



Armed with a stick, a madrasa teacher and Hefajat-e Islam supporter is seen just outside the polling centre at Aljamiyatul Arbiatul Islamia Ziri Madrasa during Hefajat's clash with Awami League men at Patia upazila of Chittagong yesterday.

PHOTO: ANURUP KANTI DAS

AL at work this time

FROM PAGE 1
the day after.

Noakhali district was worst hit by violence. A Shibir activist was killed when police opened fire to disperse Awami League and BNP-Jamaat activists fighting over the control of a polling centre in Sonaimuri upazila.

Vote was called off at all 117 polling stations in Noakhali Sadar upazila as the situation went out of control.

Besides, voting was suspended in 35 polling stations in 14 upazilas, including three in Sonaimuri, 11 in Barisal Sadar, eight in Feni Sadar and six in Faridganj, according to the Election Commission.

In contrast, elections were largely peaceful in upazilas of Lalmonirhat, Bogra, Bandarban, Kishoreganj, Rangpur, Mymensingh, Dinajpur, Khagrachhari, Brahmanbaria and Joypurhat districts.

Yesterday's polls were marked by violence more intense than that in the

first phase. Ruling party supporters seemed desperate to ensure win of the AL favourites after BNP-Jamaat-backed candidates fared better on February 19.

AL activists also came under attack in some upazilas.

For violating electoral laws, 26 people were sentenced to different terms and fined by mobile courts in different electoral areas, our district correspondents report.

In Noakhali, the supporters of AL-backed chairman candidate AFM Babul tried to capture Nandiapara Degree College polling centre, firing gunshots and exploding crude bombs around 1:30pm, said eyewitnesses.

A clash broke out as the supporters of 19-party-backed chairman aspirant Anwarul Haque resisted the ruling party men. At one stage, law enforcers opened fire to bring the situation under control.

Saddam Hossain, 22, a resident of Nandiapara and a supporter of Islami

Chhatra Shibir, the student wing of Jamaat-e-Islami, died on the spot.

Abdus Samad, officer-in-charge of Sonaimuri Police Station, confirmed the report of the death. He said locals took away the body.

Chairman aspirants backed by the BNP boycotted the polls in Compniganj and Kabirhat brining allegations of vote rigging, while the party-blessed candidate in Chatkhil demanded re-polling.

In Jessore, AL men allegedly took control of at least 60 out of 273 polling centres in three upazilas -- Jhikargachha, Chaugachha and Sharsha after driving out polling agents of BNP-supported candidates.

They also snatched ballot papers without any resistance from law enforcers, said witnesses.

At least 50 people including a BNP-supported chairman aspirant and four journalists were beaten up by AL men in these upazilas. The BNP has called

daylong hartal in Sharsha and Chaugachha for tomorrow.

In Fakirhat upazila of Bagerhat, at least 15 people, including two BGB members, were injured in a clash with supporters of a chairman candidate backed by the AL.

Executive Magistrate Ariful Islam said Jamal and Ajmal, supporters of candidate Sardar Niamat Hossain, were disturbing voters by blocking roads near the Satshika Government Primary School centre in the morning.

The duo misbehaved when the BGB men tried to drive them away, he said. After the paramilitary personnel picked them up, Niamat Hossain and his men tried to snatch them triggering the fight.

"Niamat Hossain assaulted me when he and his men tried to free the duo," he said, adding he ordered the BGB men to open blank fire to control the situation and pick up four includ-

JAGANNATH UNIVERSITY

Teachers on strike for hall recovery

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Jagannath University teachers yesterday went for an indefinite strike to press for the recovery of 11 dormitories from illegal occupation and the removal of two police officials for Sunday's action against the demonstrators.

Teachers and students claim that the dorms, located at different parts in Old Dhaka, were under the educational institution's control nearly three decades ago.

Sarkar Ali Akkas, president of JnU Sikkhak Samiti, said as per their earlier announcement, no classes were held from 11:00am to 4:00pm.

However, teachers took classes in the morning and kept exams out the purview of the strike, he mentioned.

In the afternoon, the Sikkhak Samiti met State Minister for Home Affairs Assaduzzaman Khan Kamal at his secretariat office.

At the meeting, the teachers submitted a memorandum, urging him to take action against Harun-ur-Rashid, deputy commissioner of the Dhaka Metropolitan Police's Lalbagh division, and Moniruzzaman, officer-in-

charge of Kotwali Police Station, for the police action against the protesters.

"The state minister assured us of forming a probe committee and taking action based on its report," Akkas told The Daily Star.

He added that they would continue their strike until their demands are met.

Akkas also said Odhikar Mancha, a joint platform of students and teachers, would start working from Sunday to reinforce the ongoing movement.

Meanwhile, students continued their agitation on the campus yesterday, demanding the recovery of the dormitories. They collected mass signature and also chanted slogans against the illegal occupation.

The Jagannath students have been demonstrating since February 12 for the return of the halls, including Tibet Hall, a part of which is allegedly occupied by lawmaker and Awami League leader Haji Mohammad Selim.

At least 50 people, including teachers and students, were injured as police charged truncheons and fired rubber bullets to disperse a demonstration on Sunday.

injured.

In Meherpur, at least five people were injured on their way to a polling centre at Bholadanga village in Gangni upazila around 8:45am when AL-backed chairman candidate Mokhesur Rahman's supporters exploded bombs.

In Jamalpur, at least 18 people were injured in clashes between the supporters of rival candidates in Melandah and Islampur upazilas.

In Rajshahi, some 60 Jamaat men attacked a group of AL workers at Kashabpur Government Primary School around 12 noon. Police opened fire to disperse them.

Incidents of clash, ballot box snatching and fake vote casting were reported from 21 other upazilas.

The BNP-backed candidates boycotted elections to Sharsha, Shibchar, Barisal Sadar, Borhanuddin Charfassion, Uttar Matlab, Faridganj, Kabirhat, Companiganj, Chakoria and

Tensions rise

FROM PAGE 20

They threw a flash grenade in response to a journalist's questions. Calls to region's legislature rang unanswered, and its website was down.

It was unclear if the men were members of a pro-Russian self-defence militia formed in the aftermath of Ukraine's revolution or undercover Russian soldiers.

Speaking in Kiev, the former head of the Crimean parliament, Serhiy Kunitsyn, described the men as "professionally trained". He said he had been on the phone to Crimea "all night". The gunmen were heavily armed, he said, with enough weaponry to defend the complex "for a month".

Either way, the seizure dramatically escalates tensions on the already volatile Crimean peninsula. Ukraine's acting president, Oleksandr Turchynov, who has been in the job since the removal of Viktor Yanukovich last week, explicitly warned Russia not to intervene in the crisis by moving troops. The Kremlin's Black Sea fleet is based near Simferopol in the port of Sevastopol.

Turchynov said: "I am appealing to the military leadership of the Russian Black Sea fleet. Any military movements, the more so if they are with weapons, beyond the boundaries of this territory [the base] will be seen by us as military aggression." Ukraine's foreign ministry also summoned Russia's acting envoy in Kiev for immediate consultations.

EU leaders expressed alarm at the latest developments. Russia's president, Vladimir Putin, has ordered fighter jets to a state of high alert, as well as large-scale military exercises on Ukraine's border. In a tweet, the

Nato secretary general, Anders Fogh Rasmussen, urged Russia not to do anything that would "escalate tension or create misunderstanding". Poland's foreign minister, Radoslaw Sikorski, called the seizure of government buildings in the Crimea a "very dangerous game".

He told a news conference: "This is a drastic step, and I'm warning those who did this and those who allowed them to do this, because this is how regional conflicts begin."

Hours after the parliament building was seized, Yanukovich revealed that he was now in Moscow and had "sought protection" from Putin.

Yanukovich, who fled Kiev after government troops shot dead more than 80 people, excoriated Ukraine's new leadership unveiled on Wednesday and said he was still the country's legitimate president. He appeared to give approval to secessionist pro-Russian forces in Crimea who have rejected Kiev's authority, and said an "orgy of extremism" had swept the country. "Now it is becoming clear that the people in south-eastern Ukraine and in Crimea do not accept the power vacuum and complete lawlessness in the country," he said.

The gunmen barricaded doors into the parliament building with wooden crates. Police sealed off the area on Wednesday, as a crowd supportive of the seizure gathered outside. Two people died and 35 were injured during clashes outside the building on Wednesday between pro-Russian demonstrators and Muslim Tartars. About half of Crimea's 2 million population are ethnic Russians. The Tartars - the peninsula's original Turkic-speaking Muslim inhabitants - are 300,000 strong and support the

USE OF CELL PHONE IN JAIL

Probe ordered

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The cabinet committee on law and order yesterday instructed the authorities concerned to identify the people responsible for allowing the use of cell phone inside jails across the country.

Expressing dismay over such illegal practice inside prisons, the committee asked the home ministry to take deterrent measures by carrying out investigations and bringing culprits to book.

The committee came up with the instructions in its meeting at the home ministry following news reports that Sunday's plot to snatch the JMB men was apparently hatched from jail using cell phone, a meeting source said.

The meeting stressed the need for identifying the persons and organisations responsible for making financial contribution to JMB, the source said.

The committee is also planning to form a task force comprising members from different law enforcement agencies to trace militant-run business entities and their financiers.

The government will track down organisations which carry out militant activities in the name of religion, said Industries Minister Amir Hossain Amu, also chairman of the committee.

Terming the Sunday's incident of snatching the three JMB men in Mymensingh an isolated one, he said, an investigation into the incident was going on.

Amu was talking to reporters after emerging from the meeting.

The committee also decided to

SEE PAGE 17 COL 6

Nasa finds 715 new planets

FROM PAGE 20

Amazingly, this nearly doubles the number of known planets in the galaxy to around 1,700. Even more exciting is the idea that just twenty years ago we did not know about a single planet outside of our own solar system.

"The Kepler team continues to amaze and excite us with their planet hunting results," said John Grunsfeld, associate administrator for Nasa's Science Mission Directorate in Washington.

"That these new planets and solar systems look somewhat like our own, portends a great future when we have the James Webb Space Telescope in space to characterize the new worlds."

All of the new planets were found within multi-planetary systems like our own and 95 percent of them were smaller than Neptune.

Four were even located within the habitable zone, which theoretically means that liquid water could be found on their surfaces.

The reason for Kepler's sudden windfall is a new technique for confirming planets known as "verification by multiplicity".

Since Kepler launched in March 2009 it has observed more than 1,50,000 stars and identified more than 3,600 possible exoplanets, but the work to verify each discovery is lengthy and laborious.

Kepler identifies planets by looking for changes in the light emitted by a star when an object transits in front of it.

The Crouching Tigers



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