

Mahbub, Milon remanded

FROM PAGE 1
commissioner of the Dhaka Metropolitan Police, Ramna division.

The court directed police to interrogate Khandaker Mahbub and Milon with caution. It also asked the police to quiz Selima Rahman at the jail gate within five days, if necessary.

On Tuesday, police picked up Selima, organising secretary Fazlul Haque Milon, and Khaleda Zia's adviser Khandaker Mahbub in the capital.

Shah Mujahidul Islam, sub-inspector of Ramna Police Station, filed the case on January 5, a day after miscreants hurled sev-

eral crude bombs at the office of DC Maruf Hossain Sardar on New Circular Road.

Thakur Das Malo, SI of Ramna Police Station and investigation officer of the case, prayed to the court for granting seven days' remand to each of the accused.

In the remand prayer, the IO said the investigation revealed that the three leaders were involved in instigating their party men to hurl crude bombs at the DC office to create anarchy and panic.

They were also involved in creating panic among the voters so that the latter could not go to the polling centres to cast their votes, the IO said.

Therefore, they need to be grilled to find out information on explosives, bomb making substances, and the sources of money used in making the bombs, the IO added.

Defence lawyers submitted separate bail petitions including the cancellation of the remand prayer, and said Mahbub Hossain is a guardian of 42,000 lawyers who cannot commit such offences.

Two others are also law-abiding citizens, the lawyers said, adding that the names of their clients were not included in the first information report of the case.

Therefore, the lawyers said, they had

prayed to the court to grant bail to their clients cancelling the remand prayer.

After hearing both the sides, Metropolitan Magistrate Aminul Haque passed the remand order.

Soon after the order, pro-BNP lawyers brought out a procession at the courtroom and on the court premises demanding the cancellation of the order.

The activists of BNP-led 18-party alliance hurled at least 10 crude bombs at the office of Ramna DC around 9:30pm on Saturday, a day before the 10th parliamentary election.

In the case, Mujahidul claimed that the

opposition men blasted the bombs in a bid to kill the DC and other policemen posted at the office, and foil the January 5 general election.

Selima, sister of Rashed Khan Menon -- a top leader in the ruling alliance, was picked up from her Gulshan residence.

Mahbub, vice-chairman of Bangladesh Bar Council and a former president of the Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA), was picked up near the Jatiya Press Club. Milon was detained while holding a meeting at the opposition chief whip's business office in Baridhara.

Low turnout

FROM PAGE 1
regret the circumstances surrounding the polls.

These elections were an extremely poor reflection of the electorate's will. The number of people killed or injured during the campaign and the election day itself was appallingly high.

"We condemn the violence that surrounded the elections and call upon all political forces to refrain from any form of violence and intimidation, especially against religious minorities."

The federal government urges the Bangladesh government and all political

parties to overcome their differences and work together to bring about inclusive, peaceful and credible democratic elections, said the statement issued by the German embassy in Dhaka.

The foreign affairs ministry of France in a statement on Tuesday said France was closely monitoring the situation in Bangladesh, following the holding of elections marked by violence and a very low voter turnout.

"We call on all parties to demonstrate calm and restraint and encourage the main political forces to resume dialogue within the framework of the country's democratic institutions," the statement added.

Thai anti-graft body

FROM PAGE 16
potentially result in the 308 lawmakers being banned from politics.

The Constitutional Court last year ruled against the proposed amendment. The Senate was made partly appointed under a new constitution introduced in 2007, after the military removed Thaksin in a bloodless coup.

Thaksin's opponents see the constitution as a vital check against his influence, analysts said.

Court rulings have in the past been a key factor amid political turbulence in Thailand.

In December 2008, a government of Thaksin's allies fell from power after a court

disbanded their political party for electoral fraud, allowing the opposition to form a government.

The protesters, meanwhile, said they will prevent the election from going ahead in February.

On Tuesday thousands marched through a district of the capital in a second preparatory march ahead of a planned large-scale demonstration on 13 January that the protesters said will shut down Bangkok.

National Security Council chief Paradorn Pattanatubat said Yingluck was prepared to declare emergency rule "if the protests seem

likely to escalate into violence".

The political unrest is the worst to hit Thailand since the protests of 2010, which were against a government led by the current opposition party and left more than 90 people dead.

Both sides have called on the military -- which did not rule out another coup -- to support them.

On Tuesday, Yingluck played down coup rumours, saying she believed "the military commanders will think of long-term solutions rather than employing various measures unacceptable to many countries".



FROM LEFT ... All burnt fruit trader Farid being taken to the ICU of DMCH burn unit on Friday after criminals hurled a petrol bomb at his bus near Ruposhi Bangla Hotel. Fatally burnt insurance officer Shahina on Friday had remarked that politicians should burn everyone together rather than one by one. Her husband journalist Zaman was in tears at the morgue after Shahina died early yesterday, six days after the bus was set ablaze.

PHOTO:
FILE/AMRAN HOSSAIN

Free of searing pain, finally

FROM PAGE 1
As if refusing to believe his father was dead, the little boy ran after the stretcher, calling out to it to stop, to bring his father back.

When his elder brother held him back, Liton threw himself on all fours on the filthy hospital floor and tried to crawl after the stretcher.

He finally gave up when he ran out of breath as the sobbing took over. Liton had to be dragged away by the ankles.

The bus Farid was travelling on was set afire by arsonists by a petrol bomb near Ruposhi

Bangla Hotel in the capital on January 3.

Shahina Akhter, another passenger of the bus who too suffered severe burns, also died early yesterday.

Family members of the 42-year-old official of an insurance company burst out in fury.

"You kill people because you want a special chair, is that it?" cried out one of her sisters, referring to the politicians.

Shahina died of infection-induced shock in the 64 percent areas of her burnt body, doctors said.

Infection control at the burn unit is difficult to achieve because the hospital handles more patients than its capacity, said Partha Shankar Paul, resident surgeon of the burn unit.

Shahina's human rights activist husband SMF Zaman broke down, "If they [the government] cannot stop the arson attacks, why don't they at least try to save our lives by taking us abroad where there is better treatment?"

The family could accept the fate and move

on if they knew that an effort had been made by the government to save her life by taking her to Singapore or elsewhere, said Shahida, Shahina's sister.

The free medicines being given by the hospital will not save our lives. Better medical facilities will," she added.

Meanwhile, police yesterday recovered the body of another arson victim from a burnt truck in Sirajganj.

The truck was set on fire on the Dhaka-Bogra highway on Tuesday evening, leaving two

people burned alive and injuring another.

One of the dead, Imran Hossain, 32, was pulled out immediately.

The body of Milon Hossain, 27, the second victim, was found trapped under the truck as police went to rescue the truck yesterday.

The injured, Shafad Ali, is currently fighting for his life at Bogra Shaheed Ziaur Rahman Medical College Hospital.

The 55-year-old suffered 55 percent burns, and doctors there said his condition was critical.

AL leader shot dead in Khagrachhari

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khagrachhari

Criminals shot a union-level Awami League leader dead at Bidyamohon Karbaripara of Panchhari upazila in Khagrachhari last night.

Deceased Naba Kumar Tripura, 35, was the vice-president of Logang union unit of Awami League.

A group of five to six unidentified armed criminals picked up Naba Kumar from his home around 8:30pm, said Officer-in-Charge Abdus Samad Morol of Panchhari Police Station quoting family members.

The criminals shot him dead and left his body about 10-15 yards away from his home, he said.

President of Panchhari upazila unit Awami League Mohammad Bahar Mia blamed United People Democratic Front (UPDF) cadres for the murder. He said Naba Kumar had worked for an Awami League candidate during the January-5 elections ignoring the pressure from the UPDF cadres to work for their candidate instead.

Press and information secretary Miron Chakma of UPDF denied the allegation and said they knew nothing about the murder.

The body was sent for an autopsy.

Old+new MPs=638!

FROM PAGE 1
Barrister Rafique-Ul Huq said there would be no problem if the ninth parliament is dissolved before the lawmakers-elect are sworn in.

"If they do otherwise, it will be at variance with the constitution," he said.

Agriculture Minister Matia Chowdhury, however, claimed that there was no legal bar for the MPs-elect to be administered the oath.

There wouldn't be more than one lawmaker in any constituency, as the tenure of the existing lawmakers expires once the MPs-elect take oath today.

The current parliament has a total of 349 lawmakers, including 50 in seats reserved for women, as an MP from a Dhaka constituency died a couple of days before the January 5 polls.

The Election Commission yesterday issued a gazette notification on the election of 290 lawmakers in the 10th parliamentary polls. And the MPs-elect must take the oath by Saturday, as they are obliged under the constitution to do so within three days of the publication of the gazette.

Meanwhile, AL President Sheikh Hasina gave up one of her two seats -- Rangpur-6 -- and sent a letter to the EC yesterday, urging it to hold a by-election there.

The total number of lawmakers will stand at 638 after the MPs-elect are sworn in.

Speaking at a press briefing in the afternoon, Jatiya Party Presidium Member Raushan Ershad said the lawmakers-elect from the party would join the oath-taking ceremony.

Speaker Shirin Sharmin Chowdhury is expected to administer the oath to the MPs-elect at the Jatiya Sangsad at 10:00am.

And a new cabinet is likely to be sworn in on Sunday, and President Abdul Hamid will administer the oath to the ministers at Bangabhaban, said sources in the government.

Once the lawmakers-elect take the oath of office today, the AL parliamentary party will convene to elect the leader of the House, who will then formally request the president to initiate the process of the

formation of a new government.

Sources in the AL said the new cabinet to be formed on Sunday would have around 30 members and most of the existing ministers would be part of it.

AL General Secretary Syed Ashraful Islam might be made foreign minister, while Amir Hossain Amu, Tofail Ahmed, Suranjit Sengupta, Matia Chowdhury, Obaidul Quader, Mosharrif Hossain, Nurul Islam Nahid, Latif Siddique, Faruk Khan, Shahjahan Khan and Khandaker Mosharrif Hossain might get important ministries.

Several leaders of the AL's allies, including Rashed Khan Menon, Hasanul Haq Inu and Anwar Hossain Manju, are likely to make it to the cabinet, said the sources.

Besides, at least 10 new faces might be included in the new cabinet, and young lawmakers are high on the list of priorities.

Former Bangladesh Bank Governor Mohammad Farashuddin and AL lawmaker Anisul Huq are being considered for the finance and law portfolios.

Saber Hossain Chowdhury could get

the youth and sports ministry and Asaduzzaman Noor the cultural affairs ministry, according to the sources.

Several AL policy makers said the ruling party wanted to form the new government as soon as possible so that it could take quick decisions to contain the ongoing political violence.

They held a serious of meetings to see whether there was any legal bar for the MPs-elect to take office before January 24.

Elections were held in 143 constituencies on January 5 with 153 candidates already elected uncontested weeks before the polls.

The EC did not announce the results of eight constituencies, as voting in many polling centres there was suspended in the wake of violence. Elections will now be held in the eight constituencies on January 16.

The names of two AL lawmakers-elect out of 292 were not mentioned in the gazette as the EC issued show-cause notices on them for alleged violations of the electoral code of conduct.

The AL has already secured 232 seats in

Hindus send females away

FROM PAGE 1
A group of people led by Chanu Khan, Jalil Khan and Dudu Khan, who are locally known as BNP adherents, attacked a Garo family in Jamalpur and stabbed five natives for voting in the elections.

Madhabi Khakshi, 43, who turned up at the National Institute of Cardiovascular Diseases in the capital yesterday, said they came under attack while she along with four others was harvesting potatoes on Tuesday morning.

"The perpetrators were saying that they were teaching us a lesson for voting for the Awami League," she said.

Four other Garos who were with Madhabi and two Bangalees who rushed there to their rescue were also injured.

Unidentified criminals vandalised three idols of Kali, a Hindu goddess, and set fire to the temple at Bottola of Kalmakanda upazila in Netrakona early yesterday.

Police and members of the Hindu community said the temple was in the village where 150 Hindu families resided.

Another group of unidentified criminals, allegedly comprising Jamaat-BNP men, set fire to a temple inside one Mohindranath's home in Jhargao of Thakurgaon around 3:00am yesterday.

Locals doused the fire and police went to the spot and calmed the panicked Hindu families.

Straw heaps belonging to four Hindus were set on fire at Deeghigram in Singra upazila of Natore around 11:30pm Tuesday.

Our Jhargao correspondent revisited Malopara at Abhaynagar yesterday and found only male members of the Hindu families guarding their homes.

Despite assurances of security from law enforcers, who have set up a temporary camp in the locality, the Hindus clearly did not have faith in their presence.

According to villagers, up to 300 female members of the fishermen's village are now staying away from Abhaynagar, where alleged Jamaat-BNP men carried out an attack on election day.

female members away to stay with relatives fearing further attacks. They had even received threats that their women would be raped.

With the chilly weather of early January, many of the families were seen trying to stay warm lighting fires in their front yards. They had lost their warm clothes in the arson attacks immediately after the polls.

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