

A day after

FROM PAGE 16

not collecting toll for the time being on instruction from the RHD.

Md Amanullah, superintendent engineer of RHD (Narayanganj circle), said, they sent a report to the RHD headquarters describing the situation on the ground and seeking directive on the next course of action.

Sohel Hawlader, 25, a truck helper, was killed after police opened fire during a clash with transport workers and locals protesting hike in toll for the bridge in Dhaka's Hasnabad on Friday. Over 100 others were injured during the clash.

Visiting the area yesterday, this correspondent found the situation was still tense.

Policemen were deployed near the toll booth and vehicles were allowed to use the bridge without paying toll. The presence of vehicles was also thin.

Talking with this correspondent, several truck drivers claimed they had been protesting since 2016 demanding cancellation of the "high toll rates". However, the authorities did not take any action. Rather, they introduced a higher rate, they said.

Meanwhile, police sources said criminals attacked police and hit a nearby Ansar camp with a truck during the clash.

Preparation was underway to file cases on charges of killing a transport worker, attack on police, government establishments and creating obstruction to government work, the sources added.

No case was filed in this connection till 8:00pm yesterday.

Ramanando Sarker, additional superintendent of police (Keraniganj circle), told The Daily Star the situation was under control and additional policemen were deployed to avert any untoward situation.

They were yet to identify the reason behind the killing of the transport worker, he said, adding that steps were being taken to identify and arrest those responsible.

Meanwhile, the man, who was seen in a viral photo holding a gun and running along policemen during Friday's clash, was identified as Ebadad, a constable working for Dhaka district police.

He claimed some criminals took away his uniform showing him knives.

Ebadad got injured in the clash and was being treated at Central Police Hospital in Rajarbagh, said Ramanando.

Meanwhile, Osman Ali, general secretary of Bangladesh Road Transport Workers Federation, at a rally in the city demanded proper investigation into Friday's incident and punishment to those responsible for the killing of the transport worker.

Dissolve JS

FROM PAGE 16

do many things, including dissolution of parliament, to create a level playing field," said Hafizuddin Khan, former adviser to a caretaker government.

The Election Commission has so far failed to ensure a level playing field, Khan said, adding, the ruling party started electioneering many days ago when another major party was not allowed to hold a rally.

The election would not be free and fair if the EC remained subservient to the government, he observed.

"I don't see any possibility that the Election Commission can ensure a level playing field within the remaining days. It is only possible if the government wants [it]," he added.

Former cabinet secretary Ali Imam Mazumder said the schedule should have been announced 90 days before the election as it would not be possible for the EC to ensure a level playing field in 45 days.

He suggested that the EC should take aggressive steps to ensure a level playing field so that every candidate can equally run election campaign and voters feel confident to go to polling centres.

Former ambassador M Serajul Islam in the keynote speech said the government is determined to repeat the 2014 election.

"If the dangers of repetition of the 2014 election materialise, it will almost certainly establish a one-party rule in the country that would be the antithesis of the Liberation War."

Welcoming Jatiya Oikyafront, he expressed the hope that the new political platform would endure long enough to usher in an era of democratic governance in Bangladesh through a free and fair election.

Former Bangladesh Bank governor Salehuddin Ahmed said there was no alternative to democracy to ensure sustainable and equal development.

"And there is no alternative to holding a free, fair and inclusive election to establish democracy and rule of law," he added.

Political analyst Prof Dilara Chowdhury, Prof Asif Nazrul, among others, spoke at the programme.



Aerial view of Honduran migrants heading in a caravan to the US, as they leave Arriaga on their way to San Pedro Tapanatepec, in southern Mexico yesterday. Mexico on Friday announced it will offer Central American migrants medical care, education for their children and access to temporary jobs as long as they stay in two southern states.

Gunman kills eleven

FROM PAGE 16

historically Jewish neighborhood of Squirrel Hill, Wendell Hissrich, Pittsburgh's public safety director, confirmed "multiple fatalities" and at least six people injured including four police officers whose condition was not immediately clear.

The Washington Post and the local CBS affiliate said 11 people were dead.

"The scene is very bad inside," Hissrich said. "It's a very horrific crime scene, one of the worst that I've seen, I've been on plane crashes. It's very bad."

A woman on site told CNN her daughter was with others who ran down the stairs and barricaded themselves in the basement of the synagogue after hearing shots.

"They're safe, but they kept hearing them firing and everything else," she told the television network.

Multiple US media identified the shooter as Pittsburgh resident Rob Bowers, whose online posts were reportedly rife with anti-Semitic comments.

OUR HEARTS BREAK

The attack comes at a time of sharp tensions in the United States -- a day after a Trump fan from Florida was arrested for mailing explosive devices to a series of Democratic figures, setting the country on edge ahead of close-fought elections on November 6.

Trump -- who has been accused of fueling tensions with his divisive rhetoric -- briefly considered scrapping a campaign rally later Saturday over the Pittsburgh attack, but finally decided to maintain it.

"We can't let evil change our lives and change our schedule," he said. "You go with a heavy heart but you go."

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu voiced his grief and solidarity with the United States, saying he was "heartbroken and appalled."

"The entire people of Israel grieve with the families of the dead" Netanyahu said in a video message. "We stand together with the Jewish community of Pittsburgh. We stand together with the American people in the face of this horrendous anti-Semitic brutality."

"We are devastated," tweeted Jonathan Greenblatt, the head of the Anti-Defamation League, an American civil rights group, which said it was "likely the deadliest attack on the Jewish community in the history of the United States" and certainly the deadliest since 2014.

"Jews targeted on Shabbat morning at synagogue, a holy place of worship, is unconscionable. Our hearts break for the victims, their families, and the entire Jewish community," Greenblatt said.

The Pittsburgh attack comes with the United States witnessing a sharp spike in anti-Semitic incidents, having surged 57 percent from 2016 to 2017, to 1,986 from 1,267, according to the ADL.

Trump's daughter Ivanka, in a tweet, vowed that "America is stronger than the acts of a depraved bigot and anti-Semite."

"All good Americans stand with the Jewish people to oppose acts of terror & share the horror, disgust & outrage over

the massacre in Pittsburgh."

It is the latest shooting incident in the United States, where gunmen regularly cause mass casualties and firearms are linked to more than 30,000 deaths annually.

The Tree of Life Synagogue, whose congregation was founded more than 150 years ago, is in a residential neighborhood about five miles (eight kilometers) east of downtown Pittsburgh.

Michael Eisenberg, past president of the synagogue, told local television the door would typically have been open on Saturdays with religious services going on. He said police are normally deployed only on High Holy Days -- the holiest annual Jewish religious holidays.

He said security was a "major concern" during his stint as president, and active shooting situations and trainings were conducted, "if something horrific like this happened."

Squirrel Hill has historically been the center of Jewish life in the greater Pittsburgh and is home to 26 percent of all Pittsburgh-area Jewish households, according to a study from Brandeis University.

More than 80 percent of neighborhood residents said they had some concern or were very concerned about rising anti-Semitism, found the 2017 study.

Meghalaya CM

FROM PAGE 2

Secretaries of India and Bangladesh at their meeting in New Delhi on October 25.

Sangma said increase in trade between India, Bangladesh and Myanmar is crucial for the economic development of Meghalaya.

The Meghalaya government has said it will write to the Indian government to facilitate the setting up of more import-export points along the Bangladesh border.

Meghalaya is rich in natural resources and offers excellent potential for export for agro-horticulture products, forest products, handloom and handicrafts, a senior official of the state's Industries department said.

Vote in AL

FROM PAGE 1

"Bangladesh will be a peaceful country. There'll be no room for terrorism, militancy and drug on Bangladesh's soil."

Hasina said her government has been implementing huge development programmes in the southern region.

Terming the region very beautiful and excellent, she said the people of this area had always been neglected. "Only the Awami League government works for the development of the region."

The AL chief said the government was taking steps for building shipbuilding, ship-breaking and recycling industries in Barguna's Taltoli upazila which would create jobs for locals.

AL General Secretary and Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader, Industries Minister Amir Hossain Amu, Commerce Minister Tofail Ahmed and Agriculture Minister Matia Chowdhury, among others, addressed the rally.

Earlier, the PM inaugurated 21 development projects in the district by unveiling their plaques from the venue.

For dignity of vote

FROM PAGE 1

dignity of votes and transparency of vote management.

There would be no scope for hijacking ballot paper, stuffing ballot boxes at night or casting one's vote by another, he added.

At the exhibitions, the EC showed how EVMs were used and let some people cast a trial vote using the devices. However, people had mixed reactions after using them.

The EC, however, assured free and fair polling in the 11th national general election.

Huda further said an amendment in the Representation of the People Order 1972 was necessary for use of EVMs, adding that they had already made a proposal to the law ministry in this regard.

About demands made by the Jatiya Oikyafront regarding the reconstitution of the EC and no EVMs in the election, Nurul Huda said the EC was not worried about the demand for reconstitution and that oppositions had been opposing EVMs without any knowledge about it.

In Mymensingh's exhibition, held in the city's Town Hall premises, had only a handful of people attending.

Kaiser Ahmed, a voter from the city's Akua area, said the system had no scope of rigging.

While Khodeja Akhter, another voter, said, "The question lies in whether it would be used with sincerity."

In Rajshahi, the exhibition was held at the EC's regional office in Chandipur area of the city, where

Election Commissioner Rafiqul Islam said they were emphasising on EVMs for its environmental value.

"We can't keep destroying trees by using paper. We want to introduce EVMs to save the trees," said Rafiqul.

In Sylhet, the exhibition, held in the city's Zilla Parishad office, began from 9:00am as several hundred people took part.

Senior Election Officer in Sylhet Khorshed Alam said, "Naturally a machine is designed to cast not more than 500 votes, but these machines were customised for 4,000 for the exhibition."

However, many raised objections regarding technical glitches.

Madhab Karmakar, a voter in Dariapara area in the city, said, "The machine showed me as a 'fake voter' but I had my NID card with me. Interestingly, my name and number were not on the list."

In Rangpur, Election Commissioner Begum Kabita Khanam at the EVM exhibition held in the city's Zila Parishad Community Centre, urged people to accept this improved technology.

In Faridpur, the EC organised the EVM exhibition, inaugurated by Election Commissioner Brig Gen (ret'd) Shahadat Hossain Chowdhury, at Kabi Jasimuddin Hall in the city.

Meanwhile, BNP leaders in some of the districts, including Mymensingh and Rangpur, held press conferences protesting the exhibitions.

Dummy candidates

FROM PAGE 1

besides the potential nominees.

Two central AL leaders, present at the meeting, confirmed this to The Daily Star, declining to make any comment.

But they quoted Hasina as saying that the AL should have a dummy candidate in each of the constituencies so that a contested election is held even if any major party boycotts it at the eleventh hour.

The other reason behind fielding dummy candidates is to ensure presence of more polling agents to make the election look vibrant, they added.

Hasina, also the prime minister, said at the meeting that the party will have to face criticism if any candidate is elected uncontested like in 2014, according to the two leaders.

She noted that the 10th parliamentary polls held on January 5, 2014, was severely criticised inside and outside the party, they said.

A total of 12 parties had contested the 10th parliamentary polls.

They are AL, JP, Workers Party, JSD, JP (Manju), BNE, Tarikat Federation, Bangladesh Islami Front, Gonofront, Gonotantri Party, Khelafat Majlish and National Awami Party (NAP).

SL crisis worsens

FROM PAGE 16

The crisis, which follows similar turmoil in the neighbouring Maldives, has stirred international concern.

The United States called on all sides to abide by Sri Lanka's constitution and refrain from violence. European Union ambassadors in Colombo issued a similar message on yesterday.

Regional power India was also "closely watching" developments in Colombo, official sources in New Delhi told AFP.

Rajapakse is seen as being closer to China than Wickremesinghe, who had sought to re-establish stronger ties with traditional ally India.

Overnight, Rajapakse loyalists stormed two state-owned television networks -- which they regard as loyal to Wickremesinghe's outgoing government -- and forced them off the air. They resumed broadcasting yesterday and were supporting Rajapakse.

There were reports of sporadic attacks against supporters of Wickremesinghe's United National Party in several parts of the country after Rajapakse was sworn in late Friday.

The streets of the capital remained mainly calm but security was tightened around Temple Trees, Rajapakse's residence and the state television station.

Wickremesinghe, 69, who trained as a lawyer and regarded a champion of free market reforms, insisted that he can be removed only by parliament.

His party has the largest number of seats, but the president's United People's Freedom Alliance announced it was walking out of the governing coalition shortly before Wickremesinghe was sacked.

This is the second time that a president has ousted Wickremesinghe from office. In 2004, the then president sacked him and called snap elections.

After winning the premiership a third time in August 2015, Wickremesinghe amended the constitution to remove the head of state's power to sack prime ministers to prevent a repeat of his earlier ouster.

Sirisena proceeded on Friday despite the insistence of many political

On the other hand, the BNP, its key ally Jamaat-Islami and some left leaning parties, among others, boycotted the election demanding polls under a non-partisan interim administration.

Of the 154 elected uncontested, 127 were from the ruling AL.

On October 13 this year, a new alliance called Jatiya Oikyafront was launched, comprising the BNP, Gonoforum, Nagorik Oikya and JSD (Rab).

It unveiled a seven-point demand including election under a neutral government after dissolution of parliament and release of BNP chairperson Khaleda Zia from jail.

The alliance has already held rallies to drum up public support in favour of the demands but is yet to formally announce whether it will contest the polls.

Besides, Left Democratic Alliance forged by eight left political parties including the Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB) also demanded election under a neutral administration.

The left alliance also has not said whether it would participate in the polls.

observers that he lacked the power to remove the premier.

Political commentator Victor Ivan said Sirisena's action was a blatant violation of the constitution. "This is a capture of power through a conspiracy," Ivan said.

However, Rajapakse loyalist and former foreign minister G L Peiris said they believed there was nothing illegal about sacking Wickremesinghe and challenged him to prove his majority on November 16.

Since his rushed swearing in, Rajapakse has yet to announce any official moves although several of his supporters said they expect a new cabinet to be formed today.

Speaking to jubilant supporters outside his Colombo home late Friday, Rajapakse called on Wickremesinghe to step down.

Members of Wickremesinghe's party must "respect democracy, respect the country and respect the law", the former president said through a loud-hailer from a balcony.

Rajapakse, 72, is a controversial figure at home and abroad but has pushed for a return to frontline politics since he lost the presidential election to Sirisena in 2015.

His decade in power saw Colombo crush a decades-long Tamil Tiger uprising.

Rights groups say tens of thousands of Tamil civilians were killed in the final stages of the campaign, but Rajapakse has refused to acknowledge any abuses in the civil war.

He also leaned heavily on China for political support and took loans to build infrastructure which the new government described as white elephants. His reliance on Beijing angered India, who Rajapakse blamed for his defeat in the last presidential polls.

After Sirisena became president, Sri Lanka has moved to reconcile with India, the United States and other Western powers.

It promised the UN it would investigate allegations of rights abuses during the civil war but has been criticised for a lack of progress in the years since.