

Eight people die in, around polling centres

FROM PAGE 16

Contacted, Khulna Metropolitan Police Commissioner Zahidul Hasan said, "We did not see any pushing in the CCTV footage [of the altercation]."

In Kishoreganj, a local resident reportedly suffered a heart attack while he was running away from law enforcers who were dispersing a crowd near a polling station in Bhairab upazila.

The incident took place near Aganagar Dakkhinpara Govt Primary School polling centre around 11:00am.

Razzak Miah, 55, a resident of Dakkhinpara village, was sitting outside a house adjacent to the polling centre after casting his vote, said locals.

Suddenly, a group of law enforcers arrived, began dispersing a crowd that formed outside the centre and charged truncheons at one point, they added.

"Razzak was running and suddenly collapsed on the ground. He was later taken to Bhairab Upazila Health Complex," said witness Khairul Islam.

There, physician Kishore Kumar Dhar pronounced Razzak dead on arrival. "No injury mark was found on his body. It appears the man died of a heart attack."

Contacted, Bhairab Upazila Nirbahi Officer KM Mamunur Rashid said, "We heard that Razzak was suffering from heart disease. He might have suffered a heart attack in panic when the law enforcers arrived."

In Manikganj, an elderly man died after falling ill while waiting in line to cast his vote in Shibbaloy upazila.

The incident took place at the Mahadevpur Govt Primary School polling centre around 11:20am, confirmed Presiding Officer Faysal Ahmed.

Babu Mia, 70, a van driver and a resident of Mahadevpur area,

arrived at the centre in the morning, collected his voter slip and stood in line to cast his vote.

"He suddenly fell ill, fell on the ground and died on the spot," said Abdul Mannan, a witness.

In Brahmanbaria, a polling officer suffered a stroke and died while on duty in Sarail upazila, said a physician.

The incident took place at the Syed Sirazul Islam Auditorium polling centre around 7:45am.

Mozahidul Islam, 48, a madrasa teacher, was assigned as the polling officer at the centre.

Presiding Officer Shamim Al Mamun said Mozahidul Islam fell ill soon after the voting began. "At one point, he fell unconscious and collapsed on the ground."

Later, he was taken to the Sarail Upazila Health Complex, where the on-duty doctor declared him dead, he added.

Mozahidul suffered a stroke and passed away before he was brought to the health complex, said Medical Officer Dr Solaiman.

In Chattogram, a voter fell ill and died while standing in line at a polling centre in the city.

The incident took place around 7:30am at the Kazir Dewri Govt Boys' Primary School polling centre under the Chattogram-9 constituency, confirmed Presiding Officer Faruk Ahmed.

Md Monu Mia, 57, worked as a security guard at a shop in Kazir Dewri area.

Witnesses said that shortly after voting began around 7:30am, Monu Mia fell ill while standing in line. He was rushed to a nearby private hospital, where doctors declared him dead.

Monu Mia's son, Md Shakil, said his father could not be saved despite being taken to hospital quickly.

In Mymensingh, a presiding officer and a member of the village police died while on duty at two separate polling centres in Haluaghat upazila.

Rezaul Karim, 48, was serving as an assistant presiding officer at the Darabanni Govt Primary School centre under the Mymensingh-1 (Haluaghat-Dhobaura) constituency.

He fell ill just before polling began and was rushed to the local upazila health complex, where doctors declared him dead, confirmed Returning Officer Saifur Rahman.

Ibrahim Sheikh, 50, a member of the village police, was serving at the Amtail Govt Primary School polling centre under the Mymensingh-1 seat.

He suddenly fell ill around 3:30pm while on duty. He was rushed to Haluaghat Upazila Health Complex, where doctors declared him dead.

The matter was confirmed in a condolence message issued by the district returning officer.

In Dhaka, a voter died after suddenly falling ill inside a polling centre in Jatrabari.

The incident occurred around 8:30am at Agradoot Vidyanyiketan High School polling centre, confirmed Jatrabari Police Station Sub-Inspector Shatarupa Kund.

Abu Sayeed Sarkar, 53, was taken to Dhaka Medical College Hospital, where doctors declared him dead around 10:30am.

His son, Farhan Ishraq said his father collapsed on the staircase while heading up to the booth. He was rushed to hospital, where he was pronounced dead.

Farhan added that his father had a history of heart disease and had previously suffered a stroke.

[Our correspondents from Khulna, Manikganj, Kishoreganj, Brahmanbaria, Chattogram, and Mymensingh contributed to the report.]



Protesters wave flags and hold placards as they march during the visit of Israel's President Isaac Herzog in Melbourne, Australia, yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Polls offers new chapters

FROM PAGE 16

The Indian Ocean is one of the busiest maritime corridors on the earth, carrying the lifeblood of global commerce and energy, including more than 80 percent of global seaborne oil trade, the US representative said.

Safeguarding these sea lanes through enhanced naval cooperation with partners and allies will only serve to counter China's growing influence and limit its malign behaviour in the region, he said.

Preserving America's military fortitude in the region will deter Chinese coercion, prevent piracy, and ensure the free flow of American and

world trade, he added.

Huizenga said the US India trade deal sets India's tariff rate at 18 percent, one of the lowest regionally. Moreover, Delhi has agreed to buy more American energy.

"I look forward to increasing cooperation, co-production, and investment, especially under the new framework negotiated by the president."

At the hearing, Assistant Secretary State for South and Central Asia, S Paul Kapoor, said a hostile power dominating South Asia could exert coercive leverage over the world economy and that the US must prevent this from happening.

He pointed out three broad categories: defence cooperation, targeted investment, and diplomacy. "Defence cooperation includes military sales and transfers, co-development of systems, and platforms and bilateral and multilateral exercises."

Huizenga said the US has resolved longstanding issues with India in trade relationship as evidenced by the renewed 10-year US India defence framework agreement.

"Targeted investment [in South Asia] can provide these states with high-quality transparent non-coercive support for critical infrastructure like ports."

72 injured in 14 incidents

FROM PAGE 16

In Gangni, around 10:00am, a clash broke out at the Bhatpara Government Primary School polling centre over alleged obstruction to voters. Jamaat claimed that six of its activists and supporters were injured.

In Meherpur Sadar upazila, another clash occurred at Chandpur Government Primary School polling centre.

In Rajshahi, a Jamaat activist was allegedly hacked by a BNP supporter around 3:30pm near the Mendipara polling centre.

"Police and army personnel went to the spot and brought the situation under control," said Bagmara Police Station OC Saidul Alam.

In Khulna-5, a voter named Sanjoy Saha was allegedly assaulted for casting his vote for BNP. He is undergoing treatment at Phultala Upazila Health Complex.

Phultala Police Station OC Mostafa Kamal said police could not identify the attackers and asked the victim to file a complaint.

In Chattogram-13 (Anwara-Karnaphuli), a supporter of the Bangladesh Islamic Front candidate was allegedly beaten up outside the Gundip Government Primary School polling centre, police said.

In Chattogram's Patiya, three supporters of Jamaat candidate Mohammad Faridul Alam were allegedly assaulted by BNP supporters around 11:30am outside the Purba

Ratanpur Government Primary School polling centre.

Lt Md Tahmid, who was on duty in the area, said army personnel acted swiftly and dispersed those involved. "Voting was not affected."

In Munshiganj Sadar upazila, the army detained five people and recovered a firearm and several crude bombs following an explosion at Makhati Gurucharan High School polling centre, said Captain Charles, commander of the Gazaria army camp.

Sadar Police Station OC Mominul Islam said the clash occurred between supporters of BNP candidate Md Kamruzzaman and independent candidate Md Mohiuddin.

In Brahmanbaria's Sarail, voting was suspended for 10 minutes at Alinagar Government Primary School polling centre following a clash between supporters of independent candidate Rumeen Farhana and BNP alliance contender Maulana Junayed Al Habib, said the local OC.

Voting resumed after law enforcers restored order, he added.

In Rajshahi-5, a scuffle broke out between supporters of BNP nominee Nazrul Islam Mondol and independent candidate Rezaul Karim in front of Naopara Government Primary School polling centre in Durgapur upazila. No serious injuries were reported.

In Feni, at least seven people were injured in election-related violence.

According to locals and police,

a supporter of Jamaat-led 11-party alliance candidate Mujibur Rahman, chief of Amar Bangladesh Party, was allegedly assaulted by BNP men at a polling centre in Lemua of Sadar upazila.

Anam Abdur Rahim, chief election agent of Manju, was injured in a separate attack allegedly by BNP activists in Dharmapur union.

Four to five supporters of Manju were also beaten up in Panchgachhia, while a local Jamaat leader was critically injured in Shorshodi union -- all allegedly by BNP supporters.

In Gopalganj, three people -- two Ansar members and a child -- were injured in a crude bomb explosion at the Reshma International School polling centre in Nichupara. The injured are Ansar members Sukanto Majumdar and Jamal Molla, and 13-year-old Amena Khanum.

In Jashore, BNP supporters allegedly attacked and injured two Jamaat men -- Abu Hena, 25, and Abdul Mannaf, 33 -- outside Talbaria Government Primary School polling centre.

In Jhalakathi, police detained four people after Jamaat candidate Fayzul Huq alleged that he was attacked by BNP supporters at Adakhola Secondary School polling centre in Rajapur upazila.

Huq claimed that three people, including his bodyguard, were injured. BNP candidate Rafiqul Islam Jamal denied the allegation, saying Huq's actions at the centre led to the scuffle.

At Narsingdi-1

FROM PAGE 16

were seen capturing the moment on their mobile phones.

Voters said such gestures added to the festive mood of the election and sent a positive message about political tolerance.

Shirin Akhter said, "We stand for a people's uprising. We have struggled together in movements before; there is no personal conflict among us."

Khairul Kabir Khokon, president of Narsingdi district BNP, said, "If any of my activists get into trouble with others, inform me immediately and I will take action. Elections are a festival -- let me know quickly if there are any problems."

Md Ibrahim Bhuiyan said voting was taking place in a festive spirit.

"Beyond being candidates, the three of us are good neighbours. We have competition, but no hostility. Whether we win or lose, we all win. We live side by side in the same community," he added.

Observers said such public displays of courtesy could help foster a culture of democratic coexistence in the constituency.

Russia pounds Ukraine

FROM PAGE 16

while Moscow has pressed on with a battlefield offensive and attacks on Ukrainian cities.

"Each such strike is a blow to peace efforts aimed at ending the war. Russia must be forced to take diplomacy seriously and de-escalate," Sybiha wrote on X.

3 blind men defy all odds to cast vote

FROM PAGE 16

centre in Siddhirganj after voting, while Jasim cast his ballot at a polling station in Mahmudpur, Fatullah.

Although they now live with their families in rented accommodation at Jatrabari and Manikganj in Dhaka, they remain registered voters in Narayanganj.

They said they spent around Tk 200 each to travel and vote, describing the cost as worthwhile.

Polling officials assisted them in casting their ballots. The men said they were able to vote for their preferred candidates without "trouble or confusion".

"Today's voting felt different compared to previous years. As citizens of the country, we also want to cast our votes. It gives us a different kind of joy,"

said Monir.

He added that returning to Narayanganj allowed him to reconnect with friends and acquaintances.

"It felt like the festive joy of Eid," he said.

Jewel said he was inspired to vote after noticing large crowds heading to their home districts by train earlier this week. "Hearing their enthusiasm, I decided that I must vote too," he said.

Jasim echoed the sentiment. "Many people climbed onto the roof of the train because they couldn't find seats. Everyone was happily going to vote. I also came to cast my vote. I am happy that I could vote peacefully," he said.

Beyond voting, the trio voiced expectations from the incoming government, particularly regarding

support for people with disabilities.

"We are people with disabilities. We want our children to be able to study properly, and their tuition fees should be waived. We want to be freed from begging -- that is our hope," Jasim said.

Monir noted that they currently receive Tk 850 per month as a disability allowance.

"This amount doesn't even cover a month's tea expenses. Whoever comes to power should consider this issue. The allowance should be determined based on how much a person actually needs to live each month," he said.

After speaking to reporters, the three men were assisted by a local woman into a battery-run rickshaw and began their journey back home.

10 jailed, nine detained

FROM PAGE 1

In a separate incident at the Bagahata polling centre in the upazila, law enforcers detained seven teenagers for alleged suspicious behaviour. "As they are minors, bonds were taken from their guardians, and they were released after voting ended," the UNO added.

In the same district's Nabiganj upazila, a mobile court sentenced a UK expatriate to five days' imprisonment for tearing a ballot paper and creating disorder at a polling centre, said UNO Md Rahul Amin.

In Jhenaidah-2, a teenage boy was detained for attempting to cast a fake vote at Sonatampur Government Primary School polling centre in Harinakundu upazila, said Syedzadi Mahbuba Manjur Mouna, assistant commissioner of the upazila administration.

In Tangail-3, a man was sentenced to six months' imprisonment and fined Tk 5,000 for snatching ballot papers at Sarabari Government Primary School polling centre in Ghatail upazila, said the centre's Assistant Presiding Officer Abu Sayeed.

In Kishoreganj, a mobile court sentenced a youth to two years' imprisonment and fined Tk 10,000 for casting fake votes at Piplakandi High School centre in Hossainpur upazila, said judicial magistrate Swagat Soumya.

In Shariatpur-2, a man was detained for attempting to cast a fake vote at Naria Biharilal Government High School polling centre in Naria upazila, said the centre's Presiding Officer SM Masud Kabir.

In Gazipur-4, a mobile court sentenced four people to two years' imprisonment each for provoking a

chase and counter chase between supporters of two candidates at Kapasia Bhawal Chandpur centre, said Gazipur Senior Judicial Magistrate Md Alamgir Hossain.

In Gazipur-3, an assistant presiding officer and two polling agents were withdrawn from duty on allegations of vote-rigging around 11:00am at the women's polling station of Sreepur Pilot Government High School, said Assistant Returning Officer Sajeeb Ahmed.

In Rangamati, a youth was detained for attempting to cast a fake vote at RTM Government Primary School centre in Kawkhali upazila, said Sohel Molla, the police in charge of the polling centre.

(Our correspondents from the respective districts contributed to the report.)

Yunus thanks the nation

FROM PAGE 1

Through exercising their constitutional rights, the citizens have played an active role in determining the country's future, the chief adviser added.

Prof Yunus said, "I extend special thanks to the Election Commission, the law enforcement agencies, the armed forces, the administration, observer teams, media personnel, and all officers and staff involved in the voting process."

It has been possible to complete this massive democratic event due to their dedication and hard work, he added.

"I call upon political parties and candidates to uphold democratic decency, tolerance, and mutual respect even after the final results are announced. Differences of opinion will exist, but in the national interest, we must remain united," the chief adviser said.

He said that Bangladesh has once again proven that the people are the source of all power.

"We will move forward collectively toward building an accountable, inclusive, and justice-based state," he added.

He further said, "This election is a moment of great joy and celebration for us. Through it, an unprecedented journey of a new Bangladesh has begun."

Prof Yunus said that this election

was the most peaceful and festive in the country's history, adding, "If this continuity can be maintained, our democracy will reach the pinnacle of excellence."

"Let's work together in this journey to strengthen democracy," he said.

Earlier, Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus yesterday morning described the election and referendum as a moment of national joy and renewal.

"This is a day of great joy. Today is the birthday of a new Bangladesh. We will celebrate this birthday throughout the day," he told reporters after casting his vote at 10:26am at Gulshan Model High School and College.

"Through today's process, people have rejected the past. Whatever nightmarish past existed, we have completely discarded it. From today, at every step, we have gained the opportunity to build a new Bangladesh," he said.

"Voting for a candidate is important, but the referendum is very important. The whole of Bangladesh will change," he added.

"I feel very happy. This is a day of great joy for me. It is a day of great joy for everyone in Bangladesh. A day of liberation. The end of our nightmares and the beginning of new dreams, that is what today's process is for," Prof Yunus said.

activists thronged the street outside the office, celebrating the BNP's imminent election victory.

Unofficial results showed Tarique was on course to win both Dhaka-17 and Bogura-6 with the sheaf of paddy symbol. The polling centres he visited included Adamjee Cantonment School and College, and centres in Mohakhali, Panthapath, Bhashantek, Manik Mia Avenue, Dhammondi 27 and Suhrawardy Udyan areas.

Asked about his party's priorities if it wins, Tarique said improving the law and order situation would be the top priority so that people across the country feel safe. He also expressed hope for a stable and beautiful future with everyone together.

Tarique cast his vote at Gulshan Model High School and College, centre number 65 in the capital, around 9:40am, along with his wife Zubaida Rahman and daughter Zaima Rahman, who voted for the first time.

Speaking to reporters after voting, he said people in Bangladesh had been waiting for such a day for more than a decade and expressed hope that voters would be able to exercise their franchise freely to begin a new democratic journey for the country.

Referring to reports of irregularities and "unwanted incidents", Tarique said attempts had been made to mislead voters, which he said were unacceptable and could create a negative perception about those involved. However, he noted that law enforcement agencies had taken strict steps to control the situation following

incidents reported from different parts of the country on Wednesday night, which he found encouraging.

He stressed that higher voter turnout could help resist any conspiracy. "If people come out and use their rights, if more voters take part, then all kinds of conspiracies can be stopped," he said, urging voters as well as party leaders and activists to remain at polling centres until the end of voting.

"From what I have seen in Dhaka city, it seems that people are going to cast their votes with great enthusiasm," he said after visiting several polling centres in the capital, adding that public participation could prevent irregularities. He also said he was "firmly optimistic" about both voter turnout and his party's victory.

Meanwhile, after voting ended, BNP Election Steering Committee spokesperson Mahdi Amin said at a press briefing at the party's Gulshan election office that voter turnout was lower due to "misleading activities" by a political rival.

"There is a clear and huge difference between BNP and the rival political party. To resist that difference was the main purpose behind the violation of the code of conduct since last night," he said.

"That is why a hateful attempt was made to threaten voters and discourage them from coming to the polling centres. If these unfortunate incidents had not happened, voter turnout might have been higher," he added.