government had an impact on the poll results, it was the inclusion of war criminals in the alliance that worked as the most detrimental factor.

"Voters could not accept our alliance with anti-liberation Jamaat," said a senior leader of BNP, adding that BNP developed deep ties with Jamaat and other radical Islamist parties, which discouraged voters, especially the young generation of first-time voters, to vote for four-party alliance.

He said the campaign against Jamaat and war criminals ahead of the election also affected the outcome of the election.

Jamaat, which won only two seats, is also assessing its near ouster from the parliament.

Trial in people's court

FROM PAGE 16
returning home from work. They have not forgotten the premeditated murder of Shah A.M.S. Kibria, Ahsanullah Master, a number of university teachers and journalists and especially the monstrous grenade attack on an Awami League meeting on 21 August in 2004 that killed 23 people. They have not forgotten also that the government had shown all signs of reluctance to try the known culprits in a court of justice.

The result is a reflection of people's umbrage at naked corruption that was allowed to flourish in every department of administration during the 4-party alliance rule and the remorseless denial of the rulers till the election day. The election pledges of the 4-party alliance this time sounded hollow and the people, the ultimate deciders, rejected it with contempt.

The victory therefore

belongs more to the people than to any political party or alliance. The immediate factors that contributed to helping people take the decision include (i) lack of remorse and direction in the utterances of the candidates of the 4-party alliance; (ii) over-enthusiasm of the leaders and activists of religion-based parties to sell Islam to entice (intimidate) voters; (iii) rejection of war criminals by the young voters; (iv) women voters trusting AL more; and lastly (v) TV talk show specialists trying their best with clever semantics to cover up for the misdeeds of the 4-party alliance.

THE LAST WORD
Only time will tell how judiciously elected politicians who will form the next government will work for the overall development of the country. If they fail, people will exercise their rights once again.

Public once again

FROM PAGE 16
The arrogance of the last four-party alliance government translated into an attitude of zero accountability for its actions and zero respect for public opinion.

This was not all. While violence has always been a regrettable feature of Bangladesh politics, it rose to unprecedented levels under BNP-led rule, and the climate of fear incultured during their reign of terror over the country undoubtedly contributed to the alliance's unpopularity.

From assassinations of major opposition figures, including one attack aimed at wiping out the entire opposition leadership, that occurred and went uninvestigated on the alliance's watch, to the fire-bombing of factories and burning down of houses of political opponents, to attacking peaceful opposition rallies and processions, to petty extortion, toll collection, land grabbing - the voters could be forgiven for thinking that they were being ruled by a mafia outfit rather than a democratically elected government.

The fear was that the two years of caretaker government rule would have dimmed public memory of their misdeeds or indeed that the electorate would now