

Post-polls violence

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accordingly. That is why post-polls violence could not spread," he said.

The CEC came up with the observation while talking to reporters after emerging from a meeting on law and order in the re-election to eight constituencies at the auditorium of the National Economic Council (NEC) in the capital.

The Election Commission convened the meeting attended by top officials of different law enforcement and security agencies.

"The law enforcers had to face huge difficulties to maintain law and order in the just-concluded elections, as a large group not only boycotted the polls but also tried to resist it," he said.

He warned that people involved in vio-

lence during and after the election would be severely punished under legal procedure.

However, the sources present in the meeting said the CEC expressed his disappointment over the role of law enforcers in the eight constituencies where voting was postponed due to attacks on polling centres and election officials.

He asked the law enforcers to be tougher in maintaining law and order during the re-election in the eight constituencies to be held on January 16.

"We have expressed deep concern over the attacks on Hindus, and strictly directed the law enforcers to take necessary measures to curb violence during and after the election," Election Commissioner Shah Nawaz told The Daily Star.

Meanwhile, the EC has prepared a compre-

hensive plan to tighten security during the re-election.

Dinajpur-4, Kurigram-4, Gaibandha-1, -3 and -4, Bogra-7, Jessore-7, and Laxmipur-1 will go to polls on January 16. Voting at 392 polling centres in those constituencies was postponed due to violence.

A team consisting of at least 25 police and Ansar personnel will be deployed at every polling centre. Besides, 175 mobile and strike forces composed of police, Armed Police Battalion (APBn) and Ansar; 82 teams of Rab, and 86 teams of BGB will be deployed there as per the yesterday's decision.

Moreover, the army will continue discharging duties at these constituencies till January 17.

Ancient Tibetan town

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streets in Dukezong, Xinhua news agency said.

More than 1,000 firefighters and volunteers were deployed to tackle the blaze, which was still spreading by mid-morning after windy weather hampered efforts to bring it under control, according to local authorities.

Photos posted on local news sites showed gigantic flames, some more than ten metres high, devouring an entire neighbourhood and casting a huge orange glow in the dark while emergency services battled to control the blaze, reports AFP.

No casualties have been reported so far, Xinhua said, after inhabitants of the village

were evacuated.

Dukezong, meaning "the town of moon" in Tibetan and built 1,300 years ago, was an important town on the South Silk Road, also known as the Ancient Road of Tea and Horse.

It is part of the scenic Shangri-La county in Degen prefecture, The Telegraph adds.

The county was once called Gyaitemang Zong, but changed its name in 2001 to Shangri-La, hoping to draw tourists by the reference to the mythical Himalayan land described in James Hilton's 1933 novel.

Earlier this week another high-profile site of Tibetan culture, the Buddhist Serthar institute located in the nearby province of Sichuan, was also the victim of an inferno, with ten buildings destroyed.



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina looks at some large-screen TVs at a stall after inaugurating the International Trade Fair in the capital yesterday.

PHOTO: BSS

BNP-Jamaat

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"I would like to thank the entrepreneurs for their endeavour to keep the production going ignoring the destructive activities of BNP-Jamaat.... They helped keep the economy on a firm footing despite the adversities."

She went on, "The businessmen should not sit idle under these circumstances. You have to be very vocal against such mindless acts. You have to build resistance. Because, at the end of the day, it is you and the country's people who are the worst sufferers."

Hasina mentioned the predictions made by various research firms about Bangladesh. City Investment Research and Analysis put Bangladesh on the top of the list of the emerging countries, she said.

Goldman Sachs, The International Monetary Fund, The Wall Street Journal, JO Morgan Chase and Morgan Stanley also put Bangladesh on the top of the list.

The prime minister said the government has been trying to adopt newer tactics to face the emerging challenges in global trade and commerce, while the country faces tariff and non-tariff barriers.

Attention should be given to improvement of the quality of products and their branding to make them more attractive. "Attention should also be given to the working environment and security of the workers. We are setting up seven new economic zones."

She said Bangladesh's exports brought in \$27.03 billion in fiscal year 2012-13 despite a barrage of hartals and blockades.

The curious case of new govt, JP

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"So, the tenure of the ninth parliament expired on January 3 this year," and there was no problem in recognising Raushan as the leader of the opposition, claimed Shafique.

But according to article 72 of the constitution, the five-year tenure of the ninth parliament began on January 24, 2009, the day the House had its first meeting.

In two previous cases, the tenure of the seventh and eighth parliament had begun with their first meeting. And in Bangladesh's history, only these two parliaments were dissolved on expiry of their five-year term.

Asked whether Hasina could take oath of office as PM with the ninth JS still in force, Shafique claimed that there was nothing wrong with it.

Attorney General Mahbubey Alam, however, said the MPs who took oath on Thursday would assume office after the ninth parliament's tenure expires on January 24.

But his observations don't conform to that of Shafique about the tenure of the ninth parliament and the assumption of office by the new MPs.

Mahbubey saw nothing wrong in Hasina's assuming office as PM today. "All the debates are meaningless," the attorney general told this correspondent.

When his attention was drawn to the prevailing situation, eminent jurist Shahdeen Malik said the constitution had lost its significance here.

"This is our unique contribution to the parliamentary democracy which should be included in the Guinness Book of World Records since none has conducted the affairs of the state in such an absurd manner before," he said.

The existence of the ninth parliament means Hasina is still the PM elected through that parliament, and article 123 of the constitution restricts the lawmakers elected through the January 5 polls to assuming office by taking oath, according to Malik.

Earlier, Barrister Rafique-Ul Huq said there would be no problem if the ninth parliament was dissolved before the lawmakers-elect were sworn in. "If they do otherwise, it will be at variance with the constitution."

The case involving the Jatiya Party is unique.

The party led by former military dictator HM Ershad is set to play dual role in parliament, as some of its MPs will be inducted into the cabinet while the rest will be in the opposition bench.

Raushan on Thursday placed a list of seven MPs of her party for inducting them into

Hasina's new cabinet, and Hasina agreed to take some of them aboard, according to JP source.

It has raised questions such as how the JP will play the role of opposition keeping some of its MPs in the treasury bench, or what will they do if the party decides to vote against a government bill or motion.

According to article 70 of the constitution, if they vote against the party's decision in parliament, they will lose their membership.

Referring to the matter, Shafique, also former law minister, said he needed to examine the legal aspects before commenting on it.

Speaking at a discussion in the capital yesterday, AL lawmaker Suranjit Sengupta, however, said none can be in the government and the opposition at the same time.

He mentioned a Supreme Court verdict, which observed that it is immoral, undemocratic and unconstitutional to be in the government and the opposition at the same time.

During an interview with BBC Bangla service, AL leader Amir Hossain Amu was asked what type of democracy it would be if JP lawmakers play dual role, and he replied, "How can I say this?"

In response to a query whether there was any such instance, he said there might be such an instance.

Panic, insecurity persist

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Despite police patrolling the Hindu village, which was ravaged by BNP-Jamaat men few hours after the voting ended on January 5, most of the villagers are gripped in fears of further attacks.

"We were attacked because we defied threats and went to cast our votes. We are afraid of more attacks," said Prabir Sarker of Malopara.

"We do not need to vote. We just want to live where we were born," said an inhabitant of Jessore's Monirampur where two Hindu women were raped allegedly by BNP-Jamaat men on Friday.

Meanwhile, educational institutions in Thakurgaon are experiencing a decline in the number of Hindu students attending the classes.

Principal of Old Thakurgaon Business Management College SM Ataur Rahman said though nearly 60 percent of the students of his institution were Hindus, only a handful of them were turning up for classes.

"Almost 450 of the 600 students of my college are Hindus but I do not see even ten of them on campus at present," said Raziur Rahman, principal of Abdur Rashid Degree College in Thakurgaon.

ATTACKS CONTINUE: IDOL, SHOPTORCHED

Miscreants yesterday set fire to an idol of Hindu goddess Kali at Bajadubhkura village in Netrokona, spreading panic among the local Hindus.

The fire completely gutted the hay and clay made idol at around 8:30pm, an additional superintendent of Netrokona police told our correspondent.

Meanwhile, unidentified criminals torched a shop owned by a Hindu in Kamlapur village of Narail, triggering a fresh wave of panic among the Hindus of the area.

Mitun Joy Biswas, the owner of the shop, said goods worth Tk 1 lakh were gutted in the fire that turned his shop into ashes in the early hours of yesterday.



In the face of continued post-election violence against the minority community, Hindu men stand guard at Shafinagar village in Patgram upazila of Lamonirhat on Friday night to prevent further attacks.

PHOTO: STAR

Focus on clean image

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To this end, she might travel to Europe and America.

Hasina will be sworn in as prime minister at 3:30pm today after dissolution of the polls-time cabinet and council of advisers, Cabinet Secretary M Musharraf Hossain Bhuiyan yesterday.

At a press briefing at the Cabinet Division, Musharraf said Hasina handed him over a list of her new ministers, state ministers and deputy ministers and another of her advisers after President Abdul Hamid's approval.

The portfolios would be distributed today, he added.

Musharraf also said the Cabinet Division invited some 1,000 persons, including BNP chairperson Khaleda Zia, to the oath-taking ceremony at the Bangabhaban.

According to sources, the cabinet might be comprised of 48 to 50 members but the number of new advisers could not be known.

The sources say Hasina is likely to choose AL veterans like Finance Minister Abul Maal Abdul

Muith, Land Minister Amir Hossain Amu, Industries Minister Tofail Ahmed, Agriculture Minister Matia Chowdhury, Textiles and Jute Minister Abdul Latif Siddique, former home minister Mohammad Nasim and LGD Minister Syed Ashrafur Islam.

Communications Minister Obaidul Quader, Expatriates Welfare and Overseas Employment Minister Khandker Mosharraf Hossain, Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid, Railways Minister Mujibul Haque, jurist Anisul Haque, and ex-state ministers Mofazzal Hossain Chowdhury Maya and Mostafizur Rahman Fizar might also be among her picks.

Again, AL Presidium Member engineer Mosharraf Hossain, Cultural Affairs Secretary Asaduzzaman Noor, Organising Secretary Bir Bahadur, central committee members Matiur Rahman, MA Mannan, Saifujaman Chowdhury Javed and Zunaid Ahmed Palak might get cabinet membership.

The sources add that Awami League lawmakers

AKM Mojammel Haque, Syed Mahsin Ali, Narayan Chandra Chanda, Biren Sikder, Shahriar Alam, Abdullah Al Islam Jakob, Simin Hossain Rimi and former national football team captain Arif Khan Joy could get portfolios.

However, controversial figures like Shipping Minister Shajahan Khan, State Minister for Law Quamrul Islam and AL Central Committee Member Nasrul Hamid Bipu could also find places in the council of ministers.

Jatiya Party Presidium Member and Water Resources Minister Anisul Islam Mahmud, PM's Adviser Ziauddin Ahmed Bablu, State Minister Mujibul Haque Chunnun, Masiur Rahman Ranga, Workers Party President and Posts and Telecommunications Minister Rashed Khan Menon, JSD President and Information Minister Hasanul Haq Inu, JP (Manju) Chairman and former communications minister Anwar Hossain Manju are also prospective names.

The lists are subject to last-minute changes, sources said.

Blockade resumes today for 24 hrs

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member Lt Gen (ret'd) Mahbubur Rahman said he and some other party leaders talked to BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia about people's sufferings, especially those living hand to mouth, due to the blockade.

"I told the chairperson that people should be given some respite as they are fed up with the non-stop blockade programme," mentioned the former army chief.

Several BNP leaders said the break in the blockade is part of the alliance's strategy to prepare for waging a fresh anti-government movement.

Earlier at 9:00pm, BNP acting secretary general Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir in a statement had announced to postpone the blockade programme for Monday and Tuesday due to the Eid-e-Miladunnabi.

Two hours back, in another statement, he had said people would bring back their just and demo-

cratic rights through a united movement.

The cabinet to be formed today lacks the representation of people, and will never be considered legitimate at home and abroad, he claimed, adding that the new government will not get moral support from any quarters.

He also demanded the government hold free, fair and inclusive polls under a non-party government without any further delay.

On Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's recent speeches, the BNP leader said the way she has been issuing threats to the opposition parties does not show a sign of democratic behaviour.

The premier has lately blamed opposition activists for the post-polls violence and attacks on the Hindus, and warned that the government will take tough steps to curb such incidents.

But Fakhru put the blame on the ruling party men, and said: "The government is trying to distract people's attention from the mockery of

the polls by holding the opposition responsible for the post-polls violence."

The Awami League, he noted, could stay in power only temporarily by using tactics and misusing the state power.

KHALEDA AT HER OFFICE

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia last night went to her Gulshan office without carrying the national flag in her vehicle.

However, she came to the office with police protection, said party sources.

Since December 26 last year, the BNP chief did not come out of her Gulshan residence as she was virtually confined to her house.

The previous day, additional police and Rab members were deployed around her residence. The government had claimed that it was done to ensure her security.

The BNP chief was barred from joining the "March for democracy" programme on December 29.

India blames

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against China's growing might. She was flown back home on Thursday.

In a sign India is not letting matters drop, Khurshid said the government would keep pressing for withdrawal of charges against Devyani. He said the US should have warned senior officials visiting Washington a day before Devyani's arrest.

He described the episode as a "mini crisis" during an interview with the CNN-IBN television network yesterday.

"It's an incident that shouldn't have happened, we have to find some resolution," Khurshid said, adding "immediate concerns have been addressed" but "there is a lot more still to do" to repair relations with Washington.

However, he said the core of the US-Indian relationship was very strong and that he didn't expect lasting damage from what has turned into the biggest rift in years.

Shortly before Devyani's indictment Thursday, the US granted the Indian officer - who has denied all charges - full diplomatic immunity, allowing her to fly home to India.

Initially, observers believed Devyani's return signalled tensions had been defused.

But an announcement late Friday that India had ordered a US diplomat to leave in apparent reprisal for its envoy's treatment in New York suggested New Delhi was still angry.

Reports said the US diplomat has left India. Indian newspapers named the diplomat as Wayne May, saying he managed security staff and was of "similar rank" to Devyani.

Meanwhile, The Hindu yesterday reported that the feverish closed-door negotiations between the Indian Embassy in Washington and the US State Department to secure Devyani's right to avoid prosecution broke down by Thursday because India refused to accept a reduced criminal charge that the Department of Justice offered.

The moment it became clear that an "im-passe" had been reached the Indian side emphasised on getting her back home.

Meanwhile, US State Department has confirmed that Devyani has lost her diplomatic immunity. Moreover, she will be placed on an "immigration lookout system" if she returns to US and is likely to also have an arrest warrant issued in her name, it added.

On late Friday, the United States said it "deeply regrets" India's expulsion of the US official.

During his television interview, Khurshid said India had not engaged in retaliation against Washington, calling its actions "an appropriate response".

Still, Khurshid told the TV network yesterday evening there was no chance of restoring extra privileges to US diplomats in New Delhi, withdrawn after the Indian diplomat's arrest.