

Voter enumerators through election offices

Confusion in Nilphamari whether remuneration would be paid

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphamari

Hundreds of voter enumerators on Thursday thronged six upazila election offices of the district to inquire about their unpaid remuneration.

They became anxious after Tuesday's Supreme Court verdict which turned down the Chief Election Commissioner's appeal against a High Court directive in January regarding preparation of a new voter list for the next general election.

Assurances by election officials that payments would be made 'within a short time' after a directive from Dhaka could not satisfy them as there was no clear answer to their question as to when and how much remuneration they would get.

Many of the enumerators apprehended that they would not at all get their remuneration 'as their service went in vain'. The new voter list became null and void after the Supreme Court verdict, many of

them said.

At Dimia upazila election office, over 100 data collectors gathered, many of them seen exchanging words with upazila election officials. Rebeka Banu, a data collector from Chhatnai union in the upazila, expressed her fear that payment of their remuneration became uncertain after the SC verdict.

Another data collector Talebur Rahman, a primary school teacher in Kishoreganj upazila, alleged that they had to work under threat of political parties and local influentials.

"I have been visiting the upazila election office regularly for the last two months to inquire about my remuneration.

"Time and again I was told that no directive have come from Dhaka", he said.

Same is their condition for enumerators in Jaldhaka, Domar and Saidpur.

Saidpur upazila election officer

Marufur Rahman told this correspondent, "We are waiting for Election Commission's directive following the Supreme Court verdict."

District election office source said that 3,677 data collectors, 724 supervisors and 74 assistant registration officers were engaged in then job to prepare the new voter list.

Data collection work began on January 1 this year and the draft voter list was published on May 3. The enrolment workers completed their assignments by 12 March. Till then the enrolment workers were not paid.

Mentionably, the Election Commission paid Tk 6 to each data collector for collecting data of a (each) voter in 2000 when a new voter list was compiled. A supervisor got Tk 1.25 for verification of data for one voter.

Last time, each data collector was given a target to collect data of 300 voters. The target was fixed at

400 this time.

At the beginning of the enrolment process, the EC did not give any clear indication about the remuneration. But the enumerators expected that this year the rate would be higher than that in 2000 due to price hike of essentials.

District election office sources said that the EC allotted money to pay Tk 1000 to each data collector in first instalment and that amount reached the district on May 10. But it was not disbursed till May 23 when the SC verdict was delivered due to lack of permission from the EC.

Nilphamari District Election Officer (DEO) Faridul Islam, when contacted, told this correspondent that he is expecting a directive from the EC soon regarding payments to voter enumerators.

In reply to a question he said it is too early to comment whether the present enrolment workers would be engaged again to update the current voter roll.



Participants at a roundtable on Prospects of and Obstacles to Industrialisation in Rangpur, organised by The Daily Star. Businessmen, politicians and civil society members took part in the discussion, held at Rangpur Rotary Centre on Tuesday.

PHOTO: STAR



Amra Faridpur Bashi, a citizens' group, formed a human chain in front of Faridpur Press Club yesterday demanding protection of the town from erosion by the Padma.

PHOTO: BIVASH DUTTA

Intensify agitation to oust 'failed' govt

Former AL minister Abdul Khaleque tells party men in Satkhira

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

Awami League (AL) central leader and former minister Talukdar Abdul Khaleque MP yesterday said the government has created a state of uncertainty and instability in the country in a planned way to cling to power.

The opposition demand for reforms to the caretaker system and the Election Commission (EC) are now demands of the people but the government has adopted a dilly-dally tactics to kill time with a motive to go for election without reforms.

"Awami League-led 14-party opposition alliance will not allow any election without reforms", he said while addressing a party workers' meeting at Pourasava auditorium in Satkhira town.

He alleged that the BNP-Jamaat government wants to cling to power by conspiracy and muscle and money power.

The former relief minister said the government could not solve any of the problems. Leaders of the

ruling parties have amassed huge resources through corrupt means while people are suffering and industries are incurring losses due to power crisis.

The garments industry is in a total chaotic situation but the "failed" government is trying to blame the opposition for this to cover up their misdeeds.

"They have totally destroyed the economy. They have turned the country into a food deficit one from a food surplus one while their corruption and politicisation of the administration have created an unstable situation", Talukdar Khaleque said.

He said, people have taken to streets and will not return home without realising their demands for holding a free and fair election.

Our movement will continue till the are made, he said.

There will be no dialogue with the government if it includes Jamaat men in its team", he said.

Khaleque said, the government is reluctant to accept the reform proposals because they know they

will not return to power without rigging.

"The government patronised militants to use them in the next election, claimed.

He demanded immediate arrest of those ministers, MPs and financiers who harbored top militants Shaekh Abdur Rahman and Siddiqui Islam Bangla Bhai.

The AL leader also criticised the government for price hike of essentials. A syndicate enjoying blessings of 'Hawa Bhaban' is manipulating prices of essentials, he alleged.

He urged the people to unite to realise the reforms and join the ongoing to oust the 'failed government'.

Chaired by Sheikh Nurul Haque, the meeting was also addressed by, among others, Engineer Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Nazrul Islam, Sheikh Abu Nasim, A Ahmed, Shahid Iqbal Bithar, Firoz Ahmed, SM Shawkat Hossain, Shahidul Islam, Jaglul Haidar, Saiful Karim Sabu and Rashiduzzaman Rashi.

Doctors' strike for UNO's removal

A CORRESPONDENT, Rangamati

Doctors and other staff of Rangamati General Hospital observed work abstention for two hours on Thursday demanding removal of Naniachar Upazila Nirbahee Officer (UNO).

Doctors and health workers in the district have been agitating since May 18 for removal UNO Abul Kalam for his alleged abuse of power and misbehaviour with health officials.

They will also abstain from work on Sunday, doctors at the Sadar Hospital said.

On May 18, the UNO asked Upazila Health and Family Planning Officer Mridul Kanti Tripura to push Hepatitis-B vaccine to all policemen at the upazila police station. Mridul Kanti told the UNO that Hepatitis-B vaccine was only for children, not for adults.

This angered the UNO, who kept Dr. Mridul Kanti confined and asked a policeman to push the vaccine into all policemen at the thana. Mridul was then freed.

Doctors said the district administration was also informed about the incident.

ADM Emdadul Haque, when contacted, said, they received a fax message from the Establishment Ministry about transfer of the UNO. The UNO is on leave and the order will take soon, he said.

Truck kills 2 in Rajshahi

RU CORRESPONDENT

Two day-labourers were killed when a truck knocked them down near Shishitala BDR camp in Charghat upazila yesterday. The killer truck sped away.

Ershad, 27 and Mohammad 29 died on the spot. They were going for work riding a bicycle, police and witnesses said.

Locals later put up a barricade on the Rajshahi-Natore highway for half an hour.

BDR men handed over bodies to their families.

YOUTH'S DEATH IN CUSTODY

Hartal in Gaibandha town for Monday

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha

The Gaibandha Nagirik Committee yesterday announced a day-long hartal in Gaibandha town on Monday to protest the death of a youth in custody and attack on its rally by ruling party activists.

Its rally held in the town on Thursday to protest the death was attacked and foiled by ruling party activists.

Monday's hartal was called at its rally held at Gaibandha Shaheed Miner. After the rally, a big procession was brought out in the town demanding judicial investigation into the death in custody of Sajedur Rahman Sajid due to alleged police torture.

Speakers at the rally demanded impartial probe into the death and punishment to the killers and threatened of tougher agitation for noncompliance.

They also bitterly criticised the attack on their rally on Thursday allegedly by ruling BNP activists. The attack was made to cover up the killing in custody but none has been arrested, they said.

Ruling BNP in Gaibandha is protecting the policemen who killed a youth in custody, Aminul

Islam Golap, convener of the Nagorik Committee told the rally.

The speakers demanded arrest of Noor Alam, OC of Gaibandha Sadar police station, for his alleged involvement in the killing.

Police arrested investigation officer (IO) Abu Yousuf after filing of a case against him in connection with the youth's death. Abu Yousuf was placed on three days' remand by a magistrate court on Thursday.

Earlier, police claimed that Sajid committed suicide but the autopsy report said Sajid was strangled.

Meanwhile, four policemen--SI Abu Yousuf, Fahmida Khatun, SI Dulal Chandra Sarker and Mizanur Rahman were suspended in connection with the death.

Sajid was arrested from Katpatti near the railway station along with a revolver on the night of May 18. He was killed while on remand.

Sajid's father Abur Rouf said earlier that he had talked to his son during daytime on may 21 before he was killed in the evening.

Lawmaker sued for 'killing' husband

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

Esrat Sultana Elen Bhutto, a BNP lawmaker from Jhalakati district, has been sued along with her private secretary and brother for "killing" her husband Zulfikar Ali Bhutto six years ago.

Abdur Rob alias Chunnu Mollah, elder brother of Zulfikar, a former lawmaker of Jatiya Party, lodged the case on Thursday with the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court in Dhaka accusing Elen Bhutto, her private secretary Abdullah and her brother Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury.

Sources here said Chunnu alleged in the case that his brother was poisoned to death by Elen and her associates on May 29, 2000 over her alleged extra-marital affair with her private secretary Abdullah. The poison was mixed with medicine, he said in the case.

"My brother informed me about the matter just before his death" he claimed.

In another complaint lodged by Chunnu Molla's wife Rawshan Ara accusing 11 people under Sections 107 and 117 alleged that Abdullah, Mizanur and their associates were threatening them.

BSF abducts 4, returns 2 bodies in two dists

STAR NATIONAL DESK

Indian Border Security Force picked up four Bangladesh stone quarry labourers from near the zero line in Jafflong stone quarry in Sylhet on Thursday.

On the same day, BSF returned bodies of two Bangladeshis shot dead by them in Dinajpur.

The four picked up in Jafflong are Mofazzil Ali, son of Kalachand of Kalmakanda upazila under Netrokona; Deen Islam, his brother Amir Miah, sons of Abdus Sobhan and Alauddin, son of Jashim Uddin from Jalsa village in Madhyanager upazila in Sunamganj

district. BDR lodged a strong protest with BSF but the Indian border guards declined to return the Bangladeshi nationals, our staff correspondent reported from Sylhet.

In Dinajpur, BSF returned bodies of two Bangladeshi farmers on Thursday after a flag meeting held at Dainoor border in Dinajpur Sadar upazila earlier on the day.

On Wednesday, BSF gunned down two Bangladeshi farmers -- Shirajur Islam, 25, son Rabiul Islam and Momen, 30, son of Mobarak Ali, both of Vitapara village in Dinajpur Sadar upazila.

Zainul celebrations begin in Mymensingh

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

A three-day programme began yesterday on the premises of Shilpacharya Zainul Abedin Sangrahashala (art gallery) in Mymensingh town marking the 30th death anniversary of the great artist.

The programme began with a painting competition by children.

About 150 students from over 40 schools in the district, divided into three age groups, participated in the art competition, said gallery sources.

Thirteen students will be selected from the three groups for prizes.

As it was a holiday, children in their hundreds thronged the art gallery with their parents to enjoy the painting competition and see the memorable paintings by the great artist. There are 60 paintings, 115 photographs and 75 mementos at the gallery for visitors.

The three-day programme includes discussion meetings and prize distribution ceremony.

Born in 1914 in Kishoreganj, the great artist pioneered setting up of the art gallery here in 1975. He died on May 28, 1976.

8X2

4X2

2 killed for dowry

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

Two housewives were killed allegedly by their husbands last night in the district for dowry.

The victims have been identified as Asura Khatun, 29, wife of Arman Gazi of Romjannagar village in Shyamnagar upazila and Shahanara Khatun, 20, wife of Nazmul Hossain of Khanpur village in the Sadar upazila.

Quoting local people police said Asura Khatun's husband Arman Gazi recently asked her to bring Tk 10,000 from her father. As she failed, Arman beat her severely, killing her on the spot.

On contact, SI Mofiz of Shyamnagar thana confirmed the incident.

In the other incident at Khanpur village, Shanara Khatun was slaughtered allegedly by her husband Nazmul Hossain for dowry.

Police arrested Nazmul Hossain and sent the body to Satkhira Sadar Hospital morgue for autopsy.



Children at a painting competition held at Shilpacharya Zainul Abedin Sangrahashala (art gallery) in Mymensingh town yesterday, organised as part of a three-day programme marking 30th death anniversary of the artist.

PHOTO: STAR