

Hat-trick for Hasina

BNP found missing in polling; atmosphere festive, tuned only to ruling party

STAR REPORT

Awami League President Sheikh Hasina has led her party to a third consecutive win in parliamentary polls, securing two-thirds majority in yesterday's election held in an atmosphere dominated by the ruling party men.

Hasina is set to become the prime minister for the third straight time -- an unprecedented feat in the country's history.

Under her leadership, the AL won more than two-thirds majority in the 2008 national polls, handing a humiliating defeat to its archrival BNP. And Hasina became the PM for a second term.

She was sworn in as the prime minister for the first time in 1996, steering her party to power after a long gap of 21 years.

In 2014, her party retained power, securing a landslide victory in the polls boycotted by the BNP-led alliance.

The opposition combine was agitating for restoration of the polls-time caretaker government system scrapped during the AL government's tenure in 2011.

This time the BNP, with its Chairperson Khaleda Zia in prison, joined the polls under the Hasina-led government though its demands for a non-partisan administration and dissolution of the current parliament before the polls were not met.

The results show the BNP-led Jatiya Oikyafront and 20-party alliance fared poorly, prompting a call for a fresh election.

The Jatiya Party, which performed better than the BNP, is set to emerge as the main opposition in the new parliament.

The JP is also the main opposition in the current parliament. It joined the AL-led grand alliance last month to contest this election.

Yesterday's voting was unprecedented.

The atmosphere was peaceful. Festoons fluttered everywhere, even obscuring the sky. People walked to the polling stations from early morning.

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Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina flashes V-sign after casting her vote at Dhaka City College centre yesterday.

PHOTO: PTD

OIKYA FRONT TERMS POLLS FARCICAL

Demands fresh election under non-partisan govt

STAR REPORT

The Jatiya Oikyafront yesterday demanded that the Election Commission immediately scrap the "farcical election" and hold a fresh one under a nonpartisan interim government.

"We reject this so-called result. At the same time, we demand fresh polls under a nonpartisan government," Oikyafront leader Dr Kamal Hossain said at a press conference at his house in the capital.

Reading out a written statement, the eminent jurist said the news of "vote robbery" came from almost all constituencies.

Responding to a query from a journalist, BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir said yesterday's election proved that free and fair polls were not possible under a partisan government.

"This also proves that our decision to boycott the parliamentary elections in 2014 was right."

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18 dead, 200 hurt

Eight of those killed belong to AL, four to BNP

STAR REPORT

Election violence claimed at least 18 lives yesterday, making it one of the deadliest polls in the country.

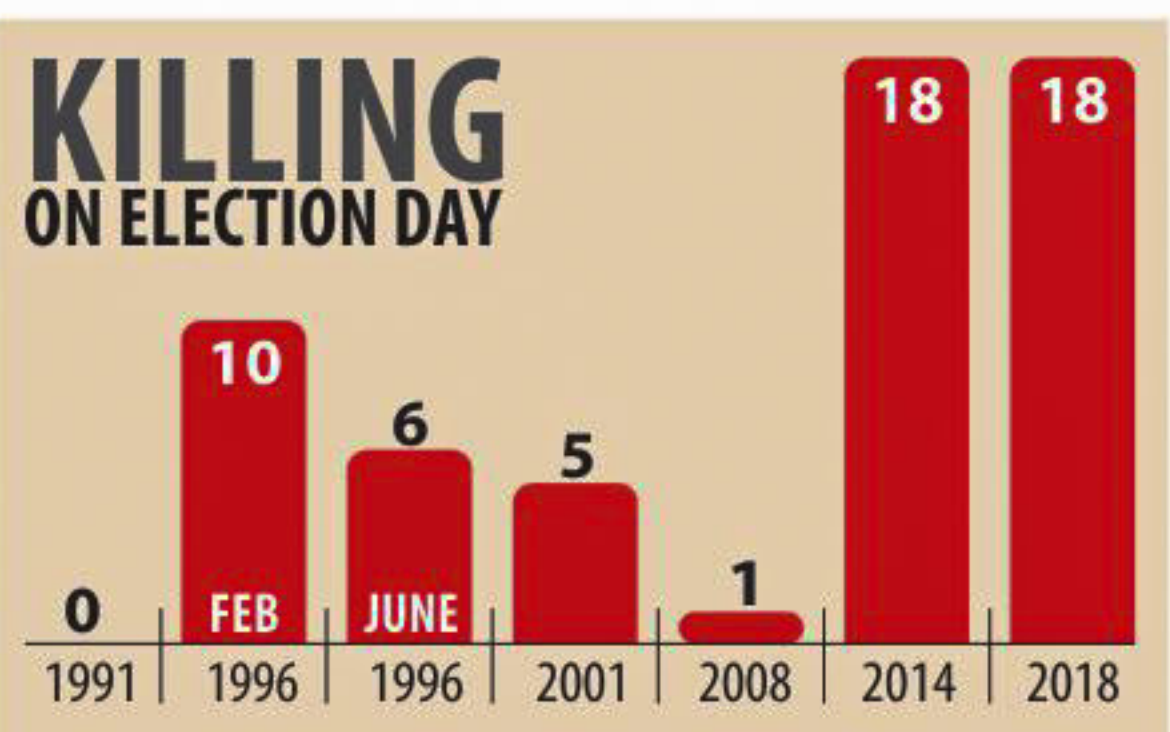
More than 200 others were injured in clashes between rival Awami League and BNP supporters in 24 districts.

Eight of the dead were involved with Awami League or its front organisations while four with BNP or its associate bodies and one each with Jatiya Party and Liberal Democratic Party. An Ansar man and three general people are also among the victims.

Of the deaths, two each were reported from Cumilla, Chattogram and Rajshahi and one each from Brahmanbaria, Cox's Bazar, Rangamati, Bogura, Sylhet, Noakhali, Dinajpur, Lalmonirhat, Gazipur, Natore, Narsingdi and Jashore.

Apart from the killing, opposition candidates were attacked and their houses and cars vandalised in different districts.

The 2014 election, which the BNP-Jamaat alliance boycotted and tried to resist, also saw 18 deaths on the

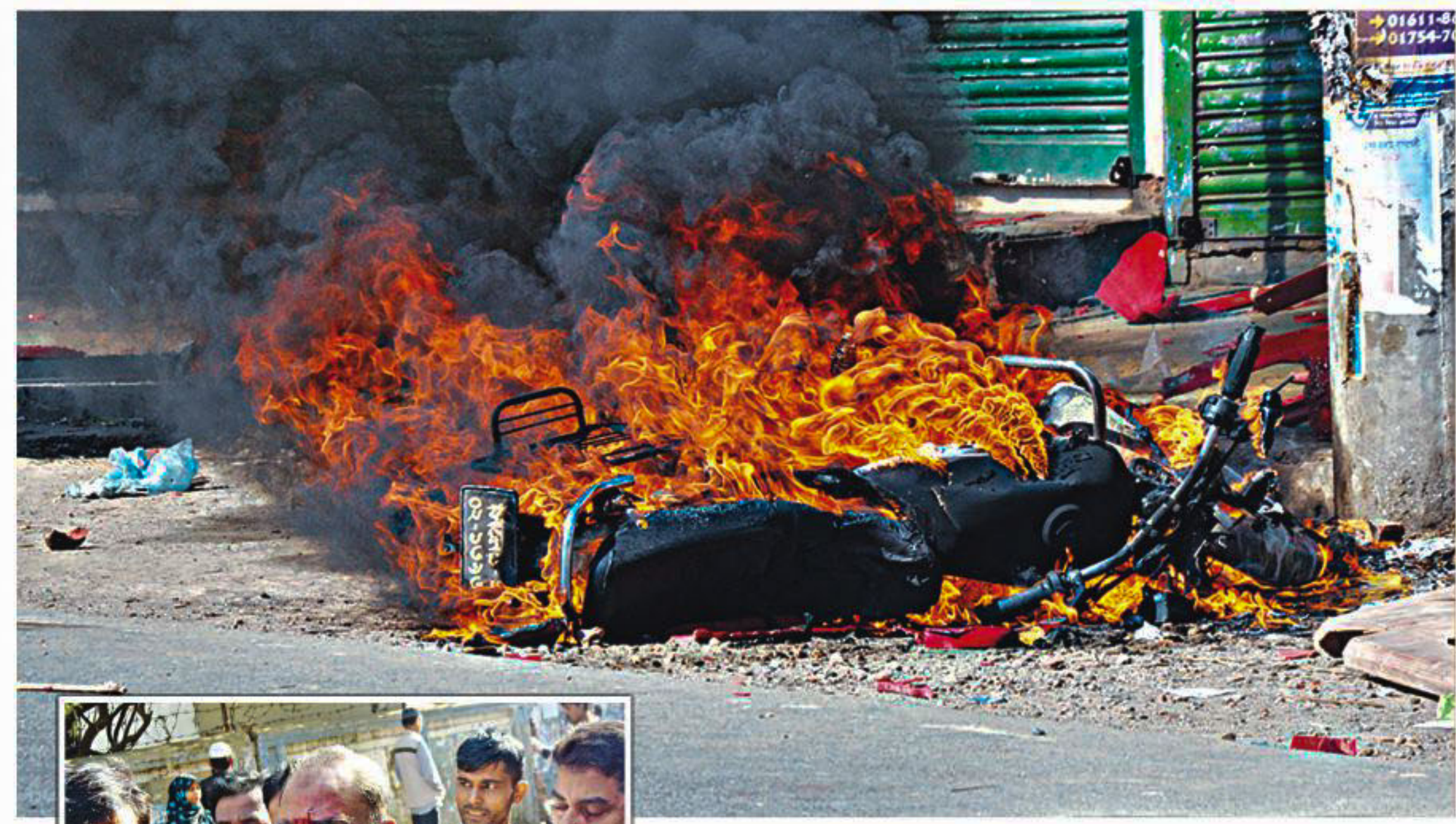


election day on January 5. At least 300 others were hurt.

In Cumilla yesterday, BNP activist Bacchu Mia, 45, was killed in a clash between BNP and AL men at Muragaon Govt Primary School centre in Nangolkot, police and locals said.

The other victim in the district is Muzibur Rahman, 35,

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A motorbike burns in front of Madina Market Pathantula Jamiah Madrasa polling station in Sylhet city after the voters' help desk of the Awami League candidate was attacked and vandalised yesterday. Inset, a bleeding Salauddin Ahmed, Oikyafront nominee for Dhaka-4, being taken to hospital after he was beaten up in Demra.

PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR/COLLECTED

As we saw

These are the snapshots of the election day based on what journalists of The Daily Star witnessed in Dhaka and other parts of the country. However, this is not the whole picture.

STAR REPORT

It was something hardly seen ever in any election in the country -- finding trace of the key opposition party was a real challenge, except for in its electoral symbol on ballot papers.

A few polling agents, posters, supporters or loyal voters of the BNP could rarely be seen by The Daily Star in polling centres across Dhaka. As if a miracle force wiped out most of them on the day of the national election yesterday.

All one could see was BNP's political rival, the ruling Awami League. The signature of AL was all over the places so much so that the polls looked to be participated by none but one party.

Gatherings of AL men outside polling centres,

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A teamwork!

Round-the-clock watch on a Dhaka centre shows how voting progressed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

It was around 3:50pm when Sirajus Salekin went to a polling centre at University Laboratory School and College on Dhaka University campus yesterday to cast his vote.

The fresh DU graduate was excited as he like many other first time voters believed that their vote can make a difference.

Soon his excitement turned into frustration as the polling officials at the centre said the voting time was over. Though he still had around 10 minutes left before the deadline [4:00pm], the officials seemed to be adamant about their decision.

Sirajus demanded an explanation. The answer this time was even more surprising.

The officials said they ran out of ballot papers at the centre.

"How can that be? I was yet to cast my vote. This meant someone might have cast it already," said a frustrated Sirajus.

Not just him, he said there were four others who

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“If the BNP agents don't come to the [polling] centres, how will they be seen?”

CEC KM NURUL HUDA

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“This election has proved that free, fair and neutral polls are possible under a partisan government.”

HT IMAM, CO-CHAIRMAN OF THE AWAMI LEAGUE ELECTION STEERING COMMITTEE

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“Some vested quarters, including anti-liberation forces and miscreants, tried to foil the election but failed due to the tireless efforts of the law enforcement agencies.”

BANGLADESH COAST GUARD DIRECTOR

GENERAL REAR ADMIRAL AURANGZEB CHOWDHURY

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“We reject this so-called result. At the same time, we demand fresh polls under a non-partisan government.”

JATIYA OIKYA FRONT LEADER DR KAMAL HOSSAIN

“It [the election] is a cruel farce with the nation ... This election has caused harm to the nation.”

BNP SECRETARY GENERAL MIRZA FAKHRUL ISLAM ALAMGIR

“It's apparent this election has exceeded the farce that was the 'yes-no' voting of the Ziaur Rahman and Ershad regimes.”

CPB PRESIDENT MUJAHDUL ISLAM SELIM

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