



Trucks line up at Shimulia ghat in Munshiganj yesterday afternoon. Over 700 vehicles were stranded at Shimulia and Kawrakandi ghat as dense fog suspended ferry services on the Padma for nine and a half hours. The services resumed at 7:30am.

PHOTO: STAR

ROW OVER UTTAR PRADESH POLLS

Mulayam expels CM from party

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

In a major political development, Uttar Pradesh's ruling Samajwadi Party chief Mulayam Singh Yadav yesterday expelled his son and Chief Minister Akhilesh Yadav from the party, capping weeks of feud within the family and the party.

The action by Mulayam came ahead of crucial state legislature elections in the state due early next year.

The senior Yadav also expelled his cousin and senior party leader Ram Gopal Yadav for the second time in months for allegedly "spoiling the career of the chief minister".

The Samajwadi Party (SP) supremo said both Akhilesh and Ram Gopal were sacked for weakening the party.

"I had made Akhilesh chief minister and now he does not even consult me," said the father as he announced the son's expulsion.

The father would not immediately say who would be the chief minister in place of Akhilesh.

The SP had appeared set for a split for some months now and the turning point came after Ram Gopal, a staunch supporter of the chief minister, called

2 local govt polls, 2 varying pictures

FROM PAGE 1

But the high hopes were dashed in the zila parishad elections held less than a week later.

Unlike the NCC polls, the zila parishad election could not flicker any hope for a change in the pervasive electoral culture. Its election process began alongside the NCC polls, but the clean campaign in Narayanganj did not have any impact on zila parishad electioneering.

While candidates in small town of Narayanganj were setting good examples in their electioneering, a complete opposite picture was seen in the countwide zila parishad elections.

In the run up to the zila parishad election, some ruling AL MPs meddled in the polls process by taking part in campaigns of their preferred candidates. In so doing the lawmakers did not hesitate to violate the electoral code of conduct. They did this so that they could keep dominating the local politics by ensuring victory of their preferred candidates, who are also local leaders of the AL.

The Election Commission was unable to prevent MPs from participating in campaigning. The situation forced the EC to seek the Speaker's intervention. Two days before the polls, it wrote to the Speaker with a request to take steps so that MPs do not stay in their constituencies and influence the polls further. But some law-

makers stayed in their constituencies, paying no heed to the call.

Another negative aspect of the zila parishad polls was the alleged use of black money and chairman aspirants' distribution of "gifts" among voters. Those who allegedly did this belong to AL and they bribed people who also belong to AL.

In the absence of the BNP in the race, the polls appeared as an in-house fight between grassroots AL leaders. The BNP leaders did not step into the battle of ballots as the party does not have adequate number of electorates to win any chairman post.

Elected representatives of other local government bodies -- city corporations, municipalities, upazilas and union parishes -- are the electorates. And almost all of them belong to the ruling AL camp as they managed to win most of the posts in those local bodies in the elections held in the last three years.

The AL supported candidates were supposed to easily capture most of the chairman posts. But party's dissidents who contested the polls in more than 30 districts, defying the high command's decision, made the election competitive.

The AL high command tried to defuse the rebels but failed. This exposed the fragile state of the chain of command in the party which resulted in the defeats of party backed 11 chairman candidates.

However, 21 AL leaders were elected chairman uncontested. Unopposed wins got new dimension in two districts -- Feni and Jhalakathi -- where two chairmen and all 40 members were elected uncontested.

This fell in line with the unhealthy trend of uncontested elections in the last three years, since the January 2014 parliamentary election which witnessed 153 out of 300 MPs elected unopposed, a record.

Alongside unhealthy practices, like violation of code of conduct by MPs and use of money by candidates to bribe voters, intense rivalries among ruling party men triggered a fear of violence on election day.

Police and members of Border Guard Bangladesh were deployed in at least 25 districts to maintain law and order. It appeared unique as those who were voters were locally important people and most of them belong to the ruling AL and there was no other opponent political parties competitively contesting the polls.

Deployment of 45,000 members of the law enforcers to ensure security of around 60,000 voters in zila parishad elections was unprecedented. The number of law enforcers was four times higher than the number of security men deployed in the NCC polls in which around 5 lakh voters were entitled to cast their votes.

In Narayanganj, the AL had archrival BNP to deal with. There was

fear of violence as the two archrivals faced off in the prestigious electoral race. Yet free, fair and peaceful election was possible as the ruling party did not interfere in the polls. The non-interference paved the way for the law enforcers and the civil administration to ensure peaceful atmosphere during the entire election process.

The situation was different in zila parishad polls. The AL was left alone in the race as the BNP and Jatiya Party boycotted the polls. Yet, the election was not free from the meddling of some MPs and ministers. Due to the interference, the administration engaged in election duties was unable to check ruling party men bribing voters.

The unprecedented security measures could not make the polls entirely peaceful. There was violence in four districts on election day. None but the ruling party men were involved.

The EC that was able to conduct the NCC polls in a free, fair and peaceful manner but could not deliver what the people expected in the zila parishad polls.

And at the end of the day, the maiden zila parishad election got tainted, dealing a big blow to the people's expectations for good elections.

The ruling AL, the government and the EC now need to walk extra-miles to restore people's confidence in future elections.

A torchbearer

FROM PAGE 1

making, two activities that can generate an income. At present 35 of the around 80 village households have started producing vermicompost, with many more set to join them.

"My husband died ten months ago," says neighbour Ila Rani Das, 65. "I am maintaining my family by selling vermicompost fertiliser, which Sabita showed me how to do. I can now write my name and address thanks to her. In our community, she is a torchbearer."

"We have learnt how to lead neat and clean lives," says Poly Rani Das, 40, of the same village. "We didn't know about sanitation before or vermicompost fertiliser. Sabita has truly opened our eyes and we are so happy about that because finally we can read and write, and we have an income."

Other local women including Joshua Rani Das and Anjali Rani Das echoed such sentiments.

"Sabita advises the other village women how to live healthy lives," says local doctor Nurul Islam. "She cares about their health."

Vermicompost expert Helal Uddin of Moheshwarhanda village in Jhenidah's Kaliganj upazila meanwhile has given vermiculture training and inspiration at Sabita's request. "It can bring prosperity to their lives," he says.

"I heard that Helal Uddin trains people to be self-employed with vermiculture," Sabita says. "So I invited him to our village. The acute misery of many women in Laxmipur is at an end. We are starting a new way of life."

The chairman of Raghbardi union in which Laxmipur is located, Babul Fakir, says he has heard of Sabita's good work for underprivileged women. "If she asks I will do my best to help her," he says.

Of course Sabita is always thinking to the future; how to help herself and fellow village women all the more. "What we need now," she says, "is access to financial assistance so we can start cattle-raising. If that, we had the capital we could do that, and we would be able to earn well."

Can Tigers end 2016 on a high?

FROM PAGE 1

for them because they had given away the control of the game during crucial moments of the series. Had they not lost the first ODI in Dhaka from an advantageous position and had they not conceded a first-innings lead in the Chittagong Test, they could have won both series.

In New Zealand, which is their first away series after quite some time, they lost the opening game at Christchurch by 77 runs on Monday. But at Nelson they lost a golden opportunity not only to level the

series but also to score their first ever win against the Black Caps on their home turf when they restricted them to 251 and then raced to 105 for one on a batting-friendly wicket. But an inexplicable collapse denied the team of something memorable.

The defeat at the Saxton Oval on Thursday was an irritating illustration of their near glory-hunting approach that was also evident in their other near-misses of a year in which they maintained their home dominance. Mushfiqur was emo-

tionally overboard at the Chinnaswamy, so was Mahmudullah in the same game. Shakib Al Hasan's down-the-wicket antics on the third morning of the first Test against England or his unnecessary aggressive intent in the first one-dayer against the same team have already been well documented. The latest instance at the Saxton Oval was a collective brain-freeze, and to an extent another glory-hunting exercise from Shakib.

The progress of the Tigers in the last couple of years revolved round a

collective, positive approach under an inspirational leader on the field with a thinking brain off it. It is also a time when the supply line through a strong youth system is far richer.

This is a different brand of Tigers prospering on their home turf, but one that has also got all the ingredients to do well in trying away conditions. Among the 22 players that featured in the second ODI on Thursday, one can safely say that Sabir Rahman was the most dangerous batsman. He has hardly played in these conditions before,

but the way he got on top of the bounce of the ball against the pacers and the way he stepped out against spinners was the hallmark of a top batsman.

Sabir was spot on when he said that despite the defeat in the first two games they have at least fulfilled the first target in New Zealand -- being competitive. What they need now is to show that competitiveness as a unit and in all aspects of the game. If they can do that on the last day, the year of lost opportunity might have a fulfilling conclusion.

Fight far from over

FROM PAGE 1

an alarming level as the government and law enforcers were always on a denial mode when so-called IS and Ansar al Islam were claiming the killings.

Things started to change after July 1 when militants attacked an upscale eatery in Gulshan's high-security diplomatic zone, killing 20 hostages, mostly foreigners.

All the five militants were killed in the commando operation launched to end the siege.

IS reportedly claimed credit for the café attack while authorities termed it an act of "Neo JMB", a faction of local banned outfit Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB).

"Neo JMB" is said to be inspired by the ideologies of IS.

Officials say this faction also carried out the armed attack near the historic Sholakia Eidgah on the July 7 Eid day, leading to the death of two policemen, a housewife and a militiaman.

Following the two major attacks, law enforcers conducted successful counterterrorism operation at Kalyanpur, Narayanganj, Rupnagar, Azimpur, Gazipur, Savar, Tangail and Ashkona, killing around 35 militants.

In the operation in Narayanganj, Bangladesh-born Canadian citizen Tamim Chowdhury, who was allegedly the main coordinator of "Neo JMB",

got killed along with his two aides. The café attack, which DMP's counterterrorism unit chief Monirul Islam compares to the 9/11 and Mumbai attacks, came as a setback for the economy and the nation's image as some countries issued security alerts and instructed their citizens and development workers to come home.

Many hotels and restaurants where foreigners used to hang out came on the verge to closure.

The situation, however, has improved but security analysts think the threat of militancy still remains.

"We have nothing to fear, but we have to remain alert," said Monirul Islam.

"If the awareness created among people against militancy persists, 2017 will be safe," he said, adding police skill along with capacity to counter militancy is also increasing day by day.

"If we want to eliminate terrorism, a comprehensive approach is needed where all stakeholders in the society has a role to play."

Analysts also said terrorism cannot be tackled only by applying force. It needs a comprehensive approach involving all stakeholders of the society and proper implementation of counterterrorism programmes the government has already taken. They also called for de-radicalisation efforts.

Security analyst Air Cdre (retd) Ishfaq Ilahi Choudhury suggested

improving intelligence gathering of different agencies and security forces and increasing coordination among different forces.

He also put emphasis on engagement of people in anti-terror campaigns and a unified education based on the country's heritage, constitution and culture.

"We have to stay vigilant and improve our capacity," he added.

Nur Khan, executive director (acting) of rights body Aion o Salish Kendra, said, "We have failed to take necessary steps for de-radicalisation. So, at the end of 2016, we have seen female suicide attackers, children being used as shields and family-based units of militants."

Militancy is no longer limited to madrasa students or the poor, he observed, saying Bangladesh might face new challenges in 2017.

He suggested forming a national security council with members from military, police and civil experts to advise the prime minister on combating militancy. He also called for consensus among political parties on counterterrorism issues.

Prof Ajay Roy, father of writer-blogger Avijit Roy, who was killed in a militant attack in February 2015, said he does not think tackling militancy would be an impossible task for the government if it remains alert and law enforcers cooperate.

Analysts also said terrorism cannot be tackled only by applying force. It needs a comprehensive approach involving all stakeholders of the society and proper implementation of counterterrorism programmes the government has already taken. They also called for de-radicalisation efforts.

It all depends on the intention of the government and the sincerity of the members of the law enforcement agencies, he told The Daily Star.

He said the government has become sincere though at the initial stage it did not attach that much importance to militancy issue.

Prof Roy expressed dissatisfaction over justice not being done for the killing of freethinkers and bloggers.

Monirul Islam said the existing anti-militancy programmes are good enough. But the authorities must ensure that they are implemented.

He said that under such a programme, imams were clearly instructed to give Bangla speech against militancy alongside Arabic sermon during the Juma prayers.

Some officials, however, said it is a good initiative but imams were not properly trained and briefed. Besides, there is no mechanism to monitor whether imams are following the directives, they said.

Monirul said following the Gulshan attack, awareness has been created among people of all spheres -- from family to educational institution.

Islamic clerics are now terming militancy anti-religious and families and relatives are offering apology to the nation for involvement of their children in militancy. So the militants have been defeated morally and ideologically, he added.

Trinamool

FROM PAGE 16

Partha Chattapadhyay, a top leader of Trinamool Congress, has also confirmed the arrest of Tapas, who was elected lawmaker twice from Krishnanagar of Nadia district of West Bengal.

He was director of a Kolkata-based financial organisation from 2011 to 2012.

Officials said Rose Valley is an illegal financial organisation and Tapas used to withdraw a handsome salary from it using his political influence.

Tapas along with his wife went to the regional office of CBI in Kolkata yesterday morning. A questioning session continued till 2:00pm and Tapas failed to reply properly, said the sources. He was also grilled for two hours three days earlier, they added.

The CBI officials said Tapas' cell phone and papers were also seized.

Partha Chattapadhyay termed it BJP government's political vengeance.

"The BJP central government has taken such a dirty step to stop the Trinamool leader's movement against black money. It is nothing but political vengeance," he said.

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has demanded resignation of the prime minister, alleging that he has failed to deliver on his commitment to resolving the problems arising from demonetisation by the end of the year.