

Rigging, violence mar polls

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Terming the municipal polls farcical and staged-managed, BNP demanded re-polling at about 1,500 centres at 157 municipalities on allegations of the capturing of polling stations, ballot stuffing and other anomalies.

At a post-polls press conference at BNP chairperson's Gulshani office, acting BNP secretary general Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir made the demand.

AL joint general secretary Mahbubul Alam Hanif said that BNP's allegations of 'irregularities' were 'imaginary' and an effort to make the election 'questionable and controversial'.

'Foil all conspiracies, people, voters and candidates jointly tried to make the polls peaceful and it was peaceful,' he said.

Jatiya Party senior joint secretary general Rezaul Islam Bhuiyan alleged that AL polling agents drove out Jatiya Party polling agents from 174 polling centres of 24 municipalities.

Voting at 38 polling centres of 18 municipalities including Barura and Laksam in Comilla, Chandanaish in Chittagong, Kalkini in Madaripur, Jamalpur and Sarishabari in Jamalpur, Madhabdi in Narisingdi, Gaibandha, Bhaluka in Mymensingh and Hajiganj and Faridganj in Chandpur, Syedpur in Nilphamari, Uliapur in Kurigram, and Chauhani in Noakhali were postponed on allegation of rigging, capturing of polling stations and ballot stuffing.

In Chittagong, Nurul Amin, 50, of Doajirpara of Satkania was shot dead in a clash between the supporters of two councillor candidates, both of whom belonged to AL, at a polling station at Satkania.

Satkania police station officer-in-charge Mahmudul Hai said that the incident took place at Goyajar Para area near the Satkania Government College polling centre at about 11:00am.

He said that the supporters of councillor candidates Mojammel Haq Bhola and Monirul Islam Halim clashed and traded fire leaving Nurul Amin, a passer-by, critically

injured. Nurul was rushed to a nearby clinic where physicians declared him dead.

At one stage, the activists attacked the people present at the polling station, leaving 25, including polling officer and voters, injured, witnesses said.

Later, members of joint force fired blank shots to resist the attackers. The incident prompted the authorities to suspend polling at the centre.

The commission suspended five policemen in-charge of separate polling centres at Chandanaish in Chittagong and Kalkini in Madaripur for negligence of duty as their polling centres were captured in the morning.

Many voters said that they experienced the repetition of capturing polling stations, stuffing ballot boxes and intimidating voters and polling staff through violence as Awami League did in the recent elections to three city corporations in Dhaka and Chittagong and in the general elections held on January 4, 2014.

Some polling officers, mostly teachers, expressed helplessness as they were forced to assist in stuffing ballot boxes by the ruling party men at different polling stations.

In Bogra, AL activists beat Ideal Government Primary School centre assistant presiding officer SM Selim Mia for protesting at ballot stuffing. The AL men led by district Juba League general secretary Sagor Kumar Roy snatched ballot papers and stuffed ballot boxes, witnesses said.

In Jessore, about 75 per cent ballot papers at 19 polling stations under of Jessore municipality were stamped before the beginning of the polling. The commission seized the ballot boxes from Jessore Government MM College polling station as polling was completed there before 8:00am, said returning officer Sabina Yeasmin.

At Matlab in Chadpur, AL activists took away five ballot boxes from Munshirhat High School centre at about 11:00am. They ransacked three of the ballot boxes on the school ground, witnesses said.

In Jhenaidah, AL activists tried to occupy the voting booths at two polling cen-

tres and stamped 204 ballot papers forcibly. The ballot papers in three ballot books were cancelled by the executive magistrate at about 8:40am. Dudshara polling station presiding officer Sheikh Sazzad Hossin said that some outsiders entered the centre at 8:40am and forcibly stamped ballots for AL mayoral candidate.

In Narisingdi, AL activists blasted 10-12 crude bombs at three polling centres — Algi Manoharpur Government Primary School, Wisdom Preparatory School and Bhuiya Kindergarten — at Madhabdi municipality. Soon after the blasts, most of the voters in queue left the polling station without casting their vote. Several hundred ballot papers were found on the roads adjacent to the three polling stations, witnesses said.

Major clashes between supporters of AL candidates and their rebel candidates were reported from Barguna, Munshiganj, Jamalpur, Sonargaon in Narayanganj, Narail, Manikganj, Noakhali and Comilla.

AL candidate for Barguna municipality Kamrul Ahsan Moharaj and among 10 others sustained bullet injuries during sporadic clashes between AL and rebel AL candidates at Barguna Government Primary School, Barguna Government College and Gagan Memorial Smriti College polling stations.

At Rangunia, a councillor candidate of Mazumderkhil area was jailed as he was caught red-handed while snatching ballot box from a polling centre at Mazumderkhil High School centre, said returning officer Mohammad Saiful Islam Mazumder.

Crude bomb blasts and clashes between supporters of AL and rebel AL candidates injured four at Sonargaon in Narayanganj, 10 in Mankiganj municipality, 20 at Dewaniganj in Jamalpur, five at Chauhani in Noakhali, and six in Munshiganj.

In Tangail, four people were injured in AL intra-party clash at Bhupur and seven were injured in clashes between AL and BNP at Ghatail.