



The damaged cars which were part of the motorcade of Okiyafront candidate for Chattogram-5 Sayed Mohammad Ibrahim at GEC Mor in the port city. Ibrahim came under attack while electioneering near Chittagong University yesterday.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

AL briefs diplomats on election

BSS, Dhaka

The Awami League yesterday briefed foreign diplomats stationed in Dhaka on the latest political issues including the election and law and order situation of the country.

Over 50 diplomats from different countries attended the briefing organised by the party's international affairs sub-committee at a city hotel, said a press release.

AL Advisory Council Member and Prime Minister's Political Affairs Adviser HT Imam, AL International Affairs Sub-Committee Chairman Ambassador Muhammad Zamir, International Affairs Secretary Shammi Ahmed and former Bangladesh Bank Governor Atiur Rahman addressed the briefing.

A booklet titled "From Mujib to Hasina: Awami League in the international arena" illustrating formulation and shaping of the country's foreign policies over the years to take the country to a new height was launched at the event.

As the most liberal political party, the AL is completely committed to extend all-out cooperation in holding the election in a free and fair manner, said HT Imam.

He also said AL leaders and activists were attacked ahead of the election.

The diplomats were provided with dossiers on Bangladesh's impressive socio-economic development under the successive Awami League governments and information on the "crimes and misdeeds" by BNP-Jamaat leaders and activists.

'Smart' uniforms

FROM PAGE 16

neighbouring Guangxi have adopted the technology, according to a Thursday report by the Global Times.

If students walk out of the school without permission, an automatic voice alarm will activate, the report said.

Paired with facial recognition devices installed on school doors, the smart uniforms can also sense if students' faces swap uniforms.

"We choose not to check the accurate location of students after school, but when the student is missing and skipping classes, the uniforms help locate them," Guizhou province school principal Lin Zongwu told the Global Times.

But so far, it's not clear how effective smart uniforms are at preventing students from playing hooky.

The high-tech uniforms have helped increase the attendance rate, "but not much", according to Ran, who added that the school chose the uniforms mainly as a way to send notifications and homework to students through an app connected to the uniform chips.

Macron slams

FROM PAGE 16

In his resignation letter Mattis spelled out to the world what seemed obvious to many observers: Trump's world view was irreconcilable with his own.

"My views on treating allies with respect and also being clear-eyed about both malign actors and strategic competitors are strongly held and informed by over four decades' immersion in these issues," Mattis wrote to Trump, who has sought closer ties with Russia and heaped contempt on Nato and other alliances.

"Because you have the right to have a Secretary of Defense whose views are better aligned with yours on these and other subjects, I believe it is right for me to step down from my position."

Brett McGurk, the US special envoy to the anti-Islamic State group coalition, also announced he would bring his departure forward from February due to the Syria policy change.

BRTA caves

FROM PAGE 16

Under the current rule, motorists having light vehicle driving licence for three years can apply for the licence to drive medium vehicles. Similarly, the licensed drivers of medium vehicles can apply for heavy vehicle driving licence.

As per the relaxed requirement, light vehicle drivers can apply for medium vehicle driving licence if they have professional licence and one-year experience. Holders of medium vehicle driving licence can apply for heavy vehicle driving licence if they have the same experience.

Moreover, those having professional driving licence for light vehicles and one-year experience can now drive medium vehicles. Similarly, those with professional driving licence for medium vehicles can operate heavy vehicles until December 31, as per the previous order.

Osman Ali, general secretary of Bangladesh Road Transport Workers Federation, said they requested the BRTA to extend the time for one more year, as the authorities could not issue licence to all of their drivers.

"The time [August to December] the government has given was not sufficient to issue licences to drivers. So, we requested the BRTA to extend the time," he told this correspondent yesterday.

"The BRTA has agreed to extend the time for six months, but I think it will not be enough."

Amid huge protests for road safety following the death of two college students in a road accident in the capital on July 29, police and BRTA launched a crackdown on errant vehicles and drivers across the country.

During the drives, a large number of bus and truck drivers were caught with light vehicle driving licences. Against this backdrop, transport owners and worker leaders had urged the government to relax the requirements.

Contacted, Prof Moazzem Hossain, former director of Accident Research Institute of Buet, said the BRTA move was unfortunate and if allowed, it would increase risk of road accident.

He added that the government should have taken an initiative to train the drivers properly before issuing them licences for heavy vehicles.

"A driver of heavy vehicle needs to have knowledge about many things. So, giving licence without training will be very dangerous," he told this newspaper last night.

Mozammel Hoque Chowdhury, secretary general of Bangladesh Jatri Kalyan Samity, said if the government allowed the move "under pressure" from a particular organisation, it would make the road more risky.

Licence should be given following due procedure and under the supervision of technical committees, he added.

There are some 35.36 lakh registered vehicles in the country till July this year. So far, the BRTA has issued 26.39 lakh driving licences till the same date.

Of them, 1.38 lakh holds heavy licences while 60,238 possess medium licences and 14.59 lakh holds light licence.

Bad year

FROM PAGE 16

number of migrants who went there last year.

The women migration rate was likely to see a 20.03 percent drop from last year.

Harrowing tales of women migrants in the print and electronic media upon their return from Saudi Arabia have discouraged migration to the country. The Middle Eastern nation has been receiving a larger chunk of unskilled women labourers as housemaids since 2015.

Asked about possible legal actions against abuse of the returnees, Tasneem said the government could help them file lawsuits in the destination country against abusers and follow the legal procedure by deploying lawyers, interpreters and arranging the victims' safe living there until the end of the court proceedings.

Wage Earners Welfare Fund can be used to bear the expenditures, she added.

Regarding the decline in the number of men going overseas for jobs, the report cites Saudi Arabia shutting its door to foreign workers in 12 sectors and the United Arab Emirates not receiving workers other than housemaids.

The government should focus on developing skilled manpower so that other labour markets like Japan and South Korea are opened up for Bangladeshi migrants, said eminent jurist Shahdeen Malik, who was present as the chief guest at the report launching.

The report also suggests that the ruling Awami League, in its election manifesto, didn't give much priority to migrant workers' rights whereas the Jatiya Oilyafront promised to ensure their voting rights, training, remedy to their complaints, special facilities at the airport, incentives to invest and to facilitate bringing back dead bodies of migrants.

Polls violence continues

FROM PAGE 1

After the attack, Bahar held a press conference at Chattogram Press Club where Abdullah Al Noman, BNP vice chairman, said, "Our party men are sacrificing blood every day in different parts of the country. Revenge will be taken through recovering a democratic trend in the country."

Police confirmed the attack but did not disclose the identity of the attackers. They also added that afterwards BNP men had blocked a road at Nazirhat Jongkar area to stage demonstrations there and vandalised several vehicles.

Additional police had been deployed to avert any further untoward situation, said Babul Akter, officer-in-charge of Fatikchhari Police Station.

Meanwhile, the motorcade of Jatiya Oikyafront's candidate for Chattogram-5 Syed Muhammad Ibrahim came under attack while campaigning at Chittagong University's Gate No 1 area yesterday.

Ibrahim, also chairman of Bangladesh Kalyan party, held a press conference at Chattogram Press Club after the attack where he alleged that four of his supporters were injured and two vehicles were vandalised in an attack by AL men.

Belal Md Jahangir, OC of Hathazari Police Station, could not be reached for comments over phone despite repeated attempts.

Additionally, Islami Front Bangladesh's candidate for Chattogram-2, Saifuddin Ahmed Majibhandari, also alleged that AL men had attacked their campaign at Bhujpur union of the Fatikchhari upazila.

Sheikh Abdullah, OC of Bhujpur Police Station, said "We went to the spot after hearing of the attack but found nothing."

Contacted, the General Secretary of Chattogram (North) district unit AL MA Salam told The Daily Star that he was not aware of any such attacks on either Majibhandari or Ibrahim but said that BNP men had been making provocative statements.

Elsewhere in Sherpur, BNP candidate for Sherpur-3, Mahamudul Haque, at a press conference at his house yesterday alleged that at least six BNP men were injured in an attack by AL men on his campaign in Tinani Bazar area of Malijhikanda union on Saturday night.

He also claimed that police were harassing BNP men so that they could not join campaign. This was denied by police.

AL's Malijhikanda union unit President Atiqur Rahman also denied the allegation, saying no AL men were involved in any attack.

Elsewhere in Patuakhali, criminals attacked and vandalised the homes of two local BNP leaders at Arambagh area in the town on Saturday night.

Although the BNP men alleged that AL men launched the attack, the district unit AL General Secretary Kazi Alomgir Hossain said no party men were involved in the attack.

In Sylhet, miscreants attacked and vandalised an electoral camp of AL's candidate for Sylhet-1, AK Abdul Momen, at Shahporan area under Sadar upazila early yesterday.

Following the incident, local party men rushed to the spot and blocked Sylhet-Tamabil highway for an hour.

Akhter Hossain, officer-in-charge of Sylhet Sadar Police Station, said security had been beefed up in the area to avoid further attacks.

In Cumilla, five AL men were injured as criminals hurled two crude bombs at an election camp of AL candidate for Cumilla-7, Ali Ashraf, at Madhaiya are of Chandina upazila on Saturday evening.

Police said they were trying to find

those involved.

Elsewhere, an electoral camp of BNP's candidate for Sylhet-1, Khandakar Abdul Muktedir, was allegedly vandalised during a clash between Bangladesh Chhatra League and Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal at Baluchar area in Sylhet city last night.

Moudud Ahmed Akash, former education affairs secretary of Sylhet district BCL, said the BNP and JCD leaders were giving "hate speeches" from the stage of the electoral camps and when they were asked not to do so, they initiated the attack on BCL activists.

Akhter Hossain, officer-in-charge of Shahporan Police Station, said the BCL and JCD activists locked in a clash following an altercation over campaigning.

"We have brought the situation under control and additional force has been deployed at the place," he said.

Meanwhile, BNP candidates in different districts alleged that police were harassing them and obstructing their campaigns.

In Barishal, BNP candidate for Barishal-5, Mojibor Rahman Sarwar, yesterday alleged that the ruling party and police were preventing him from electioneering and threatening the BNP men to leave the constituency.

Barishal's Superintendent of Police SM Saiful Islam denied the allegation.

The city unit AL President Golam Abbas Chowdhury also denied the allegation and said the BNP men were continuously campaigning.

In Chattogram, two BNP candidates yesterday alleged that police were implicating their activists in "false cases" and harassing BNP men continuously.

The BNP candidate for Chattogram-8, Abu Sufian, and for Chattogram-12, Enamul Haque, came up with the allegations in separate press conferences at Chattogram Press Club.

However, both Patiya Police Station OC Neyamat Ullah and Chandaog Police Station OC Abul Bashar denied the allegations and said they did not implicate anyone in false cases but arrested only those accused.

Meanwhile, our correspondents from different districts reported that police have arrested BNP-Jamaat men in different criminal cases.

In Chattogram, police arrested three Jamaat men with half a kilogram of explosives from Halishahar area of the city yesterday.

During primary interrogation, the trio told police that they came to Chattogram to buy 20 kgs of explosive materials with a plan to destabilise the congenial election atmosphere, claimed Deputy Commissioner (DB-port) SM Mostain Hossain of Chattogram Metropolitan Police.

In Habiganj, police arrested a leader of Jatiya party yesterday afternoon for distributing money among voters in Nabiganj municipal area in the district.

In Mymensingh, police arrested three BNP leaders from different areas of Trishal upazila on charges of ransacking and torching a stage set for an election rally of Awami League at Horirampur union yesterday, said Md Azizur Rahman, OC of Trishal Police Station.

(Our correspondents from Mymensingh, Chattogram, Barishal and Sylhet contributed to this report.)

N'ganj fire

FROM PAGE 16

building was set on fire.

Senior Station Officer of Narayanganj Fire Service Sanaul Haque said primary investigation suggested that the fire originated from a mosquito repellent coil.

Army starts polls duty

FROM PAGE 1

"The government is committed to holding the upcoming polls in a free, peaceful and impartial manner. The holding of a fair and peaceful election largely depends on the proper role of law enforcement agencies," said the circular on security arrangement.

The deployment of the armed forces comes around two weeks after the formal start of electioneering marked by violence and attacks on several candidates in different constituencies.

Welcoming the deployment, Jatiya Oikyafront convener Dr Kamal Hossain yesterday expressed hope that the deployment would create a congenial electoral environment.

In a statement, he said, "We hope that this deployment will create a congenial working environment which did not exist before."

"However, we hope that the armed forces will not stand against the interest of the people or seek to implement the agenda of an individual or a group of people."

Oikyafront, a recently formed opposition alliance, further said the armed forces serve the people and the country, and their image "cannot be tarnished for a handful of individuals."

"The armed forces must create a level playing field for all parties and play a positive role," it mentioned.

The members of the armed forces, deployed to assist the civil administration, will act in line with the sections 127 to 132 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1898.

According to the sections, they will go into action on the request of executive magistrates.

A magistrate can ask a military officer to disperse an unlawful assembly. The officer is the sole judge of the action necessary.

If no magistrate is available in an emergency situation where public security is endangered by an unlawful assembly, any commissioned officer may himself disperse it by force and may arrest anyone involved in it, according to the sections.

The home ministry circular said the members of the armed forces will carry out patrols and drives in coordination with the returning officers (ROs).

"The armed forces will perform duties to help maintain law and order inside the polling centre or vote counting room upon request of the return-

ing officer or the presiding officer concerned," it said.

They will also assist other law enforcement agencies in maintaining law and order if ROs seek their assistance.

If required, they will also ensure security on important roads and highways.

An adequate number of army personnel will be deployed "at every level" as a reserve force.

The navy will discharge duties in the coastal areas and the air force will facilitate operations involving helicopters and freighters as per the requirement of the home ministry and EC secretariat.

DUTIES AT EVM CENTRES

Members of the armed forces will not carry any arms or ammunitions while giving technical support to election officials at the centres where electronic voting machines (EVMs) will be used.

They will perform duties in uniforms, said the home ministry circular.

EVMs will be used in six constituencies -- Dhaka-6 and 13, Chattogram-9, Rangpur-3, Khulna-2 and Satkhira-2.

RAB'S ROLE

Rab will work to maintain law and order in every constituency, and also help other law enforcement agencies if the ROs seek its assistance.

If needed, the elite force can use helicopters.

Like the armed forces, it will perform duties to maintain law and order inside the polling centres or vote counting room as desired by ROs or presiding officers.

POLICE'S ROLE

Police's main duty will be to maintain law and order inside the polling centres.

They will do the task of carrying all election-related materials and documents to and from the polling centres.

The force will ensure security of election officials and staffers, the circular said.

"They will work to create an environment of trust for the voters."

They will also ensure security in important areas and polling stations, and also remain alert to prevent any unlawful activities.

All mobile teams of the law enforcement agencies will carry out patrols so that voters can come to the polling centres without any trouble.

222 dead

FROM PAGE 16

debris strewn across beaches. A tangled mess of corrugated steel roofing, timber and rubble was dragged inland at Carita beach, a popular spot for day-trippers on the west coast of Java.

Photographer Oystein Andersen described how he was caught up in the disaster while on the beach taking photos of Anak Krakatoa.

"I suddenly saw a big wave," he wrote on his Facebook page.

"I had to run, as the wave passed the beach and landed 15-20m inland. (The) next wave entered the hotel area where I was staying and downed cars on the road behind it."

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies said the "powerful waves" reached a height of 30-90 centimetres (1-3 feet).

Asep Perangkat said he was with his family when the wave surged through Carita, carving a swathe of destruction, dragging cars and shipping containers.

"Buildings on the edge of the beach were destroyed. Trees and electric poles fell to the ground," he told AFP.

In Lampung province, on the other side of the strait, Lutfi Al Rasyid fled the beach in Kalianda city, fearing for his life.

"I could not start my motorbike so I left it and I ran... I just prayed and ran as far as I could," the 23-year-old told AFP.

Kathy Mueller from the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies said the toll was likely to rise as the conditions on the ground became clearer.

"The situation, and the death toll, will remain fluid over the next days and even weeks," she told AFP.

Aid workers were helping to evacuate the injured and bring in clean water, tarpaulins and provide shelter, she added, saying the group was preparing for the possibility of diseases breaking out in the tsunami zone.

INITIAL ERROR

Anak Krakatoa, which forms a small island in the Sunda Strait between Java and Sumatra, emerged around 1928 in the crater left by Krakatoa, which erupted in 1883 killing at least 36,000 people.

"The cause of the undersea landslide was due to volcanic activity of Anak Krakatoa, which coincided with a high tide due to the full moon," Nugroho told reporters in Yogyakarta.

Professor David Rothery from The Open University said that the proximity of the volcano to the coast gave

authorities very little time to act.

"Tsunami warning buoys are positioned to warn of tsunamis originated by earthquakes at underwater tectonic plate boundaries. Even if there had been such a buoy right next to Anak Krakatau, this is so close to the affected shorelines that warning time would have been minimal given the high speeds at which tsunami waves travel," he said.

Indonesian authorities initially said the wave was not a tsunami, but instead a tidal surge and urged the public not to panic.

Nugroho later apologised, saying because there was no earthquake it had been difficult to ascertain the cause of the incident early on.

"If there is an initial error we're sorry," he wrote on Twitter.

The wave swamped parts of the coast around the Sunda Strait, leaving at least 164 people dead in worst-affected Pandeglang district on Java's western tip.

Large numbers of casualties were recorded at two hotels in the area, Nugroho said, without elaborating.

Eleven people died further north in Serang, while 48 were killed in South Lampung, on Sumatra island.

Heavy equipment was being transported to badly hit areas to help search for victims and evacuation posts and public kitchens were being set up for evacuees, he added.

According to Indonesia's geological agency, Anak Krakatoa had been showing signs of heightened activity for days, spewing plumes of ash thousands of metres into the air.

Indonesia is one of the most disaster-prone nations on Earth due to its position straddling the so-called Pacific "Ring of Fire", where tectonic plates collide.

Most recently in the city of Palu on Sulawesi island a quake and tsunami in September killed thousands of people.

On December 26, 2004 a tsunami triggered by a magnitude 9.3 undersea earthquake off the coast of Sumatra in western Indonesia killed 220,000 people in countries around the Indian Ocean, including 168,000 in Indonesia.

Latif Siddiqui

FROM PAGE 2

"In this context, I am not interested to be in the field."

The deadline for officially withdrawing candidacy was December 9.

After Latif went on a hunger strike in Tangail, he was admitted to the Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU).

He was discharged from the hospital on Thursday.