



The army personnel who arrived in Barisal yesterday evening as part of winter exercise.

PHOTO: STAR

Up to 12 days?

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December 26. The army will return to barracks one or two days after the polling day.

Meanwhile, army personnel reached several district towns yesterday as part of their winter exercises.

An army contingent camped at the district stadium yesterday, reports our Satkhira correspondent.

The army has come here for winter exercises, Satkhira deputy commissioner Anwar Hossain Hawlader told newsmen.

Troops arrived in Laxmipur town yesterday afternoon and camped at Mandari Bazar area under Sadar upazila. An officer of the army team said they went there for winter exercises.

Asked, CEC Rakibuddin said winter exercises of armed forces members have already started. That is why the army were out in many places. But it does not have any relation with their election duties.

The principal staff officer of the Armed Forces Division, top level officials of security and intelligence agencies and returning offi-

cers from across the country will attend the meeting at the EC secretariat today, which will be chaired by the CEC.

The EC has also drawn up a five-day security plan for the polling centres which too will be finalised at the meeting at the National Economic Council (NEC) auditorium at 3:00pm today.

In the last parliamentary polls in 2008, the EC took special security measures for three days for polling centres in the plains, four days for hilly and remote areas and the army was deployed for 12 days.

According to the security plans for the 10th parliamentary election, Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB), Coast Guard, Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) and Armed Police Battalion (APBn) personnel will jointly act as mobile and striking forces.

Besides, Rab and armed police will be deployed from January 1 to 7 across the country as part of special security measures.

Teams comprised of 17 members from the police, Ansar and Village Defence Party

(VDP) will be deployed in "general" polling centres and 18-strong teams in "important" centres in the metropolitan areas.

At centres outside the metropolitan areas, a 15-member team of law enforcers will be deployed at each 'general' and 16 'important' polling centre.

As for the hilly and remote areas, a 17-member team will be deployed in each 'general' polling centre whereas a 19-strong team will work in each 'important' centre.

The commission will also ask the Armed Forces Division to keep some helicopters ready during the polls so that election officials can use them in case of emergencies.

Besides, a law and order coordination cell and an election monitoring cell will be set up at the EC secretariat and at the returning officers' offices from January 1 to coordinate and monitor the activities of law enforcement agencies.

Elections will be held in 146 constituencies out of 300 on January 5 as a total of 154 candidates are set to be elected uncontested.

Sporadic violence marks third day of blockade

STAR REPORT

Sporadic incidents of violence marked the last day of the 72-hour blockade yesterday as opposition men clashed with law enforcers, exploded crude bombs and carried out arson and vandalism across the country.

Meanwhile, at least 68 opposition leaders and activists were arrested by the joint forces during raids in Bogra, Meherpur and Feni districts.

In Satkhira, an assistant superintendent of police and officer-in-charge of Sadar Police Station sustained injuries when Jamaat-Shibir activists locked in a clash with the joint forces at Raichpur around 9:30 am.

The clash erupted as the activists attacked the law enforcers when they were trying to remove logs from Alipur-Raichpur road, reports our district correspondent quoting OC Inamul Haque.

As the activists hurled handmade bombs and petrol bombs targeting the law enforcers, they opened fire on the activists in self-defence that left a Jamaat man injured, said the OC.

The joint forces have arrested five Jamaat-Shibir men from the spot, he added.

In Jhenaidah, BNP and Jamaat-Shibir activists set fire to an Awami League office at Kotchandpur upazila around 1:00 pm, reports our district correspondent quoting police.

In Sitakunda of Chittagong, blockaders set fire to three trucks and three covered vans on Dhaka-Chittagong highway at Salimpur around 11:30 pm on Wednesday.

In Jamalpur, the opposition men vandalised five vehicles in Gatepar, Kompapur and Beltia areas between 9:00 am and 12:00 noon yesterday.

However, Awami League activists from an anti-blockade procession hurled brickbats at a branch office of Shahjalal Islami Bank. The incident happened at Jam-e-Masjid Road in the town.

In Sirajganj, blockaders set fire to two trucks and vandalised three others in Konabari area of the district.

In Natore, BNP men set fire to two battery-run auto-rickshaws while they were plying the roads in Hafrasta and Alaipur areas yesterday.

Road communications between Gaibandha Sadar upazila and Sunderganj

and Shovaganj upazilas remained snapped for the third day as pro-blockade pickets dug up the Sunderganj-Shovaganj road at different places at Jhenia.

The opposition men also dug up roads connecting 15 unions in Gaibandha to snap road communications.

Meanwhile, Gonojagoron Mancha, Gaibandha unit formed a human chain at DB road in the town, demanding a ban on the politics of Jamaat-Shibir and severing of diplomatic ties with Pakistan.

In Mymensingh, ruling Awami League men last evening torched over 10 shops and damaged some houses of BNP men at Tejpatha market area under Gafargaon upazila as some opposition activists tried to block a road by felling trees.

Sardar Moazzam Khorram, convener of Jubo Dal Gafargaon unit, said around 200 AL activists set fire to the shops and vandalised some nearby houses around 6:00pm.

"Chhatra League and Jubo League activists carried out the attack. Around 25 BNP men were injured in the attack," he complained.

Abdul Hamid Mansur, member of Jubo League district unit, said locals along with some AL men launched the attack as the blockaders were causing suffering to people by felling trees on roads.

The opposition combine enforced the blockade of roads, rail and waterways demanding cancellation of parliamentary polls schedule and election under a non-party polls-time government.

FOUR INJURED IN CITY

Four pedestrians were injured in three incidents of crude bomb explosions in the capital yesterday.

Tailors Md Sohag, 26, and Azim Biswas, 30, suffered injuries in their legs from splinters when cocktails were blasted in Bangshal of Old Dhaka.

According to the victims, a handmade bomb exploded on Abul Hasnat Road when they were crossing the area around 10:00am.

Private employee Shahnaz Qadir, 36, was wounded when a cocktail went off in a front of New Market around 7:45pm, while Nargis Parvin, a student of Begum Badrunnesa Govt Girls' College, was injured in front of Teachers Student Center at Dhaka University.

The four injured were receiving treatment at Dhaka Medical College and Hospital.

Free treatment

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more than Tk 1 lakh. Now we are in a big debt for nothing," lamented Shamsunnahar.

Their eighth grader daughter might be forced to give up her studies as the family was unable to get her admitted to ninth grade.

"She got an A minus in her Junior Secondary Certificate examination. I could not study much because my father could not afford it. But we were hopeful we could get my three younger sisters educated," sobbed Prima, the eldest daughter of the family.

Khorshed is diabetic. Doctors say he would need at least four months to recover.

"He was burned on December 5. It has barely been a month and I have already borrowed a lot of money. I do not know how I will run the family next month," said Shamsunnahar.

The situation is more or less same for most of the families of the arson victims, who earn their wages on a daily basis.

Kamal, who was burned in Laxmibazar, has no-one to run his tailoring shop and had to leave it shut down.

"Three of my employees have quit because they were not sure if I would return or not," he told The Daily Star.

His wife Polly had not yet paid the rent of their tiny one-room house where the couple lives with two children.

"Whoever is responsible for burning me must give me compensation," pleaded Kamal.

Ten-year-old arson victim Shimul's father ran to this correspondent during the conversation with Kamal yesterday.

"Are you here to help Kamal get any compensation? I want compensation for my son too. I am a rickshaw-puller who has been

grounded at this Burn Unit for more than a month. Doctors have said I need to stay more. My family is living completely on debt," he said.

Both Shimul and Kamal were burned on November 10. The prime minister paid a visit to the Burn Unit on November 30 and directed the authorities to introduce free medication for the arson victims.

Until then, most of the patients' families had to spend a lot for medicines.

Arson victim Munia's family had spent more than Tk 37,000 before they started getting free medicine.

Eight-year-old arson victim Sumi's mother also sees no bright future ahead. "I have got some help initially, but my daughter needs to take medicines for at least three years. I hope her fisherman father will be able to afford it," she added.

INJURED IN JAMAAT ATTACK

Jubo League man dies after 9 days

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A Jubo League activist lost his battle for life at a hospital in Chittagong city yesterday, nine days after he was critically injured in a Jamaat-Shibir attack in the district's Satkania upazila.

Abdul Jabbar, 25, a member of the upazila's Janar Keuchia union unit Jubo League, died in Holy Crescent Hospital's intensive care unit (ICU) around 11:00am, said Abdul Mannan, the victim's eldest brother.

Activists of Jamaat-e-Islami and Islami Chhatra Shibir, the student wing of Jamaat, went on the rampage in different areas of Satkania upazila at night on December 10 when the news broke that Jamaat leader Quader Mollah would be executed on that night, he said.

Jamaat-Shibir men indiscriminately hacked Jabbar and ransacked his house at Madarbari village in the upazila as Jabbar was involved with Jubo League, the youth body of the ruling Awami League, said Mannan, who managed to escape from the house during the attack.

Mannan rushed to the nearby on-duty police team in Keranirhat area and informed them about the attack, but the police did not pay any heed to him, he alleged.

Jabbar was admitted to Chittagong Medical College Hospital, and later he was shifted to the private hospital on Wednesday as his condition deteriorated, Mannan added.

Dr Hasan Khayer, on-duty doctor of ICU of the private hospital, said Jabbar sustained severe head injuries and his brain had swollen. He was kept on life support.

AKM Hafiz Akhter, superintendent of Chittagong police, said police could not go to the village due to problems in different areas, especially on the highways, of the upazila on that night.

He, however, said police will take action against those involved in the attack.

Satkhira union

FROM PAGE 1

Journalists stay away from Agardari, considering it too dangerous. To get access, this Daily Star reporter on Wednesday afternoon had to pretend to be a friend of a local journalist who was on good terms with an Agardari Jamaat leader.

The 8km ride on a rented motorbike to the union revealed what kind of difficulties the law enforcers had been facing. It was a trail of destruction from Kadomtola on the outskirts of the district town to the union. Jamaat and pro-Jamaat Islami Chhatra Shibir men had dug up the road in at least eight places and a large number of the roadside trees had been reduced to stumps. The air still had the smell of burnt tyres and logs.

The road was almost free of traffic. Just a few rickshaw vans, bicycles and motorcycles were on it. Yet one could not ignore the eerie feeling that people on the road were staring and trying to figure out who the two people were on the motorbike.

Around 4:30pm, the motorbike pulled over at the gate of Agardari Kamil Madrasa, even though the journalists were not supposed to meet the Jamaat leader there.

A teenaged boy in a long panjabi and lungi appeared and asked the local journalists who they were.

"I am a journalist ... I came here with my friend to meet a teacher of the madrasa," said the local journalist. But the boy interrupted him as soon as he had said, "I am a journalist".

"Are you from Prothom Alo [the leading Bangla daily]?" he said.

The local journalist then gave a copy of his paper which the boy and a few other people there began to scrutinise.

Sensing things could get out of hand, the two journalists left on the motorbike.

The madrasa had been used as the hideout of Jamaat leaders on the run as the law enforcers had difficulties reaching it since the war criminal Jamaat leader Delwar Hossain Sayedee was sentenced to death way back in February.

Lt Col Enamul Arif Sumon, commanding