

UPAZILA POLLS VIOLENCE
AL, BNP share equal blame
Says EC Abu Hafiz
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Election Commissioner Abu Hafiz has equally blamed both Awami League and BNP for widespread violence in the recent upazila elections. Being hell-bent on winning, the two political parties turned the local government elections into partisan ones that contributed to widespread violence, he told reporters at his office at the EC Secretariat yesterday.

Besides, political parties and contesting candidates did not cooperate the Election Commission for holding free and fair elections in many districts including Noakhali, Laxmipur, Pirojpur, Satkhira, Jessore and Munshiganj, he said.

He said constructive

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TOKI MURDER
Govt high-ups blocking justice
Say protesters
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The highest-level officials of the government are blocking the way for justice in the sensational Toki murder case, protesters said yesterday, referring to the delay in the charge sheet submission.

Though Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) said last month that the charge sheet, citing the name of Azmeri Osman, son of Jatiya Party MP Nasim Osman and nephew of Awami League MP Shamin Osman, would be submitted soon, no progress has been made so far, they said.

"Recently Rab's additional inspector general Ziaul Ahsan informed different electronic and print media that they had had confirmation that Azmeri and 10 of his aides killed Toki ruthlessly," said Halim Azad, member secretary of Santrash Nirmul Toki Mancha, a platform seeking justice in the killing of Tanvir Mohammad Toki, who had passed his A-level exams before death.

Azad read out a statement during a news conference in the capital's Jatiya Press Club.

Rab officer Ziaul Ahsan did not respond to phone calls of this correspondent. However, another high official of Rab-11, wishing anonymity, said they hoped to submit the charge sheet shortly.

"It's such a sensational case that we want to get the final confirmation about the witnesses and evidence before submission so that no bias exists in the case," he told The Daily Star.

Toki, son of cultural activist Rafiur Rabbi, was found killed in the Shitalakkhya river on March 8, two days after he went missing. Rabbi sued unnamed people on March 8 but later submitted a complaint to Narayanganj's superintendent of police, accusing seven persons, including Shamim Osman, his son Ayon Osman, and 8-10 unnamed others, of the murder.

Asked about the Osman family's involvement, the Rab official said they did not find enough evidence about Shamim and Nasim Osman's link.

The press statement says Rab's investigation found the political conflict between Toki's father and the Osmans, who lost to Selina Hayat Ivy in the last mayor election, as a reason behind the murder.

Rabbi campaigned for Ivy and led protests against Osman kin's alleged extortion in the transport sector of the city, it adds. "The investigation revealed that they committed the

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Youth shot dead in capital
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Criminals on a car shot dead a youth in the capital's Green Road early yesterday.

The dead, Saddin Hossain Sunny, 26, son of Kazi Shawkat Hossain, was an engineer of a textile factory at Savar.

Quoting witnesses, Sunny's maternal uncle Jahangir Nazim told The Daily Star that the criminals halted Sunny's motor bike by keeping their car before it near Lab Aid Hospital in Dhanmondi and shot him and fled away around 12:45am. He was declared dead at the hospital.

"Sunny left my house [at about 12:35am] after staying five minutes and I heard the news of the incident around 1:00am," said Nazim.

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POLITICAL DIALOGUE
Govt rules out prospect
It says that in response to Canada's inquiry
DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The government yesterday said it would go by the constitution after Canada wanted to know whether it had any plan to initiate a dialogue with the opposition parties that boycotted the January 5 election to find a "political mechanism" acceptable to everyone.

Canadian High Commissioner in Dhaka Heather Cruden made the inquiry when she called on Foreign Minister Abul Hassan Mahmood Ali at his office.

Mentioning that the government has successfully brought back normalcy in public life, Cruden wanted to know about the prospect of any political dialogue.

In response, the foreign minister reiterated the government's commitment to defend the sanctity of the constitution for the sake of institutionalising democracy.

He said that like all other societies, Bangladesh also had its own mechanism of establishing equilibrium in society.

Mahmood Ali said Bangladesh was progressing towards that equilibrium which involved polity, society, country and its people, according to a press release of the ministry.

He said it might look different to other nations because every country had its own way to development. When violence turns to terrorism, the state has no alternative to acting against that, he said.

Cruden said the Canadian government always condemned the violence in the strongest possible terms.

Meanwhile, she added that her government had given 8

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ABM Musa on life support
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Veteran journalist ABM Musa is critically ill and has been put on life support at Labaid hospital in the capital since early yesterday.

"Doctors kept him on artificial ventilation as his heart and kidneys have been damaged," said Dr Boren Chakraborty, a cardiologist treating Musa.

A pacemaker has been inserted into his body to maintain a normal heart rate, he added.

Stating the 83-year-old's health condition as critical, the physician said it was gradually deteriorating.

Parveen Sultana Jhuma,

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RANA PLAZA COLLAPSE
7 more bodies identified
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Seven more bodies of Rana Plaza victims have been identified by the National Forensic DNA Profiling Laboratory (NFDPL) of Dhaka Medical College.

NFDPL chief Prof Sharif Akhtaruzzaman told The Daily Star last night that they had submitted the DNA results to the government authority on Monday.

So far 207 out of the 322 unidentified bodies, from which DNA samples were collected, had been identified.

On April 24 last year, nine-storey Rana Plaza that housed five garment factories collapsed, trapping thousands.

According to government estimate, 1,134 people were killed and 2,515 injured people were rescued from the death trap.

The bodies which were beyond recognition were identified in three phases through DNA tests—initially 157, then 43, and now 7.

Punish errant ship-breaking yard owners: NGOs
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Coalition of Local NGOs, Bangladesh (CLNB) and Bangladesh Environment Lawyers Association (Bela) yesterday demanded that the government take action against ship-breaking yards which are violating laws.

CLNB demanded that the government investigate all incidents of workers' deaths at ship-breaking yards.

"As the shipyard owners are deliberately leading untrained workers to deaths by engaging them in risky jobs without adequate safety measures, they cannot avoid their liabilities for the accidents," said Harunur Rashid, chairperson of CLNB.

The government must identify the owners who are engaging workers flouting "The Ship Breaking and Ship Recycling Rules-2011," effective since 2012, he added.

He also demanded that the responsible owners be identified and punished. Referring to the government-authorized training centres' data, he said only 4,908 workers out of 200,000 have the mandatory job training.

In 2010, following a High Court order, which came after 43 workers had died, the government put up a ban on the industry.

It lifted the ban in 2012 on condition that the owners follow the law.

Over 45 deaths occurred in the last 28 months at ship-breaking yards, the CLNB chairperson said.

Meanwhile, Bela sent a legal notice to the government asking it to cancel environment clearance certificate and license of ship-breaking yards that have been violating laws.

Bela made the move following an incident of a gas cylinder explosion that killed four workers and injured two others who were dismantling a 5,400 tonnes ship at Arafin Enterprise at Kadam Rasul area in Sitakunda last Thursday.

In the legal notice, Bela asked for a neutral probe committee to investigate the incident and publish its report, said a Bela press release.

Bela sent the legal notice to several government agencies as per the High Court's direction that ordered compensation for all workers who die or are injured in accidents at ship-breaking yards.

Three killed as trains hit them in capital
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In a span of less than three hours, three people including a minor died in separate incidents after getting hit by trains at Malibagh rail gate and Karwan Bazar in the capital yesterday.

Saleha Khatun, 50, a street vendor, and Mukul Hossain, 45, a construction worker, died at Malibagh rail gate being run over by trains.

Mukul was hit by a train around 1:30pm while Saleha was struck by another around 4:00pm.

Both of them were rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital where they succumbed to their injuries.

Meanwhile, Billal Hossain, 10, died instantly at Karwan Bazar around 4:00pm after a train hit him.

Abdul Mazid, officer-in-charge of Dhaka Railway Police Station, confirmed the deaths.

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