

JAN 5 ELECTION

EPP moves for a resolution

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The European People's Party (EPP), the largest political group in the European Parliament (EP), has moved to adopt a resolution on January 5 parliamentary elections in Bangladesh, according to the EP website.

Twenty-two powerful MPs belonging to the EPP Group have called for adopting the resolution in the EP and hold a debate which will focus on fundamental freedoms, human rights and democracy in general in Bangladesh.

The motion for a resolution has noted with concern the preliminary results and low turnout for the parliamentary elections held on January 5.

The motion also says it condemns the acts of violence which occurred in the run-up and during the elections and particularly attacks against the most vulnerable populations, including women and children as well as religious and ethnic minorities.

It is deeply concerned about the high number of casualties in these clashes and expresses its condolences to the families of the victims.

The conditions for transparent, inclusive and credible elections were not met and that

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Re-polling today in 7 constituencies

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Re-elections will be held in 390 polling centres in seven constituencies across the country today, as voting had to be postponed there due to violence on January 5.

These constituencies are Dinaipur-4, Gaibandha-1, 3 and 4, Bogra-7, Jessore-5 and Laxmipur-1.

One other constituency, Kurigram-4, was supposed to go to the polls today. The polls were postponed following a High Court order yesterday.

Meanwhile, the BNP-led 18-party combine, which had been staying out of the polls, called a daylong hartal in Bogra's Gabtoli upazila (Bogra-7) for today.

The elections are being contested by 16 candidates. Of them, six are nominated by ruling Awami League, two by Jatiya Party, two by Jatiya Party (Manju), one by Workers Party of Bangladesh and one by Bangladesh Tarikat Federation. The other four are independent candidates.

The eight constituencies have 959 poll-

ing stations. Of them, 390 will go to the polls today, with the number of voters being 10,25,272. Voting in the rest of the centres was held on January 5.

In Dinaipur-4 constituency, AL-nominated candidate Abul Hasan Mahmood Ali is running ahead with 68,088 votes. His rival candidate Enamul Haque Sarker of Workers Party has 1,380 votes.

In Kurigram-4, Ruhul Amin of JP (Manju) won 30,544 votes, while his rival Zakir Hossain of AL 23,946 votes.

AL candidate Manjurul Islam Liton is keeping ahead with 68,993 votes in Gaibandha-1, while his competitor Abdul Quader Khan of JP got 8,386 votes. In Gaibandha-3, AL's Yunus Ali Sarker bagged 70,664 votes, and his rival independent candidate Khademul Islam Khudi 12,781 votes.

In Gaibandha-4, independent candidate Abul Kalam Azad polled 59,862 votes, whereas Monowar Hossain of AL 18,806 votes.

In Bogra-7, Altaf Ali of the Jatiya Party

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Jamaat man killed

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including Officer-in-Charge Tarok Kumar Biswas of Debhata Police Station received bullets during the clash.

Law enforcers had information that activists of Jamaat and its student wing Islami Chhatra Shibir were gathering at Ghonapara to plan an attack on the religious minorities, said the OC.

A joint team of police, Rab and BGB reached the spot around 9:00am. Sensing danger, the Jamaat-Shibir men opened fire and hurled crude bombs at the law enforcers, forcing the joint force team to retaliate with gunshots.

As the Jamaat-Shibir men fled the scene after sometime, law enforcers found bullet-hit Anwar lying on the ground and sent him to Satkhira Sadar Hospital, where doctors declared him dead.

The joint force recovered a gun, six cartridges, two unexploded handmade bombs and two sharp weapons from the spot.

Anwarul was accused in three murder cases, including the one for killing upazila Awami League organising secretary Abu Raihan, said police.

Cops handed over Anwarul's body to his relatives on Tuesday afternoon after an autopsy was performed on the body.

Five injured cops received primary treatment at Satkhira Sadar Hospital.

Police lodged a case with Debhata Police Station on Tuesday night in connection with the gunfight accusing around 300 unidentified men for carrying out the attack on the law enforcers.

4 of a family murdered

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kurigram

Unidentified assailants killed four people by slitting their throats and injured another seriously of a family at Diadanga village in the district's Bhurungamari upazila early yesterday.

The dead are Sultan, 55, a farmer, his wife Hazera Begum, 45, and their two granddaughters Rumana, 14, and Anisa, 7. The injured was Mousumi, 16, a daughter of the deceased couple.

Mousumi is now undergoing treatment at Rangpur Medical College and Hospital, said Sahabuddin, Kurigram additional superintendent of police.

On information, at around 3:00am, a police team was sent to the spot. They found three bodies lying in a room, and Hazera and Mousumi groaning with injuries, said Bhurungamari Upazila Nirbahi Officer AZM Ershad Ahsan Habib.

Police with the help of the locals took the injured to Rangpur Medical College and Hospital. But Hazera died on the way, he added.

The bodies were sent to Kurigram Sadar Hospital morgue for autopsies.

"Nobody open their mouth about the brutal incident. We would find clues to the killing when we can talk with Mousumi. She cannot speak now. But we are trying to trace the killers of the four," said Sahabuddin.

None was arrested in this connection.

Russia cheers

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BNP chief Khaleda Zia yesterday termed the new Hasina-led government "illegal". Diplomats, however, told The Daily Star that the government was constitutionally sound and not illegal at all and the international community would not ignore the new government.

The elections remain controversial, they added.

They believe the political deadlock in Bangladesh is not over and it must be solved peacefully through dialogues so that its socioeconomic and other progresses face no hindrance.

A free, fair, peaceful, participatory and credible election, reflecting the will of the Bangladeshis would solve the crisis, they added.

They also said it was now the obligation of the BNP and Jamaat to avoid hartals, blockades, and "especially the violence" to create an atmosphere conducive to dialogue and the government should come forward to hold a meaningful dialogue on a way towards an inclusive, peaceful and credible election as soon as

possible.

On Tuesday, Russian President Vladimir Putin in a letter of felicitation extended his congratulations to Sheikh Hasina on her re-election as the prime minister of Bangladesh.

Russian Ambassador to Bangladesh Alexander Nikolaev handed over the letter to Hasina at her Gono Bhavan residence.

"Russia counts on the government formed by you to continue the lines aimed at further increase of mutual beneficial Russia-Bangladesh cooperation in all spheres," said Putin's letter in which he expressed his high satisfaction with the friendly relations between the two countries.

The Russian president wished good health and new successes for Hasina.

Belarus Prime Minister Mikhail Myasnikovich yesterday congratulated Hasina on her election victory.

"I would like to confirm the intention of the government of Belarus to further develop the constructive dialogue with the government of Bangladesh in the political sphere, as well as mutually beneficial cooperation in trade, eco-

nomie, industrial, agricultural, scientific-technological, military-technical, educational, cultural and other spheres," Myasnikovich said.

Meanwhile, Marie Harf, deputy spokesperson for the US state department, during a regular press briefing Tuesday in Washington DC responded to a journalist's question whether the US recognised Hasina's government after the January 5 elections.

"Well, that's not exactly how it works. We obviously work with governments who are elected, but in regards to these elections themselves, we have already made clear our disappointment with the elections, which in our view did not credibly reflect the will of the Bangladeshi people since almost all of the seats of the new parliament weren't contested or had only token opposition. So we'll make clear our concerns when we have them," she said.

Asked whether the US will continue to work with the government of Sheikh Hasina, Harf said, "We continue to work -- of course we will, but while at the same time making clear our concerns with the election."



With tears rolling down from her eyes, a family member of deceased Rajib stands on the Agrabad Access Road in Chittagong city protesting the killing of Rajib in police firing yesterday while other family members, inset, exchange heated words with a policeman there.

PHOTO: STAR

2 killed day after cop murdered

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there, the OC said.

Sensing the presence of the law enforcers, a gang of seven to eight men opened fire. The security men also fired back, said police.

Rajib and Nasir sustained bullets during the exchange of gunfire. Police sent the duo to Chittagong Medical College Hospital (CMCH) where doctors declared them dead on arrival.

The bodies were sent to the hospital morgue for autopsies.

Police recovered a light gun, several machetes and five bullets from the spot.



Ismail Rajib

Md Zia, younger brother of Rajib, told The Daily Star his brother went out of home in the morning to work at their fuel outlet.

Later he came to know that some people had picked up Rajib from the shop.

Nasir's cousin Md Idris said Nasir went to Rajib's shop taking along his truck from Majhirghat to collect fuel early in the morning.

The injured police personnel -- sub-inspector Titan Sarkar, constables Sujit Dey and Md Saleh -- were admitted to Police Lines Hospital.

Two cases were filed in connection with the shooting incident.

Good realisation in the end

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property of an unparallel scale.

This strategy yielded very little in BNP's favour. Rather people were agast. Despite repeated calls from all quarters, including the media, Khaleda did not relent to change this line of action. The economy bled. The poor bled. The country bled.

But now, we can thank her for shunning that path. Her new strategy is smart and positive for several reasons.

First, she has seen the folly of waging this kind of violent programmes. These only alienate the party from the people.

Secondly, her programmes are now more people oriented. She will hold "peaceful" protests and rallies with black flags. She has stressed the word "peaceful". She would also take on tours for mass mobilisation. On all these counts, her party had failed in its previous movement. We hardly saw her doing the mass mobilisation that was needed to stop the one-sided election that had just been held. Her party leaders never came to the streets for movement; rather the thugs ruled the agitation with mindless brutality.

And she has clearly depicted the misrule of the last government. She has been able to rightly point out the rampant nature of corruption and brutal rule that the country has gone through over the past five years.

Above all, we can all thank her that she did not go for another endless bout of strikes and blockades that have wreaked havoc on the country.

Her call on the government to allow her party to do politics in its rightful way is also correct. It is now time for the government to let her party offices function and let her hold all peaceful democratic programmes.

Most of her party leaders are behind bars. And it is obvious that many of the charges against them are fabricated. Her demand for the immediate release of these leaders is also a rightful one.

This is no way of doing democracy by interneg Khaleda to hold elections and sending anyone of her party who dared to talk to jail. This culture has to change.

Khaleda has called for dialogues to resolve the crisis and look forward to an election in which all parties and above all, the people, will take part. While this is the right approach we should also remind her that such dialogues should be in its true spirit and not only to fool the people, as we have seen prior to the election.

But at the same breath, we have to point out some other overtures of Khaleda's speech.

While denouncing the pre-election violence and the post-election attacks on Hindus, she has flatly put the blame on the

government and the Awami League. She has also mentioned media reports to support her claims.

This is denying the fact, flatly. The mainstream media have reported extensively on the violence and attacks. There is no denying that these were carried out by Jamaat and BNP activists. Khaleda also did not condemn such activities. And she is now trying to shift the blame.

She has also termed this government "illegal". This is a travesty of truth. The new government has been created through a legally right election. But of course, this government does not enjoy the people's mandate as only half the seats were contested and only 20 percent votes were cast if the total number of voters is considered. Such poor turnout cannot be a base of a democratic government.

Khaleda's two more points evoke many questions. She has said she will fight fundamentalism and terrorism. She has also said she would work for spread of women's education.

We recall her uninhibited support for the fundamentalist group Hefajat and accepting its highly objectionable and quaint 13-point demand, realisation of which would take the country back. We recall how Hefajat wants to block education to women.

Only future could tell if she will come good on her commitment on these two counts.

Save minority communities

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action has so far been taken against the persons who are directly or indirectly responsible for the attacks.

In the rule, the court asked the respondents to explain in two weeks why they should not be directed to take immediate steps by deploying necessary forces to protect the interests of the minority communities and other vulnerable groups of citizens.

The HC also ordered the respondents to explain why the citizens, who were already victimised or have lost life, liberty, dignity and property, should not be compensated.

The HC bench of Justice Quazi Reza-Ul Hoque and Justice ABM Altaf Hossain came up with the orders and rule following reports published on the daily Prothom Alo on January 7 and the daily Amader Shomoy on January 13 on the attacks on the minority communities and the damage done to their houses, temples and

shops after the 10th parliamentary polls.

Some Supreme Court lawyers led by Advocate Parimal Chandra Guha placed the newspaper reports before the judges.

The judges also observed that the law enforcement agencies were "seriously failing" to protect the interests of the citizens, especially of the minority community and the vulnerable groups.

Following the rule, Deputy Attorney General Bishwojit Roy told The Daily Star that the government would take necessary steps to ensure security of the victims of minority groups. "IT'S CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY"

Describing the attacks on the minorities as crimes against humanity, NHRC Chairman Mizanur Rahman said the attacks were aimed at destabilising the country.

He made the remarks while visiting the victims of post-polls attacks in Kornai village of

Dinaipur yesterday.

He also said such violence will happen again if the culprits are not brought to book without delay.

The NHRC boss also stressed the need to revive the confidence of the Hindus in the state machinery.

"The minority communities are still haunted by the horrendous attacks. Their mental strength has to be restored as soon as possible", he observed.

Meanwhile, different organisations have demanded punishment of those responsible for the post-polls attacks on Hindus in different places of the country.

General Secretary of Bangladesh Hindu-Buddhist-Christian Oikya Parishad Rana Dasgupta has demanded that the government enact a special law to protect the minorities from such attacks.

He made the demand yesterday after visiting the Kornai village in Dinaipur where hundreds of Jamaat-Shibir and BNP men attacked around 60 Hindu families soon after the voting ended on January 5.

Ekatturer Ghatok Dalal Nirmul Committee, an anti-war criminal platform, yesterday formed a human chain on Bagerhat-Khulna Highway demanding exemplary punishment of the perpetrators.

After the completion of their first road march to Jessore's Abhoynagar, Gonojagoron Mancha has announced another march to Thakurgaon.

The three-day march will start from Shahbagh at 8.00am on Friday and rallies will be held at Ashulia, Mirzapur, Tangail, Sirajgonj and Bogra, Imran H Sarker, spokesperson of the platform, said at a press conference at Shahbagh yesterday.