

"We did not fight the Liberation War to live in the country as a minority."
RANA DASGUPTA, GENERAL SECRETARY OF BANGLADESH HINDU-BOUDDHA-CHRISTIAN OIKYA PARISHAD, AT A PRESS CONFERENCE (PAGE 3)

"Converting India into a police state isn't going to solve your problems, Modi Ji. It's only going to prove to over 1 billion Indians what an insecure dictator you really are."
INDIAN CONGRESS PRESIDENT RAHUL GANDHI (PAGE 8)

"Leaders and activists of Awami League are facing massive attacks across the country. We sought remedy from the Election Commission."
HT IMAM AFTER A MEETING WITH CEC

Hasina pledges modern capital

At her first election rally in Dhaka, she urges people to vote for AL for development, reject BNP for corruption, militancy



STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League President Sheikh Hasina yesterday pledged to turn Dhaka city into a modern capital, urging the city dwellers to vote for the party candidates to achieve the goal.

"We have multifaceted plans to transform Dhaka into a scenic and liveable city, ensure all civic amenities and improve the public transport system...", she said while addressing her first campaign rally in the capital for the December 30 polls.

"If voted to power again, we will construct an elevated ring road around Dhaka city."

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3



The crowd at an Awami League rally organised at the Gulshan Youth Club ground yesterday to campaign for December 30 parliamentary polls.

PHOTO: PID

A situation not seen in 47 years

Dr Kamal Hossain on 'harassment of opposition'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police harassment of opposition activists has reached unprecedented levels ahead of the national election, Jatiya Oikyafront leader Dr Kamal Hossain alleged yesterday.

"The current government has outdone all the previous autocratic governments in carrying out its activities. I have not seen such a situation in the last 47 years since the country's independence," he told a press conference at the alliance's Purana Paltan office.

He said the government was blocking the way to a fair election by arresting and repressing opposition leaders and activists.

"The police force is being used centrally to arrest

SEE PAGE 2 COL 6

'EC, police ruined polls atmosphere'

Fakhrul alleges state organs being used against BNP

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission, judiciary and police have joined hands to destroy the country's democracy, the BNP alleged yesterday.

"We are noticing that the EC and police have formed an alliance and destroyed the election atmosphere. We are worried over their role," BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir told a press conference at Khaleda Zia's Gulshan office yesterday.

The partisan role of the EC and law enforcement agencies has already turned the upcoming election into a farce, he said.

"The Awami League is using the state organs to cancel the candidacy of our leaders."

Fakhrul alleged that the High Court was barring the BNP candidates from participating in the polls on purpose.

SEE PAGE 12 COL 1

24 injured as JP rally attacked in Chattogram

Attackers open fire; JP blames AL; election camps of AL, BNP torched, vandalised in two districts

STAR REPORT

At least 24 people were injured by shotgun pellets during an attack on the election campaign of the Jatiya Party candidate for Chattogram-16 in Banskhali yesterday afternoon, said police and witnesses.

The JP blamed activists of the ruling Awami League for the incident and claimed that 37 of its supporters were wounded.

Tarikul Islam Chowdhury, campaign coordinator of JP contender Mahmudul Islam Chowdhury, alleged that AL men attacked their rally at Chambal Bazar around 4:00pm.

The attackers suddenly opened fire, leaving the JP men injured. They also vandalised the vehicle of the candidate, he added.

There were policemen in the area, but they didn't take any action, alleged Tarikul.

The JP's rally was scheduled for Thursday, but it was deferred as the AL organised a meeting at Chambal Bazar on the same day.

"Although we had permission from the local administration to hold the meeting, we rescheduled

the rally to avoid any clash. But they [Awami League men] seemed to be determined to attack us. And they did it," said Tarikul.

Contacted, AL candidate Mustafizur Rahman Chowdhury declined to comment.

Alauddin Talukder, assistant sub-inspector of the police outpost at Chittagong Medical College Hospital, said at least 24 people were admitted to the hospital around 8:00pm with pellet injuries.

Protesting the attack, supporters of Mahmudul put up barricades across the Banskhali-Chattogram road around 5:00pm.

Police reached the spot around 7:00pm, used batons to disperse protesters and cleared the barricades, said witnesses.

ATTACKS ON ELECTION CAMPS

Three AL and a BNP election camps were torched and vandalised in Tangail and Chattogram early yesterday.

Criminals torched a camp of AL candidate Ataur Rahman Khan for Tangail-3 in the district's Behula around 2:00am.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 2

UN experts voice concern over 'political violence'

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

UN human rights experts expressed alarm about political violence, restrictions on freedom of expression and the rise of religious fundamentalism in Bangladesh ahead of the election, according to a statement issued in Geneva on Thursday.

"In the run-up to the vote, religious minorities, especially Hindus, fear renewed targeting," said the experts.

"Unfortunately, these fears have a strong basis," they said, adding that reports indicate that around 380 members of minority groups have been attacked in the first half of 2018.

Members and supporters of opposition parties have been arrested, killed and

SEE PAGE 12 COL 4

AL men facing 'massive attacks'

Says HT Imam, urges EC to cancel candidacy of Jamaat men

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League Election Steering Committee Co-chair HT Imam yesterday sought the Election Commission's steps to stop "attacks on party activists across the country" during the campaigning.

An AL delegation led by him also requested the EC to cancel candidatures of Jamaat-e-Islami leaders who are running for the 11th parliamentary polls on BNP ticket.

Imam, also Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's political adviser, said the BNP was bringing a "false" allegation that its members were coming under attack. Rather, AL leaders and activists were being attacked by BNP and Jamaat men, he added.

"Leaders and activists of Awami League are facing massive attacks across the country. We sought remedy from the Election Commission," he told journalists after a meeting with Chief Election Commissioner KM Nurul Huda at the Nirbachon Bhavan.

On the Jamaat leaders' taking part in the polls, Imam said, "Jamaat website and media reports are showing that the Jamaat men are still holding party posts though they submitted nomination papers as BNP candidates. It is a clear violation of law."

The High Court on December 18 directed the Election

SEE PAGE 12 COL 1



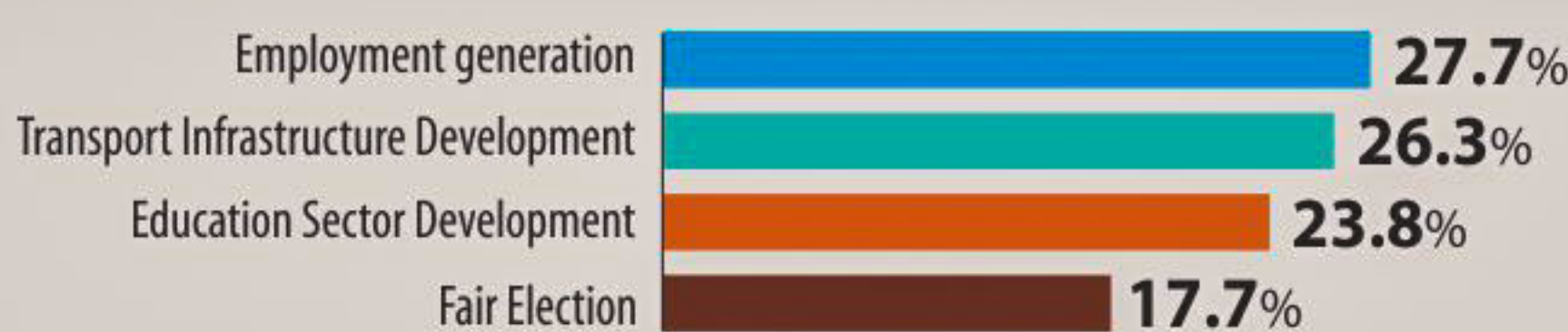
An elderly man bleeding after being injured in an attack on an election campaign of a Jatiya Party candidate in Chambal Bazar area of Chattogram's Banskhali yesterday. Inset, a car used in the electioneering was also vandalised.

PHOTO: COLLECTED



Job, transport, education

Says survey on people's expectation ahead of national election



MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA and PORIMOL PALMA

Currently, people's top priority is employment, followed by transport and education, finds a Brac survey ahead of the December 30 polls.

During the survey, carried out by the NGO's Advocacy for Social Change (ASC) in September, 5,378 respondents from all the districts and different socio-economic groups, genders, professions and ages were asked about election manifesto, selection of MP candidates and expectations from the next elected government.

At least 27.7 percent respondents said they were looking for a solution to the

countrywide unemployment problem, while 26.3 percent want to see development in the transport infrastructure, and nearly 23.8 percent prioritised progress in the education sector.

Demand for a free and fair election came fourth on the list, as 17.17 percent respondents expected to see credible polls.

The Rohingya crisis, which has affected Bangladesh to a great extent and remains an issue of global concern, was named by 4.5 percent respondents.

The survey results have reflected people's perception, Asif Saleh, senior director of

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5