



**VOTING SUSPENDED 539** centres | **ZERO VOTER 41** centres | **SEATS UNCONTESTED 153** | **VOTERS NOT REQUIRED 4.8** crore  
Out of 9.19 crore

AL CLINCHES TWO-THIRDS MAJORITY IN VIRTUALLY ONE-PARTY ELECTION

## Turnout low in deadliest polls

STAR REPORT

It was the bloodiest election in Bangladesh.

Intense localised violence leading to at least 18 deaths, very low voter turnout and high tension sum up the 10th general election held yesterday.

Enthusiasm among voters was little, as the outcome of the polls had already been known weeks before.

In a one-sided election boycotted by the BNP and without any opponents of note, the ruling Awami League has already sealed a two-thirds majority by securing at least 74 seats in the 147 constituencies that went to the polls yesterday.

The Jatiya Party won 12 seats, the Workers Party three, the Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal two and independent candidates seven,

according to early results. The fate of the remaining 49 seats was yet to be known.

Candidates in 153 of the total 300 parliamentary seats have already been elected unopposed.

The AL is now free to form a new government any time. Indications are there it would form the government at the earliest by dissolving the current parliament whose tenure expires on January 24.

But the hope for a return of peace is bleak, as the BNP has announced another spell of hartal from today. The country has already witnessed 26 days of shutdown in December alone.

And immediately after the election was over, Jamaat men swooped on the Hindus in

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1



Opposition activists attack two men, who "dared" to go to a polling station to cast votes, with sticks and sharp weapons in Monigram Tulsipur area of Rajshahi yesterday.

PHOTO: FOCUS BANGLA

### Terror on Hindus

BNP-Jamaat men vandalise 130 houses, burn another 10 in Abhaynagar

STAR REPORT

A couple of hours after yesterday's voting ended, BNP-Jamaat men unleashed terror on a Hindu village in Abhaynagar upazila of Jessore.

They vandalised 130 houses of the minority community and torched 10 more in Malopara village because the villagers had cast their votes.

About 600 Hindus of the village swam across the Bhairab River and took shelter in Diyapara village under Sridhar union to save their lives.

SEE PAGE 13 COL 4

### Not a vote in 41 centres

STAR REPORT

Not a single vote was cast in at least 41 polling centres of 11 districts yesterday, a phenomenon the nation has never before witnessed.

Of the polling centres, 27 were alone in Lalmonirhat, while four in Jhenidah, two in Satkhira, and one each in, Feni, Sylhet, Cox's Bazar, Chuadanga, Dinajpur, Naogaon, Rajshahi and Sirajganj. All the centres were set up in BNP-Jamaat dominated areas.

Of the 27 centres in Lalmonirhat-3 constituency, seven were in Borobari union of sadar upazila, six each in Panchagram, Kulaghat and Mahendranagar unions, and two in Harati union.

"Nobody in my village cast his or her vote," said Abdus Sattar, 58, a farmer of Barabari village under the constituency, reasoning that their favourite from the BNP had boycotted the polls.

However, some Awami League men of Sindurmoti village in Panchagram union alleged that the AL candidate there had many voters but they could not come to the polling centres as BNP men were on guard.

As the village is BNP dominated, voters did not dare to cast their votes by dodging the eyes of the BNP men, said the AL men.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 1

## 18 killed, 300 hurt

Jamaat spearheads opposition's attack in 29 districts; voting in 539 centres suspended

STAR REPORT

Spearheaded by Jamaat, opposition men yesterday unleashed fierce violence in 29 districts to foil the election, leaving at least 18 people dead and more than 300 injured.

The marauding Jamaat-Shibir and BNP activists clashed with law enforcers and ruling party men, attacked election officials and went on a rampage in more than 350 polling stations across the country.

They torched and snatched ballots from many of these centres during the vote boycotted by the BNP-led 18-party alliance.

Voting was suspended in 539 polling centres in the wake of violence, according to the Election Commission.

Of the dead, three each were reported from Thakurgaon and Dinajpur, two each from Rangpur, Nilphamari and Feni while one each from Munshiganj, Laxmipur, Naogaon, Chittagong, Jessore and Gaibandha.

Meanwhile, Swetchhasebak Dal mem-

ber Faruk Hossain succumbed to his injuries at Rangpur Medical College Hospital yesterday afternoon, a day after Awami League activists stabbed him during a clash at Patgram in Lalmonirhat.

In Dinajpur, Jamaat-Shibir activists attacked a Hindu-majority village during and after the voting. They damaged and looted 65 houses and 30 shops and set afire paddies stored at courtyards in several homes.

Locals in two villages in Thakurgaon Sadar upazila alleged that Jamaat-BNP men, brandishing lethal weapons, roamed through their areas and threatened them with consequences as they cast their votes.

One of the victims in Dinajpur is Ansar member Wahed Ali. Jamaat-Shibir men beat him to death during an attack on polling officials and Ansar members at Uttar Salandarpur Government Primary School polling centre in Parbatipur around 11:00am, said presiding officer Paban Kumar Sarker.

Five people, including Paban, were also

injured in the attack.

Sohel Rana, publicity secretary of district Shibir, claimed responsibility for the killing.

In another incident, Raihan Masud, general secretary of Parbatipur upazila Jubo Jagpa, the youth wing of the 18-party ally Jatiya Ganotantrik Party, was killed as law enforcers opened fire on opposition men who attacked the vehicles of a strike force near Manmathapur Co-operative High School polling centre around 1:00pm.

Chunnu Mia, a BNP activist of Hoiburpur village of Parbatipur upazila, was killed in a clash between the activists of the AL and BNP near Khorakhai Baiswabpara Government Primary School in the upazila.

In Thakurgaon, three BNP activists were killed and 60 people, including several policemen and Ansars, were injured as BNP-Jamaat activists clashed sporadically with law enforcers and ruling party men at different unions of Sadar upazila.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

PUZZLING TURNOUT  
Low in the day, high at night  
Ershad, GM Quader lose Lalmonirhat seats

STAR REPORT

The turnout at Matuail Adarsha High School polling centre was only 16.5 percent as of midday yesterday. But in the last two hours, it rose to 42 percent, thanks to false votes cast by polling agents and supporters of the Awami League candidate.

A team from The Daily Star was present at the centre in Dhaka-5 throughout the day. It saw a few AL activists frequently entering and exiting the centre's seven booths. They were casting false votes aided by the polling agents.

From 8:00am to 2:00pm, 711 votes  
SEE PAGE 11 COL 4



### Little effort to better turnout Finds Star's monitoring in capital

STAR REPORT

Voter turnout in the capital was very low even though polling went on without any incidents of violence.

The Daily Star had deployed 14 reporters at seven polling centres in the capital to record each and every incident related to voting. There were incidents of fake votes being cast in two of the centres.

The usual election day festive mood, in which voters are seen queuing up well before the booths open, was absolutely missing yesterday.

The average vote cast in the seven centres was about 18 percent. There were no queues whatsoever during the entire day; and presiding and polling officers and polling agents spent the day largely sitting there with very little to do.

They said the poor voter turnout was due to the election not being an all-inclusive one. Although there was no violence throughout the day, a sense of insecurity was in the air since violence centring on the polls had rocked the country just a day before, they added.

Many voters, especially first timers, could not cast their votes as they did not find their names on the voters' list.

Some centres looked deserted as only a few voters turned up in the first couple of hours. The number of voters slightly increased around noon.

SEE PAGE 13 COL 1



Ansar and VDP men stand guard at the voter-less Bangabandhu University College polling centre in Kalapani of Dhaka around 10:00am yesterday, two hours after voting began.

PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ

### Hartal again BNP happy at low turnout

RASHIDUL HASAN

Ecstatic over the low turnout and the opposition's election-day protests, the BNP-led 18-party combine last night called a nationwide 48-hour hartal from 6:00am today.

The opposition alliance announced the fresh programme demanding cancellation of polls results and protesting killing of opposition men on the polling day.

Apart from the hartal, the country-wide indefinite blockade of rail, roads and waterways, already in force from January 1, will continue, BNP chairperson's adviser Osman Faruq told a press briefing at his Gulshan residence at 6:00pm, two hours after polling in the 10th parliamentary elections had closed.

BNP sources said its Chairperson Khaleda Zia was pleased with the low turnout in the national polls and the demonstration yesterday by the BNP-Jamaat men to resist the polls.

"We are greatly inspired by the way people have rejected the January 5 elections. Considering our recent disorganised movement, we actually didn't expect this. We want to utilise people's

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1