

Different polls

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be deprived of their voting rights as candidates in those seats have already been elected uncontested because there are no other contenders.

They are all AL leaders, including Muhiuddin Khan Alamgir, Dipu Moni, Mrinal Kanti Das, Sheikh Helal Uddin, Abu Syed Al-Mahmud Swapan and Omar Faruk Chowdhury, according to the Election Commission.

The number would significantly rise if the Jatiya Party candidates pull out of the race in line with the party chief HM Ershad's decision.

Grassroots and mid-ranking leaders apart, many top leaders and even some candidates themselves shared their security concern with this correspondent. Several contenders were attacked allegedly by BNP-Jamaat cadres on their way to file nominations.

But top leaders would not make their fear public, thinking it would dampen the spirit of the party men. They said party chief Sheikh Hasina was aware of the reality, but she was still maintaining a bold face to keep the grassroots' morale high.

Shahin Chakladar, general secretary of the party's Jessore district unit, said voting could take place as the government had decided to hold the polls. "But due to the BNP-led 18-party's violence, voters are panicked and this will mean a low voter turnout."

A presidium member of the party agrees that the scenario is not ideal for holding polls and he apprehends attack by the opposition men.

"But there is no option but to hold the election as it is a constitutional obligation," he said, requesting anonymity.

Last week, the opposition men attacked the house of Gazipur district AL president and lawmaker AKM Mozammel Haque. Tanvir Imam, AL candidate from Sirajganj-4, came under attack by the BNP men at Ullapara upazila. In Chapainawabganj, blockaders set fire to the house of Kansat movement leader Golam Rabbani, who got nomination from the AL.

AL General Secretary Syed Ashraful Islam's motorcade came under attack at Tongi in Gazipur on his way to Kishoreganj.

"When criminals are out in the field, everyone is unsafe," said Momtaz Uddin, Bogra district unit AL president, referring to the ongoing street violence by the opposition men.

He expressed his concern about the voters and the party candidates.

According to Ahmad Hossain, acting president of Cox's Bazar AL, the polls would be more festive if all political parties participated in it. "We might have to face attack [during the campaign]."

But there are optimists too. Sheikh Nurul Islam, AL candidate for Satkhira-1, and Golam Mostofa Biswas, AL contender from Chapainawabganj-2, said turnout would vary from one constituency to another.

Both of them expected good voting environment and satisfactory turnouts in their seats.

However, they feared the same might not happen in all the constituencies.



Traders use trains to bring in sacks of onions to Dhaka from Chapainawabganj spending as much as Tk 500 in transport cost per sack. They had to use the expensive trains as they could not use trucks due to the string of long blockades and hartals.

Mugger killed in 'shootout'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

An alleged mugger was killed in a "shootout" between his cohorts and members of Rapid Action Battalion in the capital's Boro Moghbazar early yesterday.

The deceased was identified as Mohammad Shafique, 38. The law enforcers claimed that they had arrested three of his accomplices.

Papia Islam, wife of Shafique, however, said her husband was a cloth trader and she had no information about his involvement in mugging.

Major Md Sadiqur Rahman, company commander of Rab-3, said, "The shootout occurred around 2:00am when Rab personnel challenged a gang of muggers who were preparing to commit a crime."

"Rab members shot back when the criminals started shooting at the law enforcers," he said.

At one stage, the gang tried to flee in a car but the car hit an electric pole at Moghbazar, police claimed.

The criminals took injured Shafique to a hospital on Panthapath, where doctors declared him dead, said Nazmul Ahsan, sub-inspector of Ramda Police Station.

"On information, law enforcers from Sher-e-Bangla Nagar Police Station arrested three members of the gang from the hospital," he

Day's freedom for people ends

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Sadeque Hossain Khoka.

In a desperate attempt to make up for the disturbances caused by the blockade last week, many schools, colleges and universities remained open on the weekend for holding pending exams and classes while commercial banks kept their branches open to cater to the needs of customers, as directed by Bangladesh Bank.

And with only 35 hours interval between the two spells of blockade, city dwellers scrambled to finish their emergencies creating unusual traffic congestions at different parts of the city.

"It took me over forty minutes to get from Dhanmondi Road 1 to Road 28," said Razia while dropping her third-grader son to a school in the area.

The flow of passengers at bus, train and launch terminals in the capital was unusually higher than any other Friday in recent times as people, who were stranded in the city for six days last week, were frantically trying to reach their destinations before the beginning of the latest spell of blockade.

Many people were seen returning to the capital as well after having been stranded in

different places of the country due to the last week's blockade.

"I went to Kishoreganj to bring my family to Dhaka but got stuck there for six days due to the blockade," said rickshaw-puller Rahmat Ali while talking to this correspondent at Kamalapur Railway Station after boarding off a train yesterday morning.

Though banks in the capital saw a relatively low turnout of customers at some branches, they could refill the ATM booths which were left empty during the six-day blockade last week due to what they say-security concerns.

A large number of traders, who rely on the wholesale markets of the capital for their supplies, were found purchasing goods in different markets of the city.

"Though I tried a few times, I could not come to Shyambazar to purchase turmeric due to the blockade," said Anowar Hossain, a small trader from Gazipur.

65-KM TAILBACK ON DHAKA-CTG HIGHWAY

A 65 kilometre tailback was created on Dhaka-Chittagong highway after a Chittagong bound goods-laden truck broke down on the highway at Harikhola in

Chandina upazila of Comilla at 3:00am.

Although highway police removed the truck around 10:30am, the tailback continued for the whole day causing untold sufferings to a few thousand passengers. There was a 45km congestion on the highway till 8:30pm.

A number of trucks loaded with export items were reportedly stranded in the tailback which became a major headache of the exporters.

"We are already under immense pressure to transport seven days' export items to the port city in one day and now we are worried whether the stranded vehicles would make it there before the blockade begins," said Abdus Salam Mursheedy, president of Exporters Association of Bangladesh.

Main Uddin Khandaker, additional secretary (security) of the home ministry, told The Daily Star that they had already assured the business leaders of providing security for their vehicles plying on Dhaka-Chittagong highway, if needed.

Meanwhile, more than 250 vehicles, mostly goods-laden trucks, were waiting at Mawa-Kaorakandi Ghat to be ferried across, reports our Munshiganj correspondent.

Parents' choice

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childhood, according to a study.

A survey of 500 parents of children aged four to 10 revealed the shows much loved among parents.

Horrible Histories and Mickey Mouse Club House were also hailed as the top TV shows that parents secretly love.

The survey by internet content provider Viral Spiral revealed that the US cartoon series Scooby Doo was named the favourite cartoon among 23 percent of parents, followed by Peppa Pig and Postman Pat, both on 22 percent.

The next favourites were Tom and Jerry (21 percent), Fireman Sam (20 percent), Sponge Bob Square Pants (17 percent) and Art Attack (14 percent).

Other children's shows that parents secretly love include Thomas the Tank Engine, Mickey Mouse Club House and Bob the Builder.

Damian Collier, head of Viral Spiral said: "Our survey has revealed that parents secretly love many of the shows that their children watch."

"Parents even admitted that they often change the channel to watch their favourite cartoons and kids shows. Creating TV shows and content for young children is as much about meeting parents' desires for nostalgia and fun as it is about entertaining children."

One in three parents said sentimental recollection played a big part in their enjoyment of current children's shows because they remembered watching them as a child.

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quoting Cabinet Secretary M Musharraf Hossain Bhuiyan.

Meanwhile, President Abdul Hamid, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia, Speaker Shirin Sharmin Choudhury, Deputy Speaker Shawkat Ali and Foreign Minister Abul Hasan Mahmud Ali expressed their profound shock at the death of South Africa's first black president.

In a message of condolence, President Hamid said, "On behalf of the people of Bangladesh, I extend my condolence to Nelson Mandela's family and to the people of South Africa."

Hasina, in her message, said the example of this great leader will guide all those who fight for social justice and peace in the world.

She prayed for salvation of the departed soul of the great leader and conveyed deep sympathy to the bereaved family, reports UNB.

In a condolence message to Jacob Zuma, the president of South Africa, Khaleda said, the world has lost a great statesman, an icon who chose reconciliation over revenge and a global symbol of triumph over adversity.

The Speaker and the deputy speaker in their separate condolence messages said Mandela will be remembered forever for his long struggle for the liberation of the people.

They prayed for eternal peace of the departed soul, reports BSS.

Foreign Minister Ali, in his condolence message, said, "At his [Mandela] demise, the world has lost a great inspirational leadership the legacy of which has influenced many and will continue to do so in the years to come."

Last statesman of our times

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or hold on to it till the masses or circumstances forced him out.

The trajectory of Mandela's life traces the long tale of his initiation into revolutionary fervour followed by his gradual but sure coming to terms with the idealism that was, and is, non-violence in the struggle for social justice and political freedom. He was a prince among men, and literally too with his background in the patrician African tradition. As part of a rich heritage, Mandela could easily have led a charmed life of pomp and power as chief of his tribe, could have grown old gracefully and died in tranquil repose. He turned away from the thought of being the Big Man of his tribe. But he did age gracefully, in prison and then outside it. In death, he informs the world that reputations are best served if they have a dash of humility coming into them.

There was a steely aspect to Nelson Mandela's humility. He did not harangue. Nor was he inclined to the confrontational, in that violent sense of the meaning. Therein was he different from the emotional Patrice Lumumba of the Congo or the cantankerous Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe. It was the years in prison, twenty seven of them in all, that went into a mellowing of the man, not in his core beliefs, for those beliefs only reinforced themselves with the passage of time, but in his conviction that violence in the end was self-defeating, that the enemy could be engaged and

shamed through repudiating, through recourse to silent contempt, the very methods of abuse it loved to employ in suppressing truth and justice. That was how Mandela defeated the Bothas and the Vorsters of apartheid-laden South Africa.

Men like Mandela have that certain capacity to grow even as they go through the searing pain of prison and all-too-certain death. At Rivonia, death by hanging or shooting and presided over by a racist apartheid regime looked Mandela squarely in the eye. He did not flinch. And his fellow African National Congress colleagues, all in incarceration with him, knew that peaceful resistance to the regime was the best way of defusing a condition so long entrenched in South African life. The resistance, of course, was long and tortuous. On Robben Island, Mandela and his fellow prisoners slaved away in heat and cold, breaking stones for a regime that thought it could break them into submission to the hollowness of power. In the end, years after Sharpeville and Rivonia and Soweto, the advocates of apartheid crumbled.

An ageing but spirited Mandela emerged into sunshine and liberty in February 1990, ready to change his country and transform the world. It was a rainbow coalition he wove into the South African consciousness, through warning his fellow blacks against the arrogance of new-found power, through reassuring whites that despite their long racial

hubris they were free to stay on and help build a new future for the country, through letting the rest of the world know that black liberation in South Africa was necessarily a liberation of the soul of man everywhere.

Nelson Mandela's greatness lay in a conscious rejection of bitterness in his soul. He would not be a leader looking for scapegoats to blame for his country's ailments or for the loss of his youth in the darkness of prison. His feet firmly planted on earth, he went looking for increasingly wider pieces of sky he needed to claim for his people --- black, white, coloured. He knew he embodied the new South Africa. He knew too that his triumph was as much his glory as it was the grandeur of a nation which had believed in him, which knew he was out there as its voice in the councils of the world.

In Mandela, philosophy was all. It was philosophy he shaped in his own manner, through his readings of Gandhi, Martin Luther King and others. His first reading of Chinese communism came from Edgar Snow's Red Star Over China. He knew Clausewitz, was well-versed in the works of Mao Zedong and was impressed by Menachem Begin's The Revolt. In prison, he educated himself on a perfection of politics. Keenly aware that dealing with the enemy often called for a dip into the enemy's culture, Mandela learned Afrikaans in prison. Morality was part of his life. Turning one's back on friends in

times of need was for him a grave outrage, which is why he remained grateful to Libya's Muammar Gaddafi for the latter's support for the ANC in the years of the anti-apartheid struggle.

Mandela was larger than life. And yet life, for him, could not be a prisoner of unnatural desire and inordinate ambition. The proof of this principle came through the single term of a presidency he was not willing to extend into a second. That showed his mettle as a leader. That was also the moment when the statesman in him rose to newer, greater heights.

On the day he was sworn in as South Africa's first democratically elected president in May 1994, Nelson Mandela spoke to the whole world of his faith in the ability of the individual to preserve and protect his self-esteem:

"Out of the experience of an extraordinary human disaster that lasted too long, must be born a society of which all humanity will be proud. . . We, who were outlaws not so long ago, have today been given the rare privilege to be host to the nations of the world on our own soil. We thank all our distinguished international guests for having come to take possession with the people of our country of what is, after all, a common victory for justice, for peace, for human dignity."

(Nelson Mandela --- long-term prisoner of apartheid, African nationalist leader, Nobel laureate and global statesman --- was born on 18 July 1918 and died on 6 December 2013)

Two more die

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Mehedi had dropped off goods and was returning home with the truck, she added.

"A couple of picketers hailed his truck. He stopped not knowing it would cost him his life. They attacked his vehicle with sticks and broke its glass. As he tried to pull away, they hurled a petrol bomb at him," said the mother.

His wife Kohinoor, 21, became unconscious unable to deal with his death. Mehedi left behind two daughters -- one is five years old and the other, one and a half years.

"Mehedi's respiratory tract had been burnt. It caused him enormous pain every time he breathed. But for the last 24 hours before his death he was even incapable of taking short breaths, and kept gasping for air," his brother-in-law Abdur Razzak told The Daily Star.

Meanwhile, Shueb Ahmed, 25, a CNG-run auto-rickshaw driver, who had suffered a fatal road accident while being chased by picketers in Sylhet, died of his injuries at Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical College Hospital around 7:30am yesterday.

Our Sylhet correspondent quoting Mahbubur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Moglabazar Police Station, said on Thursday, a group of picketers chased Shueb while he was driving his vehicle on the Dhaka-Sylhet highway in Fenchuganj.

Shueb sustained serious injuries as his three-wheeler overturned and hit a roadside structure.

Around 2,000 locals put up barricades on Chandipul-Jalalpur road for around two hours yesterday, demanding immediate arrest of the people responsible for Shueb's death.

It was cleared at 3:00pm as local police officials assured them of taking steps in this regard.

Meanwhile, Jahanara Begum, 50, got burnt when criminals hurled a petrol bomb at the Easybike she was a passenger of at Shyampur in the capital last night.

The battery-run three-wheeler flipped following the attack and most of the passengers got out in time but her sari had caught fire, the victim told The Daily Star at DMCH.

DMCH sources said 27 percent of her body was burnt.

Officer-in-Charge Mazharul Islam of Kadamtoli Police Station told The Daily Star the woman was injured in the petrol bomb attack but they have not been able to arrest the perpetrators.

A DMCH autopsy report yesterday revealed that Hasan, the seventeen year old bus helper who suffered burn injuries when blockaders set fire inside his bus at Jatrabari on Thursday, died mainly because he was unable to bear the excruciating pain anymore.

"Over 90 percent of his body was burnt, and the pain in every bit of his skin was terrible. His body went into shock to relieve him of the pain," Soheli Mahmud, assistant professor of the forensic department, said.

The boy's mother, a resident of Chittagong, had started for the capital shortly after her son was set ablaze. But her hope to see him alive shattered as she could not reach the hospital before his death.

"When I saw the body, there was hardly any way to recognise him as my son. The fire had completely blackened my fair skinned boy. I recognised him from the only body part -- his toes -- which was not burnt," Hasina Begum, 35, told The Daily Star.

Hasina could not take her son back home, fearing she could get caught up in the blockade scheduled to start at 6:00am today.

"I started right before the blockade ended and it took me around 12 hours to reach here because of long tailbacks on the road. With Friday being the only day left free from blockade, there may be more traffic jams," said a sobbing Hasina.

"His body has already started to smell. He might not be able to take the journey to Chittagong," she added.

Hasina chose to bury her son at Azimpur Graveyard in the capital, far away from his home.

Talk, end crisis

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Sultana Kamal, former adviser to a caretaker government, along with other eminent citizens took part in a "citizen sit-in" programme organised by Bangladesh Rukhe Darao, a platform for civil society members, at the Central Shaheed Minar yesterday.

Sultana, however, said there is no compromise with those who are against secularism, which was the spirit of the Liberation War.

The former adviser also suggested the political leaders learn from the philosophy of Nelson Mandela who was always against revengeful politics.

Prof Emeritus Dr Anisuzzaman said the ongoing violence could not be considered political activity in any way, rather these activities are criminal. "We want all kinds of violence to end."

Poet and writer Syed Shamsul Haq said those who are sponsoring violence will not be spared.

He also urged the people to counter the evil force.

Journalist Abed Khan said a group of people who had opposed the country's liberation are now trying to show their muscle power.

The organisation will bring out a procession on December 14 from the same venue, demanding speedy trial of war criminals and a ban of Jamaat-Shibir politics, Dr Sarwar Ali, convener of the platform, announced.

Among others, Prof MM Akash was present at the programme.

In another programme yesterday, Sultana Kamal alleged that BNP and Jamaat were instigating violence against the people through their violent activities.

"We do not support the BNP-Jamaat's undemocratic activities as these are killing people, and destroying their properties in the name of anti-government movement," she said.

Violence can only create more violence, and this is against the interests of people. Considerate people must protest against any undemocratic movement, Sultana Kamal, also a rights activist, added.

She made these remarks at a protest rally against violence by BNP-led 18-party alliance organised by Samprodaikota-Jongibad Birodhi Mancha, a platform against communalism and militancy, in the capital.