



PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

Candidates hoping to run in the polls to Dhaka city corporations had jumped the gun and pasted posters of their campaign across the capital even though they are now not allowed to do so. The Election Commission had issued a notice to remove all such ads by yesterday morning. The photo was taken at a Suhrawardy Udyan gate around 1:00pm yesterday.

Half of Vanuatu's population affected by Cyclone Pam: UN

AFP, Port Vila

More than half of the South Pacific island nation Vanuatu's population has been affected by Cyclone Pam, the UN said yesterday as the death toll rose to 16.

Severe Tropical Cyclone Pam barreled into the archipelago a week ago, bringing sustained winds of some 250 kilometres (155 miles) per hour which devastated entire communities.

"Around 166,000 people, more than half of Vanuatu's population, have been affected by Tropical Cyclone Pam on 22 islands," the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) said in a situation report.

"Food stocks and water reserves are being exhausted and will not last more than a couple of weeks across the affected islands."

The agency said the confirmed death toll had risen to 16, as aid workers were able to reach new areas, with completed assessments covering 15 islands.

Aid agencies have stressed that potable water, food, shelter and health were a priority in the aftermath of the storm which hit late on March 13.

The latest assessment found damage to food crops was extensive.

"Coconut and banana plantations have been particularly devastated, which will have significant longer-term impact," OCHA said, noting that most people living on the outer islands grow their own food.

In some areas local residents would not only lose their main source of income due to damage to crops such as copra, but their food security would be threatened by the loss of livestock, such as pigs and poultry, it said.

In its situation report, OCHA said that access to some communities was still hindered across the sprawling nation which is made up of more than 80 islands.

But it said between 50 and 90 percent of local dwellings were estimated to have been damaged by the fierce winds which pounded Vanuatu as the eye of the storm hovered over the nation for hours.

Protests anger

upazila in Rangpur, reports our Rangpur Correspondent.

The victim is Sabiha Khatun (not her real name), 50.

Police and village sources said Polash Mian, 20, son of Raja Mian of the same village, stalked Mithila Khatun (not her real name), 12, often on her way to school. Mithila is a class VI student at Chowdhurani Girls' High School.

On Wednesday morning, Mithila protested when Polash harassed her on her way to school.

Later at night, Polash along with his friends tried to abduct Mithila when she went out of her room to go to toilet. Hearing her scream, her grandmother Sabiha came forward to rescue her.

The stalkers then threw acid on the grandmother, leaving her critically injured. She was

rushed to Pirganj Upazila Health Complex but was transferred to Rangpur Medical College Hospital on Thursday.

Dr Nimai Chandra Karmokar of Rangpur Medical said Sabiha's left eye would be damaged.

Md Aminul Islam, officer-in-charge of Pirgachha Police Station, said the victim's family has already lodged a case in this connection on Thursday night accusing four including Polash Mian.

Police have started drives to arrest the culprits, the OC added.

9 hurt in Magura arson

FROM PAGE 1

area, leaving seven labourers, the driver and his helper injured, said Jahangir Alam, officer-in-charge of Magura Sadar Police Station.

The victims were identified as Ilias Ali, 40, Roushan Ali, 36, Imran Hossain, 25, Faruk Ali, 35, Nazmul Hasan, 35, Arab Ali, 35, Yeadul, 33, Shakil, 32 and Nawsher Ali, 42. All of them hail from Sadar upazila of the district.

They were first taken to Magura Sadar Hospital. Of them, the conditions of five were critical.

Around 10:00pm, seven ambulances with the nine victims started for the DMCH, Magura SP Ziadul Kabir told The Daily Star around 1:00am.

DEATH OF THE FREEDOM FIGHTER With the death of sixty-year-old trucker Yusuf, 89 people have been killed and over a thousand injured in the ongoing political violence since January 6.

Yusuf, a skilled driver, loved his profession. On the fateful day, he was driving a fish-laden truck.

After the bomb attack, he was rushed to a local hospital in Feni and shifted to Comilla Medical College Hospital the next day.

Finally, he was admitted to the DMCH around 3:00pm yesterday.

"He [Yusuf] told us that he had fought in 1971 with the dream that people would live in peace. But now poor people like us are getting killed without any reason," said Yusuf's nephew Matiur Rahman, also a trucker.

"The politicians make money out of politics and become more powerful while we have to lose our lives," Matiur told The Daily Star at the DMCH burn unit last night.

Yusuf's wife Nasrin Akhter, who was waiting on the corridor of the unit, was not informed of her husband's passing as of 1:00am as she herself was very sick.

"Let me go to him [Yusuf] ... he wants to drink water," Nasrin kept saying, wailing.

Yusuf, who hailed from Comilla, left behind three sons and a daughter.

Hearing the news of Yusuf's admission to the DMCH, officials of the liberation war ministry visited the hospital and gave Tk 10,000 for his treatment, said the victim's relatives.

FRESH HARTAL

The call for hartal came at a time when BNP leaders hinted at the party's possible move to back some candidates for the upcoming mayoral polls in Dhaka and Chittagong.

The shutdown, beginning at 6:00am today, will continue until

6:00am Wednesday, according to a press statement issued yesterday by BNP Joint Secretary General Barkatullah Bulu.

The opposition combine called the fresh shutdown demanding the release of its arrested leaders including BNP joint secretary general Salahuddin Ahmed as well as to protest "enforced disappearance, killing, torture, abduction and arrest of its leaders and activists".

The alliance has been enforcing the countrywide hartal on all working days since February 1 on top of its indefinite blockade from January 6.

The worst victims of the shutdowns are some 1.5 million candidates of SSC and equivalent exams. The hartals left their exam schedules in tatters and forced them to sit for their exams on Fridays and Saturdays only.

The SSC and its equivalent examinations of March 8 and 10, which were postponed earlier, will be held on March 27 and 28 respectively.

As per the new schedule, the exams of March 27 will begin at 9:00am, while those of March 28 at 10:00am, said a press release of the education ministry yesterday.

The revised date for the postponed Dakhil exams of March 11 will be announced later, the press release stated.

According to the press release, the authorities concerned are asked to complete all the practical exams, including music and basic trade, between March 29 and April 2.

Meanwhile, criminals torched a local land office at Ullapara upazila in Sirajganj early Saturday.

Ullapara Upazila Nirbahi Officer Mohammad Shamim Alam said a group of criminals set fire to the land office around 12:30am, burning down valuable documents. On information, two firefighting units rushed in and doused the flames.

A three-member probe committee, led by an additional district magistrate of Sirajganj, was formed to investigate the incident.

The upazila administration filed a case in this connection, said Tajul Huda, officer-in-charge of Ullapara Police Station.

Two cops were injured as alleged pro-hartal pickets hurled several crude bombs at Dainik Bangla intersection in the city's Paltan around 8:00pm.

Assistant Sub-inspector (ASI) Nazmul Islam, 40, and Constable Kamrul Islam of Paltan Police Station were hurt when 4 to 5 cocktails were exploded in the area, ASI Sentu Das of Dhaka Medical College Hospital police camp told The Daily Star.

Libya rivals still long way from deal: envoy

AFP, Madrid

The UN's Libya envoy has warned an agreement between the strife-torn country's rival political factions is still a way off, in remarks published yesterday after the launch of crunch talks.

Libya has been wracked by violence since the NATO-backed uprising that toppled longtime dictator Moamer Kadhafi in 2011, with rival militias and administrations battling for power.

Three days of UN-mediated talks that began on Friday are aimed at reaching an agreement to form a national unity government.

"An agreement is going to be difficult, we are still a long way off," UN special envoy Bernardino Leon told the Spanish newspaper El Pais from Morocco.

As the talks got under way in Morocco, the internationally recognised government said loyalist forces had launched an offensive to "liberate" Tripoli, seized by Islamist-backed militia last summer.

"We think this activity is linked to the negotiations," Leon was quoted as saying.

"In both camps, there are the hardliners and the moderates," he said. "The moderates want to reach an agreement, while the hardliners prefer a military solution, they want to impose it on the other party by force."

"The international community can't accept such an outcome."

"What the international community didn't do well after the 2011 intervention is not to stay on the ground. It wasn't about rebuilding a state, it was about building one from scratch," he said.

Leon has said the talks in Morocco would focus on security arrangements, the creation of a national unity government and confidence-building measures.

"By Sunday, we would like to have these three documents ready and if possible, published, as already agreed (as) part of what will be a final package," Leon has said.

Six killed

FROM PAGE 16

Shafiqul Islam, 35, son of Asrof Ali. All hailed from Muktagacha upazila.

Police said the accident took place as a Jamalpur-bound sand-laden truck, which was coming from Mymensingh, collided head-on with a CNG-run auto-rickshaw in Bhabki area around 6:00am.

Two people were killed on the spot while six critically injured. All the victims were passengers of the auto-rickshaw, said Kamal Hossain, officer-in-charge of Muktagacha Police Station.

The injured were rushed to Mymensingh Medical College Hospital where doctors declared four of them dead, said police sources.

The CNG driver Rafiqul Islam, 35, and Nizam Uddin, 33, were being treated at the hospital, said sources.

Soon after the accident, locals demonstrated putting a barricade on the road near the spot, suspending vehicular movement for nearly one-and-a-half hours there, sources added.

Police seized the truck but the driver fled.

A case was lodged.

Family

FROM PAGE 16

"We wake up every morning with hope that maybe today we will get a good news [about Salahuddin]. But as dusk descends, our hopes to this end fade away. It is hard for me to look at my children's face when night falls," Hasina Ahmed told The Daily Star in an emotion-choked voice.

"No one in the world will be able to feel the pain and agony we are going through," she added.

The former BNP lawmaker also said she was yet to get any response from the Prime Minister's Office regarding an appointment to meet Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

Hasina along with her son and daughter went to the PMO on Thursday and submitted a memorandum, seeking PM's intervention to get her husband back.

On the matter, Hasina Ahmed yesterday said the PMO is yet to make any response about the memorandum.

Talking to The Daily Star, Moinul Kabir, investigation officer of Uttara West Police Station, yesterday said they were yet to get any information about the missing BNP leader.

"But our investigation is on," he added. He, however, did not elaborate.

According to Salahuddin's family, plainclothes detectives had picked up the BNP joint secretary general from a house in Uttara around 10:10pm on March 10. Law enforcement agencies, however, denied the allegation.

Hillary asked

FROM PAGE 16

Representative Trey Gowdy, who heads the Benghazi panel, said in a letter to Hillary's lawyer dated Thursday that she must respond by April 3 and agree to hand over the server. Otherwise, he would discuss additional steps for obtaining it with House of Representatives Speaker John Boehner.

Democrats on the committee accused Gowdy of being driven by politics, given Hillary's potential presidential aspirations.

The email issue has given Republicans new material to attack Hillary, widely seen as the Democratic 2016 presidential campaign front-runner, though she has not formally declared her candidacy.

Hillary has already given thousands of pages of work-related emails to the State Department. But many congressional Republicans want a neutral outsider to examine her email server and determine whether she handed over all relevant material.

Gowdy also has demanded emails from former Hillary aides and said he wants her to testify.

Gowdy said the committee would not examine any personal emails found on Hillary's server itself, but instead recommended the State Department's inspector general or another neutral figure look at them.

Kiwis fly

FROM PAGE 16

He departed soon afterwards skying an ambitious lofted drive which was well held by West Indies' captain Jason Holder running away from the pitch at deep cover.

Ross Taylor, who had been short of runs and uncertain of technique during the group stage, played with increasing assurance after a slow start. He ran a series of quick singles and the score mounted steadily against steady but unthreatening bowling.

Guptill brought up his half-century with seven fours and his century from 111 balls. He took 16 from a Taylor over and a huge six off Benn before Taylor ran himself out for 42.

The West Indies' bowling and fielding disintegrated and Guptill took full advantage, hitting the first ball by Andre Russell in the final over 110 metres into the stands.

Another six went over long-off, a four followed and the 30,000-strong crowd rose to Guptill as the teams left the field.

Arrests after woman beaten, set ablaze in Afghanistan

CNN ONLINE

The Afghan woman is dragged onto a roof and hit with a stick, as a horde of angry, screaming men swarm around her.

At one point, video shows her standing with her face covered in blood. She is pushed and falls over, with her beating continues with feet, with rocks, with boards. Then, in the last part of the video, her body is engulfed in flames -- though it's not known whether, by that point, she was already dead.

This horrific scene played out in Kabul on Thursday. It's already had ripple effects, including a United Nations statement on Friday condemning what it called "the brutal killing and burning of a 27-year-old mentally ill woman."

That corresponds with what the woman's parents told CNN affiliate Tolo News, saying their daughter suffered from mental health problems for the last 16 years.

It's not known whether her attackers knew this, or whether it would have mattered.

Case backlog piling up

FROM PAGE 16

Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) President Khandker Mahbub Hossain told The Daily Star that the backlog of cases was increasing for various reasons.

He said the HC, for example, extends its bail and stay orders in cases several times, and therefore, stay and bail petitions are not disposed of

quickly.

The government was not appointing judges to the Appellate Division even though four posts were vacant for a long time, the SCBA president said.

Mahbub also said disposal of cases by the apex court would further increase, if more benches were formed through the appointment of new judges.

| YEAR | APPELLATE DIVISION | HIGH COURT | LOWER COURT |
|------|--------------------|------------|-------------|
| 2014 | 5,911 | 22,477 | 12,76,156 |
| 2013 | 5,035 | 24,286 | 10,89,972 |
| 2012 | 2,905 | 64,483 | 9,88,651 |
| 2011 | 1,359 | 68,912 | 8,79,105 |

Number of cases disposed of according to an SC study

| YEAR | PENDING CASES | DISPOSED OF | FILED AND REVIVED |
|------|---------------|-------------|-------------------|
| 2014 | 30,07,860 | 13,04,544 | 16,07,255 |
| 2013 | 27,47,468 | 11,19,294 | 15,05,167 |
| 2012 | 24,45,435 | 10,32,189 | 13,59,589 |
| 2011 | 21,31,559 | 9,49,476 | 10,83,827 |

(According to an SC study)

AL-Shibir friendship!

FROM PAGE 16

On January 31, the police official filed the GD. On March 5, the SB informed Mozammel Haque Khan, senior home secretary, about the matter for action.

The incident reflects the desperate attempts by district-level AL leaders to set guidelines for police and force them to work according to their will. It also shows how law enforcers are under political pressure and influence.

During his conversation with the OC, the AL leader in question also alleged police were making a brisk business by detaining and releasing people.

This, too, is not an isolated charge against the police. Similar allegations have been raised from different parts of the country since the political unrest began in January.

In this particular incident, police arrested a Chhatra Shibir worker from a procession after blockaders blasted cocktails in front of a school around 10:50am on January 31.

Around 5:30 that afternoon, an AL man came to the police station and told the officer-in-charge that the party leader in question asked the cop to see him. When the officer went to the AL leader's office, he saw 30-35 more

party leaders there.

According to the SB report based on the GD, the AL leader told the OC that three senior police officers, including the OC, were not working as per the AL leaders' instructions. He alleged police were arresting hundreds of people only to release them later for lakhs of taka.

"You are not releasing those I want released. You are not arresting those I want arrested. You are not informing me before arresting anyone. I'm the party secretary general. From now on, you will not arrest anyone without consulting me.... You won't be able to work here [the name of the district taken out] if you detain anyone without my consent," the report quotes the leader as telling the OC.

"My boys will roam around with guns and knives; they will take drugs. Don't arrest them," he added.

But the OC told the AL leader that he would follow instructions of his superior officers, not his.

Later around 7:00pm that day, the AL leader called the OC and asked him to reconsider if the Shibir leader could be freed. When the OC replied in the negative, the leader said, "I will see to it how you can work at this police station."

Unparallel under

FROM PAGE 16

to this day, instead of modern masks or scuba gear. And their underwater vision is so evolved that they are able to gather tiny shellfish and other food from the ocean floor at depths as low as 75 feet!

Diving for food sounds like a difficult way to survive, but scientists have discovered that young Moken children have underwater vision that's twice as good as European children of the same age. Scientist Anna Gislén, of Sweden's Lund University, studied the children's unique vision after hearing about them from a colleague.

"Another scientist, Erika Schagatay, was in the south of China working with sea nomads and their diving response," she said. "She noticed that the children were picking out small brown clams from among brown stones. To her, this was incomprehensible, as she could hardly see them with her goggles, and the children used no such thing. It was not her area of science, so eventually it ended up on my desk."

Gislén then travelled to Thailand's Surin islands to conduct underwater tests on Moken children. "When I first saw them, I was instantly struck by their familiarity with water and -- though it may sound like a cliché -- they looked a bit like a school of little fish swimming around," she observed.

She compared the vision of 17 local Moken children with that of 18 European children on vacation in the

area, and found that there were no differences in their respective eye structures. Their land vision wasn't drastically different either. But underwater, the Moken children clearly had a distinct advantage. Their vision was twice as sharp.

The reason behind the baffling phenomenon, according to Gislén, lies in the refractive power of the eye's corneal surface. She explained that for most people, this refractive power is greatly reduced under water, because of the different densities of air and water. But the Moken are able to muscledly change the shape of the eye's lens, in order to increase light refraction.

"It seems they have learned to control their accommodative response, such that they can voluntarily accommodate even the blurry underwater environment," she said. "Their constricting pupils improve vision further. It's the same process that improves focal depth if using a camera with a smaller aperture."

Though Gislén has managed to find an explanation for the Moken's incredible underwater eyesight, she isn't sure if the ability is learned or genetic. "I think that in general this is very hard to know," she said. "Genes and environment are so intertwined that it's hard to separate them. What I do know is that we have trained European children to become as good at underwater tasks as the Moken children. So training seems to do the trick."