



People of char areas join a rally at Joybangla Bazar in Mymensingh yesterday to protest lodging of two “false cases” against members of a committee to protect homesteads and farmland from a land acquisition bid. The committee has been spearheading a movement for the last two years against an “unfair” acquisition list for the development of new Mymensingh divisional city.

PHOTO: STAR

EC warnings fall on deaf ears

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Despite having all these elements, he said, no major untoward incident took place in the cities. “I hope the voters will cast their votes in favour of development and democracy.”

Meanwhile, BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir alleged that the EC was making a “mockery” of the elections.

“I talked with the election commissioners over the upcoming three city polls and they said they were trying [to hold a free and fair election]. I want to say that trying is not your duty, your duty is to hold a free, fair and credible election.”

Fakhrul urged the EC to create a congenial atmosphere for the polls, and said, “Otherwise, resign from the office. If any election commission fails to transfer an OC or SP, that commission is not capable of holding any national election.”

VIOLATIONS APLENTY

The EC has recently warned against the violation of the electoral code of conducts in the three city polls, saying it will take actions against the violators.

However in Rajshahi city, the mayoral candidates brought out huge processions, showcasing their strengthen. Some of the processions were participated even by children.

On behalf of AL candidate AHM Khairuzzaman Liton, boats -- larger than the permissible size of three metres -- were placed at different points of the city.

One large boat was kept at a pond near Liton’s residence in Kadirganj area while another with wheels and loudspeakers was used for campaigning.

Thousands of posters and banners of both the mayor candidates hung across the city. Many of those were larger than the advised size.

During his campaign, BNP candidate Mosaddek Hossain Bulbul allegedly made “provocative” statements against Liton.

Returning Officer (RO) Sayed Amirul Islam said they received at least 82 complaints, most of which were related to violations of the code of conduct.

Although Liton was facing these charges of electoral rules violation, he himself filed 50 complaints against his

opponents. Bulbul filed 21 while the rest were filed by different ward councillor candidates.

Talking to The Daily Star, the RO said, “I warned the candidates concerned at least twice for violating rules and also warned the police for harassing BNP men.”

He said he served show cause notices on both Liton and Bulbul more than once, but only Liton came up with explanations.

There have been similar cases of breaching electoral rules in Sylhet.

Almost all the candidates were seen violating the rules during the end of the electioneering. The EC, on the other hand, was passing busy time making preparations for the polls.

In a clear violation of rules, Chhatra League yesterday brought out processions and chanted slogans in favour of AL candidate Badar Uddin Ahmed Kamran.

Most councillor candidates were also seen bringing out processions. Supporters of many candidates roamed on motorbikes.

According to Section 11 of the City Corporation (Electoral Behaviour) Rules 2016, no procession or showdown can be brought out before the election.

On Thursday, eight chairmen of different upazilas in Sylhet division joined an electoral meeting at Hotel Gulshan in favour of Kamran.

While leaving the hotel after the meeting, they all carried posters and other electoral materials in their government vehicles.

Earlier on Tuesday, 14 upazila chairmen in the division campaigned for BNP candidate Ariful Haque Choudhury. While coming to the campaign programme, they also used government vehicles.

In the last few days, flocks of posters were seen in many parts of the city along with some bigger sized banners. Proloy Kumar Saha, assistant returning officer of the election, said, “We have served show cause notices on two government officials for taking part in electoral campaigns and will take action against anyone if any complaints are filed with the EC.”

Meanwhile, at an emergency press conference at his election camp around 10:00pm yesterday, Ariful

alleged that the AL was trying to intimidate the BNP men in the city and destroy the polls environment.

Earlier in the day around 1:30am, miscreants riding two motorbikes threw a cocktail that blasted in front of an electoral camp of AL candidate at Chowkidekhi area in Ward 6. No one was injured in the blast.

In Barisal, a procession was brought out last night in favour of the mayor candidate from the AL, Serniabat Sadiq Abdullah. It is clearly a violation of the election rules.

At a press conference at the AL office yesterday afternoon, party leaders denied all allegations of breaching the electoral code of conducts and brought counter allegations against the BNP.

However, BNP leaders yesterday claimed that at least 15 leaders and supporters were arrested as law enforcers raided several houses in an “attempt to arrest BNP men”.

Contacted, Afzal Hossain, information and research secretary of the central AL, claimed that police arrested only those men who were accused in specified cases.

Four new cases were filed against BNP men with three police stations in Barisal.

BNP mayoral candidate Mujibur Rahaman Sarwar yesterday submitted a written complaint to the EC over the arrest and harassment of their party workers. He demanded the EC ensure a congenial atmosphere for the polls.

Talking to reporters later, Sarwar said, “We are suspecting that the election in Barisal would be like the ones in Gazipur and Khulna.” BNP alleges both the elections were marred by irregularities.

He called upon the voters to cast votes ignoring “all kinds of obstacle and intimidation”.

Contacted, EC Secretary Helal Uddin Ahmed said a peaceful environment was prevailing in all three cities with no major untoward incident, excepting for a crude bomb blast in Rajshahi.

“If any incident of violation of code of conduct takes place anywhere, the returning officer and mobile courts will take steps against it,” he said, adding that, “We will do everything necessary for holding a free and fair election.”

Commercially

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proposed to shut down the commercially unsustainable pharmaceuticals unit.”

The company expects the winding-up process to complete by the end of 2018.

The company will, however, continue to run its consumer healthcare business in Bangladesh.

Around 70 percent of its turnover comes from consumer healthcare products while the pharmaceuticals unit has continued to incur losses, Azizul Huq said.

He hoped that GSK Bangladesh’s profits would soar after the closure.

The company will provide financial and psychological support to the 1,000 people who will become unemployed due to the closure, he promised.

The company will also arrange a job fair to help the employees find work, he added.

Each share of the company was traded between Tk 1,205.90 and 1,286.70 on Thursday.

Five more killed

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In another incident, two alleged robbers were killed in a “shootout” with detectives near Narayanpur graveyard in Comilla’s Titas upazila.

They are Al Amin Kawser, 30, of Titas upazila, and Ershad Mia, 32, of Burichang upazila.

Around 2:45am, a team of Detective Branch (DB) of police raided Narayanpur graveyard area on information that some robbers were planning to commit a robbery, said Shakhawat Hossain, additional superintendent of Comilla police.

Sensing presence of law enforcers, the “robbers” opened fire. The law enforcers retaliated, triggering the “gunfight”, the police official said.

After the “gun battle”, detectives detained seven of the robber gang, including injured Al Amin and Ershad. Doctors declared the two dead after being taken to Titas Upazila Health Complex, the police official said.

DB Sub-inspector Shah Kamal, who led the drive, said the seven were accused in criminal cases.

Police claimed to have recovered two firearms, four cartridges and three sharp weapons from the spot.

In Sirajganj, another suspected robber, Hazrat Ali, 35, of Pankharua village in Ullapara upazila, died in a similar incident in the upazila.

Sakibul Islam Khan, commanding officer of Rab-12 and also additional superintendent of police, said the “shootout” happened in Paikpara when a team of Rab-12 was raiding the area around 2:30am yesterday.

Two firearms, three bullets, 14 cartridges and several sharp weapons were recovered from the scene, the Rab official said.

Hazrat was the ring leader of a robber gang and accused in 12 cases, including murder and robbery, the Rab official added.

In Rajbari, a suspected outlawed party leader was killed in what police claimed to be a shootout in Sluice Gate area of Pangsha upazila around 4:00am yesterday.

The deceased is Lalon Hawladar, 42, of Pabna’s Sujaganar upazila.

Lalon, who was wanted in four cases filed in connection with robbery, was the second-in-command of “Julhash Bahini”, a faction of outlawed Purb Banglar Communist Party (ML Lal Pataka), said Fazlul Karim, senior assistant superintendent of Rajbari police (Pangsha circle).

Police claimed to have recovered two firearms and six cartridges from the spot.

Our correspondents in Tangail, Comilla, Pabna and Faridpur contributed to this story.

Tigers need

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turned around from their humiliating defeats in the two-match Test series, but the Tigers reverted to type in the second match, letting a match that was there for the taking slip from their grasp. Shakib Al Hasan and Tamim Iqbal -- the heroes with 97 and 130 respectively in the first match -- had again wrested the initiative in the second match but both departed playing irresponsible shots in chase of West Indies’ 271 all out.

Mushfiquur Rahim and Mahmudullah Riyad repaired the damage, but the latter was guilty of losing his cool when he ran himself out within touching distance of the win. While the seniors have been performing, the onus will now be on the juniors like Sabbir Rahman and Mosaddek Hossain to support them.

There were also numerous missed opportunities on the field that the Tigers will want to eradicate. If they do win today, it will be their third series win over West Indies and their second series victory over the hosts in West Indies.

As for the hosts, they will be looking at Shimron Hetmyer -- who hit a fifty in the first game and a century in the second -- to fire yet again and for their explosive opener Chris Gayle to impose his will on the series.

Mine officials to face music

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The Petrobangla chief said the BCMCL MD had been telling him about sufficient coal stock, but he gave wrong information which was an offence.

He said coal mine officials could not give “appropriate answer” to Petrobangla about the delivery of coal from its yard on April 22 flouting a decision of the BCMCL’s board.

The board had decided not to sell coal from March 18.

Faizullah further said involvement of coal mine officials in an alleged trade over delivery order (DO) letter would be investigated.

He mentioned that production of coal at the mine would resume early in September. He said weekend and Eid-ul-Azha holidays of all the BCMCL staffers have been cancelled.

Energy Division Secretary Rahmatul Muneem questioned why the BCMCL officials didn’t adjust it earlier if there was system loss in mining.

He termed giving wrong information about coal stock an offence.

Asked about the yearly audit report of the coal mine company, he said they would also check the auditor’s report.

The secretary said they asked the BCMCL officials to resume mining as early as possible so that power generation at the power plant resumes at the earliest.

Power Division Secretary Ahmad Kaikaus said they were trying hard to resume power generation at the power plant.

“Had the power plant officials

known about the shortage of coal earlier, they would have found alternative sources of coal for running the plant.”

He informed journalists that the power ministry was looking for some alternative sources of coal.

The secretary said although the power plant suspended production on July 22, the PDB was trying to manage the power supply across the country through load shedding. “We are trying to keep people’s suffering at minimal level.”

Kaikaus said eight districts in Rangpur division would mainly suffer from load shedding and low voltage problems at peak hour (7:00pm to 10:00pm).

Abdul Hakim Sarkar, chief engineer of the power plant, said the four top officials had a meeting with the plant officials yesterday to discuss ways to resume its operation soon.

The BCMCL produced around 1.0166 crore tonnes of coal from 2005 to June 16 this year. The company sold 66.87 lakh tonnes to BPDB and 33.19 lakh tonnes to brickfield operators and other industries. Besides, the company itself used 12,000 tonnes of coal.

According to the coal mine company, its stock was 3,000 tonnes on July 22.

Anisur Rahman, manager (administration) of BCMCL, filed a case with Parbatipur Police Station on July 24 accusing 19 company officials of corruption.

Israel to build new homes

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The attacker was later identified by official Palestinian media as Mohammed Dar Youssef, 17, from the village of Kobar.

The army said yesterday it had raided the village, questioned a number of his family members and suspended their work permits.

During the raid, clashes broke out between young Palestinians and soldiers firing tear gas.

“The rioters hurled large rocks and firebombs and rolled burning tyres at (Israeli) troops, who responded with riot dispersal means,” an army statement said.

The clashes were over by mid-morning, an AFP photographer said, though the army had established a checkpoint at the edge of the village.

Official Palestinian news agency Wafa said three people were arrested.

The army added it was “reinforcing the defence” of Adam and other settlements.

BARBARIC ATTACK

All Israeli settlement construction in the occupied West Bank is considered illegal by the international community.

Israel rejects the widely held view that settlement expansion is one of the greatest obstacles to peace with the Palestinians.

Attacks against Israelis in the West Bank are supported by many Palestinians as pushing back against settlement growth.

US President Donald Trump’s special envoy Jason Greenblatt called on Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas, whose Fatah movement leads the government in the West Bank, to condemn the attack.

“Yet another barbaric attack tonight. When will President Abbas and Palestinian leaders condemn the violence?” he wrote on Twitter.

There was no response from Abbas’s government, which has cut ties with the Trump administration over its stance on Israel.

“Error must be condemned by all,” the United Nations envoy for the Middle East peace process, Nikolay Mladenov, wrote on his Twitter account. “Such horrible acts serve only those who stand in the way of peace.”

Lone Palestinian attackers have carried out multiple deadly stabbings and car-rammings against Israelis in recent years in the West Bank, Jerusalem and elsewhere.

The attack came after a period of relative calm in the West Bank.

The last stabbing attack in a West Bank settlement was in April, when a

3-month ban

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year,” said Mahamudul Hasan, forest officer of Sundarbans East Division.

“Sundarbans is the biggest wildlife habitat in the country. The 6,017 square km forest is home to Royal Bengal Tiger, Chitra and Maya deer, Erabati dolphins, saltwater crocodiles, wild pigs and otters,” he added.

Surveys in the mangrove forest showed in 2004, 2007, 2011 and 2015 that the three months from June to August were the breeding season, he said.

“We hope that instructions will be issued to ban tourists during the three months.

“Two species of deer, two species of rhinoceros, one species of sweet water crocodile and one species of wild buffalo have already been extinct from the Sundarbans.”

Nur Alam Sheikh, coordinator of Bangladesh Poribesh Andolon in Bagerhat, welcomed the move.

Palestinian tried to stab an Israeli with a screwdriver near a petrol station in an industrial area connected to the Maale Adumim settlement east of Jerusalem.

In Gaza, however, there has been recurrent violence between the Israeli army and Palestinian protesters in the Gaza Strip in which at least 154 Palestinians have been killed since late March.

Palestinian Islamist movement Hamas, which rules Gaza, has promised revenge after Israeli strikes on the coastal enclave killed a number of its members in recent weeks.

In a statement late Thursday, Hamas praised the “courageous operation” in the West Bank without claiming responsibility for it.

“The West Bank is ready and able to avenge the blood of the martyrs,” it said.

AL leader

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“Four people with walkie-talkie sets picked up Parvez at gunpoint and took him away on a black car that had a number plate reading Dhaka Metro Gha 14-2577,” the victim’s cousin, Fahad Bhuiyan, told The Daily Star.

The abductors were aged between 30 and 35, witnesses and police added.

In a CCTV footage, which The Daily Star obtained from a nearby building, a youth in T-shirt and jeans is seen in front of the main gate of Parvez’s rented house in Lalmatia C block.

As Parvez reaches there, the youth shakes hands with him. Another person with long hair appears and holds Parvez tight from behind, and they then take him away.

However, because of the distance of the CCTV camera and also its angle, what actually happened is not fully clear from the footage. It doesn’t show the car or other abductors.

The family said Parvez was Titas upazila chairman from 2009 to 2013 but lost the election in 2014. During his tenure, he got locked into a conflict with upazila vice chairman Sohel Shikder.

Last year, Sohel and his men allegedly launched a gun attack on the AL leader.

Parvez, who was in his car, escaped unhurt and a case was filed with Titas Police Station over the shooting. Fahad said, claiming they suspect Sohel might be involved in yesterday’s incident.

Sohel, however, refuted the allegations and told The Daily Star that he was neither involved in the abduction nor attacked Parvez ever. “We have some differences of opinion in politics but I have no personal conflict with Parvez,” he added.

Contacted, Biplob Kumar Sarker, deputy commissioner of DMP’s Tejgaon Division, said they have got some video clips of the incident.

In one clips, they have seen two people taking Parvez inside the car while another closing the main gate of his house from outside, he said.

“We have checked the vehicle number, given by victim’s family, with Bangladesh Road Transport Authority, but found it fake,” said Biplob.

Asked if the abductors were equipped with firearms and walkie-talkie sets, he said they were looking into the accounts of witnesses with the help of Detective Branch.

Main parties reject results

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The PML-N and other parties have alleged “blatant” rigging over the vote count.

“We think a robbery has been committed,” Maulana Fazalur Rehman, head of the religious Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI-F) party, told reporters late yesterday.

“We will run a movement for the holding of elections again. There will be protests... We will not allow democracy to be taken hostage by the establishment,” he said, using a word widely understood in Pakistan to mean the military.

The PML-N, which claims it was the target of the military manipulation, said it would join in the protests although no date was immediately announced.

“I fully agree with it. The worst kind of irregularities have been committed, which are unprecedented,” party leader Shahbaz Sharif said.

However Sharif said he would need to consult with his party’s leadership over a decision by the APC not to take the oath swearing in members of parliament.

The Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), which has won the third largest number of seats in the vote, was notably absent from the APC.

In a later press conference, PPP chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari said his party also rejected the election results, but vowed it would try to convince the other parties to participate in the parliamentary process.

The vote was meant to be a rare democratic transition in the Muslim country, which has been ruled by the powerful army for roughly half its history.

But it was marred by violence and allegations of military interference in the months leading up to the vote, with Khan seen as the beneficiary.

The EU Election Observation

Mission to Pakistan’s chief Michael Gahler told reporters in Islamabad that “a number of violent attacks, targeting political parties, party leaders, candidates and election officials, severely affected the campaign environment”.

“Many of our interlocutors acknowledged a systematic effort to undermine the former ruling party through cases of corruption, contempt of court and terrorist charges against its leaders and candidates,” he continued.

The Election Commission (ECP) yesterday said that with only a handful of seats left to count, Khan’s Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) enjoys a strong lead with 115 seats, and will be the biggest party in parliament.

The PML-N is a distant second, leading on 64 seats, while the PPP has won 43. The Muttahida Majlis-i-Amal (MMA) -- an alliance of multiple religious parties -- has managed to secure just 13 seats.

Independent candidates have won 12 spots in the National Assembly, while the MQM-P has six seats to its name. The PML-Q, meanwhile, has won four seats, and the Balochistan National Party (BNP) and Grand Democratic Alliance (GDA) have grabbed two seats each.

But the count indicates PTI will not achieve the 137 seats needed in the National Assembly to form a majority government.

Analysts had long predicted that if Khan took power it would have to be via coalition -- but the size of his lead still took many by surprise.

Analyst Ayesha Siddiqi said observers may have underestimated the depth of feeling among Pakistan’s growing middle class.

“Remember they grew up on this narrative of a corrupt Pakistan being damaged and needing a new leader-

ship... In all this hue and cry, we didn’t notice there is another Pakistan there that wanted this change,” she told AFP.

Khan campaigned on promises to end widespread graft while building an “Islamic welfare state”.

Now the former World Cup cricket champion will have to partner with independents and smaller parties, a task analysts said should be straightforward.

“The independents know that the establishment is inclined toward Imran Khan,” retired general and analyst Talat Masood told AFP.

Khan claimed victory in a wide-ranging address to the nation Thursday.

He vowed to tackle corruption and touched on promises to balance relations with the US, while saying he was open to discussions with arch-rival India including over the disputed Himalayan territory of Kashmir.

Khan will face myriad challenges including militant extremism, an economic crisis with speculation that Pakistan will have to seek a bailout from the International Monetary Fund, water shortages, and a booming population, among others.

He will also have to contend with the same issue as many of his predecessors: how to maintain a balance of power in civil-military relations.

In the West, Khan is typically seen through the prism of his celebrity and high-profile romances, but at home he cuts a more conservative persona as a devout Muslim who believes feminism has degraded motherhood.

Known in Pakistan as “Taliban Khan” for his calls to hold talks with insurgents, he increasingly catered to religious hardliners during the campaign, spurring fears his leadership could embolden extremists.