

UP POLLS VIOLENCE 75 hurt in two days

STAR REPORT
With union parishad elections getting closer, supporters of rival candidates are being engaged in clashes in several districts.

At least 75 suffered injuries in polls-related violence since Friday in Patuakhali, Barisal, Pirojpur and Pabna districts, report our correspondents.

Elections to 732 UPs are scheduled for March 22 in the first phase and 650 UPs for March 31 in the second phase.

In Patuakhali, at least 40 were injured in clashes at Choto Bighai union parishad (UP) and Alipur UP under Sadar and Dashmina upazilas on Friday.

Supporters of Awami League-nominated chairman aspirant Altaf Howlader for Choto Bighai UP attacked the residence of the ruling party's rebel candidate Lal Gazi contesting the same post.

The incident prompted both the parties to be locked into a clash, leaving some 30 people injured from both sides.

Ten others sustained injuries when supporters of independent chairman aspirant Sohrab Sardar of Alipur UP clashed with supporters of AL-nominated candidate Faysal.

In Barisal, at least 15 people were injured and seven motorcycles burnt during clashes between supporters of AL-backed and BNP-backed candidates in Sarikal union of Gourmadi upazila yesterday.

A local Chhatra League leader Lutfur Rahaman Dip along with AL men went to Kurirchar area to seek vote for the AL-nominated candidate. As they were getting past the residence of BNP-nominated candidate ASM Manjur Hossain, some BNP men hurled brickbats at them and burnt the motorcycles.

Awami League men later attacked BNP men in the area.

On information, police and other law-enforcement agencies rushed to the spot and brought the situation under control.

Kidnappers

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Thursday.

"I along with my husband and son was asleep on the same bed. Around 2:00am, I suddenly woke up hearing my son's screams.

"It was quite dark at that time. Before we could realise anything I saw two masked men taking my son away through the door," she said, adding that they disappeared immediately.

Asked, she said it was not a break-in. On information, police went to the spot around 4:30am.

The father, Kanchon, filed a case later at night with Galachipa Police Station against his sons Belal Hossain and Sona Mia for their alleged involvement in the crime.

Quoting the father, Abdur Razzak Mollah, officer-in-charge of the police station, said an unidentified man called Kanchon over the phone around 9:30am yesterday and demanded a ransom of Tk 1 crore for his son's release.

Kanchon said Belal and Sona might have kidnapped their step-brother for money as he had recently asked them to hand over the ownership of some business establishments in the town to the victim.

The brothers, son of Kanchon's first wife, termed the allegation "baseless". "It's a conspiracy against us," said Belal.

OC Razzak said they were dealing with the case with "due importance". SI Jakaia of the police station, also the investigation officer of the case, said they were trying to rescue Habibur.

Poet who bled rage

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manchitro khabo" (give me food, bastard, or else we will eat the map).

"[But] poetry is my first expression of love," the poet once said. That was when he lived.

An iconic poet of the 1970s and 1980s and a freedom fighter, Rafiq Azad died yesterday. He was 75.

He breathed his last at 2:10pm at the Intensive Care Unit of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU) hospital in the capital, his niece Niru Shamsunnahar told The Daily Star.

Rafiq Azad, who was awarded Ekushey Padak (2013) and Bangla Academy Award (1981), had been fighting for life for the last 58 days. He had suffered a brain stroke and was admitted to BIRDEM hospital and later transferred to the BSMMU.

The poet left behind his wife poet Prof Dilara Hafiz, four sons and two daughters, friends, fans, a host of relatives and well-wishers to mourn his death.

Abboy Azad, one of the poet's sons, urged all to pray for his father's departed soul. "My father had no regrets," he said.

His body will be kept at the BIRDEM mortuary until Monday, and will be taken to the Central Shaheed Minar at 10:00am on the day for people to pay their last tribute.

Later, his body will be taken to the Bangla Academy premises. Following his namaz-e-janaza at Dhaka University Central Mosque, the poet will be laid to eternal rest at Martyred Intellectuals' Graveyard in Mirpur the same day.

Renowned poet and ambidextrous litterateur Syed Shamsul Haq sees the demise of Rafiq Azad as "the departure of the brightest star" from the sky of Bangla

poetry. "Soon after hearing the news, I rushed there [hospital] and gazed at his face. I touched his hand that took up arms to fight for the country's liberation and at the same time wrote poems about injustice, exploitation, love and rebellion," he told The Daily Star.

In the 1960s, Rafiq Azad and Abdul Mannan Syed played the greatest role in shaping up the tone, nature and subjects of poetry, Shamsul Haq added.

His strong, intense verses deal with political, social and personal issues. His poetry reflects his experiences of the Liberation War, in which he fought. The poet once said, "As a freedom fighter, I think the spirit of Liberation War allows me to explore myself with new thought patterns, which is reflected in my poems."

Nature is another recurring theme in his poems. "I have been a keen observer of nature since childhood. Images of seasonal change, sailing boats and paddy fields nourish my soul and inspire me," the poet said in an interview when he received Ekushey Padak in 2013.

The poet was born on February 14, 1941, at Guni village in Ghatail upazila of Tangail. His contribution to Bangla literature is priceless. He was the editor of Bangla Academy's monthly literary magazine "Uttaradhikar".

He taught Bangla literature at Maulana Muhammad Ali College in Tangail.

Rafiq Azad had his primary education from Sadhutu Middle English School, and developed a keen interest in writing from his childhood.

He was one of the most prominent

young poets in the post-liberation period. Since then, he began experimenting with language and poetic forms, where surrealistic approach was noticeable. His first book of poetry was published in 1973. The following year, Bangladesh experienced a famine-like situation. The crisis, prevailing across the country at the time, prompted him to write one of his most notable lines -- "Bhat de haramjada, ta na hole manchitro khabo."

During the period and afterwards, Azad's poetry changed its course a bit and became more personal, lyrical and romantic.

His notable works include: "Prokriti O Premer Kobita", "Ashombhob-er Payer", "Sahashra Sundar", "Haturir Nichey Jibon", "Porikimo Panchala Amar Swadesh", "Khub Beshi Durey Noy", "Karo Ashru Paat", "Pagolar Thekey Premikar Chithi", "Seemabodho Jol-e, Simito Sabuj-e", and "Apar Aranya".

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, in a condolence message, expressed deep shock at the death of the poet and prayed for eternal peace of the departed soul and conveyed profound sympathy to the bereaved family, reports UNB.

President Abdul Hamid expressed profound shock at the death of Rafiq Azad.

Terming Azad's death an irreparable loss, he said the poet's contribution to the world of Bangla poem would be remembered forever, reports BSS.

In a condolence message, BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia said, "I am deeply shocked and saddened by the death of the country's renowned poet and journalist Rafiq Azad."

UK team looking into security steps

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Airport (ACC3) by an EU member state based on a valid security programme.

ACC3s must ensure that all cargo and mail carried to the EU is physically screened or have come from a secured supply chain which is EU aviation security validated.

For each carrier, ACC3 validation is required for an airport which serves as the Last Point of Departure (LPD) for flights into the EU, according to the EU regulations.

Local exporters said export of goods from Dhaka to the UK has started to face trouble since Thursday.

The UK-bound air carriers from Dhaka have already started re-screening of the cargo in third country airports as per the rules of the ban on direct cargo from Dhaka, they said.

"Such re-screenings at a third country airport takes more time and it might damage perishable goods. The carriers might charge higher transportation fare in future for the re-screening, if the ban prolonged," said Mohammed Monsur,

general secretary of Bangladesh Fruits, Vegetables and Allied Products Exporters Association.

"The vegetables and other perishable goods exporters would be the worst sufferers due to the latest move by the UK government," he said.

Apart from apparel, Bangladesh also export items like carrots, tomatoes, potatoes, eggplants, spinach, cauliflowers, papayas, pumpkins, bottle gourds, cabbages, coriander leaves, ladies fingers, cucumbers, bitter gourds, beans, jute leaves, radishes, dry fish, fish, and meat to other countries. The UK is a major market for them.

The local companies also export agro-processed packaged food to the UK.

Mahbulul Anam, president of Bangladesh Freight Forwarders Association, also said the exporters would have to face trouble due to the physical screening of cargo.

Siddiqur Rahman, president of Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association, said, "We want immediate solution to the prob-

lem as the UK is also a major market for our garment business. In emergency cases, we send garment items to the UK on flights. The ban on direct flights will hamper our business."

Bangladesh exported garment items worth \$3.23 billion in 2014-15 fiscal year to the UK, registering a 21.28 percent growth from the previous year, according to data from the Export Promotion Bureau.

Biman is set to lose business of around Tk 100 crore a year if the ban on direct cargo from Dhaka to the UK continued.

There could be more bad news for the carrier as the UK might ban direct passenger flights from Dhaka as well, if Bangladesh failed to start meeting some international security requirements by March 31, officials in the civil aviation ministry has said recently.

Biman is the only carrier that operates Dhaka-London direct flights. The carrier has four flights a week and until Wednesday it carried cargo on those flights.

1 lakh trees planted

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coordinators.

Each of the 82000 households of the country planted a tree while the other 26000 trees were planted by volunteers, headed.

Bhutan, which broke a world record by planting over 49,000 trees in an hour last year, has an inherent desire of reforestation in the country and has a constitution that calls for 60 percent of the land to be covered by forests.

King Khesar's father introduced the Gross Happiness Index in 1972 which balances economic growth with environmental conservation and overall well being of the people.

According to the index, happiness is connected with cleaner surroundings and passion for environmental conservation no matter what the political align-

ments of the country are.

Bhutan, which has recently become a democracy, still looks up to the monarchy for stability and prosperity of the nation.

Tourism Ministry of Bhutan has opened up a 'Happiness Garden', in line with the royal celebrations, where foreign visitors are invited to plant trees representing their home nation.

Giving life to something that sustains life being the key to happiness is the philosophy behind all this.

"Bhutan is known as a country of happiness. To have a happiness garden is therefore logical. With this garden, we hope to bring the peoples of the world closer," said Damchoe Rinzin, a spokesperson for the Tourism Council of Bhutan.

Inu-led JSD

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Udyan on Friday. Its central leadership was supposed to be elected yesterday by the councillors at the Mohanagar Natya Mancha.

The councillors elected Inu as president and lawmaker Shirin Akhter as general secretary by voice votes.

Talking to The Daily Star last night, Ambia said electing a new leadership by a voice vote is "undemocratic". The election was supposed to be held by secret ballot.

The JSD-Inu is a component of the ruling Awami League-led 14-party grand alliance. Ambia claimed that four out of the party's six lawmakers are with the new faction.

The JSD was split in 2002 when some of its leaders led by ASM Abdur Rob formed a new party -- Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD-Rob).

NID card not easy to get

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services every day, have to go through the same sufferings, if not more, as Kulsum had to.

"I applied for correction of my name's spelling in the card around a month ago. They [NIDW officials] asked me to come today [February 23] to take the card. But now they are saying that card has not been printed yet," said Imam Hossain, who resides in the capital's Mohakhali area.

In response to the allegations, NIDW Director General Brig Gen Sultanuzzaman Md Saleh Uddin says sometimes it takes longer than usual to verify information of the card holders and that's the main reason behind the delay in service delivery.

Then again, an excessive number of service seekers and mismanagement of the authorities concerned make the entire office premises very chaotic.

On February 23 afternoon, over two dozen people were seen hurling expletives at an Ansar man who was assigned to maintain the queue of service seekers.

The Ansar member had allegedly allowed someone to break the queue and let them stand in the front.

Moments later, at least one hundred people, who were in the queue, started shouting again, this time for speeding up the card delivery process.

The authorities were not moved at all. After shouting for around 10 minutes, the people eventually went quiet, they could change nothing.

Such chaos comes as a boon for the swindlers. A number of them were found selling application forms for new NID cards at Tk 10.

Though the forms are supposed to be distributed free of cost by the NIDW officials, the distribution outlets are open only for certain hours of the day and people have to stand in queues to get them. So, people often prefer paying Tk 10 to going through all those hassles.

To deal with an ever-increasing number of service seekers, the NIDW central office in Dhaka from February 15 stopped accepting applications for correcting the NID cards. People have to do that through the upazila election offices concerned.

But around 2:00pm on February 23, a swindler was found telling a service seeker that he could get the NID card corrected through underhand dealings.

Sensing presence of the correspondent, the duo went away.

Asked about this, NIDW chief Saleh Uddin said the authorities often conduct drives against them and some have already been arrested.

People have to endure sufferings because of the excessive number of people who come every day to seek service, he said

"But we hope that the sufferings will be lessened as the NID card correction service has been decentralised to the upazila-level election offices."

Since 2008, the NIDW has received more than 6 lakh applications for the NID correction, around 2.5 lakhs in the past three months, according to the NIDW director general.

They have delivered 4.5 lakh corrected NIDs already and the rest expected to be served by this month, he added.

In a first, UN adopts

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against soldiers who face credible allegations.

Foreign troops found guilty of sex abuse "do not deserve to serve in UN peacekeeping missions," US Ambassador Samantha Power told the council.

"To the victims of sexual exploitation and abuse, we pledge that we will do better," she said.

"We will do better to ensure that the blue helmets we send as your protectors do not become perpetrators."

Egypt, along with Russia and Senegal, had argued that the new policy amounts to collective punishment and that attention should focus on prosecuting individual perpetrators of sex crimes.

Minutes before the adoption, Egypt presented an amendment that would have added criteria for deciding on a repatriation, a move Power said would have "undermined the purpose of the resolution."

That amendment was backed by Angola, Russia, China, Egypt, Venezuela but it fell short of the nine votes needed for approval in the 15-member council.

Egyptian Ambassador Amr Abdellatif Aboulatta said the resolution will "negatively affect the morale of the troops and demonstrates contempt for the sacrifices of tens of thousands of peacekeeping personnel operating under extremely difficult conditions."

Egypt argued that it was up to the UN General Assembly, and not the Security Council, to take action on issues of discipline in UN peacekeeping.

Concern has been growing since the release of a UN report showing a rise in the number of allegations of sexual abuse and exploitation by peacekeepers in 10 missions, from 52 in 2014 to 69 last year.

Cases of child rape by UN peacekeepers in the Central African Republic have been particularly damaging, prompting

Ban to fire the mission commander in August, but the allegations have continued to surface.

Under UN rules, it is up to the country that contributes the peacekeepers to investigate and prosecute any soldier accused of misconduct while serving under the UN flag.

The United States had argued that too often, countries fail to investigate after they are notified by the United Nations of credible allegations against their troops.

The Security Council resolution will strengthen Ban's hand as he pushes peacekeeping nations to take sex abuse allegations seriously, diplomats say.

Last year, Ban ordered troops from the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Republic of Congo to be sent home after their soldiers were accused of sexual abuse in the Central African Republic.

A total of 122 countries contribute 125,000 troops and police to the UN's peacekeeping missions worldwide.

Five hurt

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factory "blew up in the explosion leaving a wreckage of demolished walls and other equipment."

Anamul, Mizan and Billal were in critical condition with 45, 60, and 50 of their bodies burnt, said Partha Shankar Paul, resident surgeon at the National Institute of Burn and Plastic Surgery at Dhaka Medical College Hospital where all the injured were taken.

A hydraulic oil cylinder of the factory exploded due to excessive heat around 4:00pm, said Palash Chandra Modok, duty officer of the Fire Service and Civil Defence headquarters.

The OC claimed that the owner of the factory was on the run.

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