

FIRST DAY OF VOTER LIST UPDATING

None enrolled in Nilphamari, officials mum in Khulna

STAR NATIONAL DESK

Not a single new voter was enrolled in Nilphamari district yesterday, the first day of updating the voter list.

In Knulha, election officials said revision of the electoral roll began in all the 31 wards in the city and in nine upazilas, but remained tight-lipped on how many new voters were enrolled.

In Nilphamari, most of the Union Parishad (UP) and municipality offices where election commission officials were supposed to sit for enrolling new voters or correcting the original list were found locked, reports our correspondent EAM Asaduzzaman.

Though a government holiday, these offices were supposed to remain open to facilitate election officials update the voter list of 2000. No election official was seen either at any UP or municipality office.

The Election Commission (EC) started updating the voter list as a Supreme Court verdict on May 30 declared null and void the draft voter list announced by it on May 3 and asked it to update it on the basis of the voter list of 2000.

As per a decision of the EC to update the voter list, assistant registration officers would go to Union Parishad offices, municipality offices, ward commissioner's offices or any convenient place like school, madrasa or college with forms to enrol new voters or correct the list.

Application form No. 7 will be used for inclusion of any name in the voter list, form No. 8 for correction and form No. 9 for deletion of any name from the voter list, according to election officials.

This correspondent visited Nilphamari and Jaladhaka municipality offices and Union Parishad offices at Gayebari in Dimla upazila, Putimari in Kishoreganj upazila and

Boragani in Domar upazila yesterday and found all those locked. NO election official was seen.

Jahir Hossen, a resident of Sabuj Para adjacent to Nilphamari municipality office, said he had been waiting in front of office since morning to enrol himself as a voter. But the office was locked and no election official was found there, he said. Shahidul Islam, chairman of Putimari UP in Kishoreganj, said he did not get any directive either from the UNO office or from the upazila election office that enrolment of new voter in his area would be performed at his office.

Sources in the district election office said 74 assistant registration officers who earlier prepared the new voter list (now null and void) have been asked to update the voter list in 540 wards under 60 unions and 42 wards under four municipalities in the district. The district election office and upazila election officials will also do the job.

The sources however said assistant registration officers with 3 to 4 persons (former data collectors and supervisors) would go to each ward on a certain date. Before that, a massive publicity would be made through announcements by mike and pasting posters in respective areas to make the people aware. Union Parishad chairmen, members, village police would also be asked to campaign.

There were 11,10,061 voters in the district in the 'rejected' voter list of 2006. The number was 9,31,999 in the voter list 2000, sources said.

Talking to this correspondent, many eligible voters said they apprehend that they would not get the chance to enroll their names in the voter list in the system.

Sreedam Das, Nilphamari district president of Communist Party of Bangladesh said poor day labourers



PHOTO: STAR

Nilphamari municipal office where election officials were supposed to update the voter list was locked yesterday.

could be dropped as they would prefer to work in fields than going to Union Parishad offices for enrolment.

When contacted, District Election Officer Faridul Islam admitted that no voter was enrolled in his office on the first day yesterday. Enrolment will continue till 31 July.

He however said some assistant registration officers could not go to designated spots as they were busy with June closing report at his office. They will go to spots and correctly update the voter list, he said.

Some voter enumerators this correspondent talked to expressed their displeasure with the new work as they are yet to be paid for the earlier work.

Our Staff Correspondent reports from Khulna Revision of electoral roll began yesterday in all the 31

wards of Khulna metropolitan city and nine upazilas of the district, election officials said.

Assistant registration officers began their work for revising electoral roll sitting in offices of ward commissioners in city and union parishads in 9 upazilas of the district.

There is doubt about full success of revision campaign due to want of necessary manpower, said some assistant registration officers (AROs) in Khulna city.

It could not be known till 5 pm how many persons were enrolled as voters as the district election Officer remained tight-lipped.

He said only one copy of form No. 7 was distributed in the ward commissioner's office in ward no. 28. He however claimed that 35 AROs were working in the city.

Diarrhoea kills four in Gaibandha

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha

Diarrhoea has claimed four lives including two children and attacked 50 others in remote shoal areas of Shaghata and Fulchhari upazilas in last two days.

The victims are Sajeda Begum, 5, Hamida Begum, 8, of Khatiyamari village in Fulchhari upazila, Abdul Jabber, 35, of Diholkandi village and Kulsum Begum, 26, of Patilbari village in Shaghata upazila.

With recession of floodwater, the disease has broken out in an epidemic form at Khatiyamari, Patilbari and Digholkandi villages and is now spreading alarmingly in the affected areas. Every day children and women are being attacked with diarrhoea in increasing number.

Fulchhari Upazila Health Complex physicians said the disease has broken out in shoals for want of pure drinking water and improper sanitation system.

Medical teams are working in the affected areas and there is no shortage of oral saline, water purifying tablets and essential drugs, they said.

2cr affected by unplanned shrimp farming in S-W dists

Croplands lose fertility, bio-diversity damaged, workshop told in Satkhira

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

Speakers at a day-long workshop here yesterday stressed the need for evolving environment friendly shrimp cultivation to protect the bio-diversity as unplanned cultivation destroys the ecological imbalance.

Unplanned shrimp cultivation is ecologically suicidal, socially unjust and economically not viable, they said.

The workshop on 'Environment friendly and socially responsible shrimp cultivation' was organised by a local NGO, N Z Foundation with assistance from some NGOs including Coastal Development Partnership, Shrimp Quality Support Project (FQSP) and World Fish Centre; and the USA AID. It was held at Assassuni Upazila BRDB auditorium with Biswajit Sadhu in the chair.

Assassuni UNO Khan Mohammad Nurul Amin was the chief guest.

It was addressed by, among others, NZ Foundation Director Monzur Hossain, Assassuni Upazila Fisheries Officer Shamim Haider, World Fish Center Project Director

Nasim Ahmed Alim, Regional Director of (SFQSP) Kudrat E Panir and Abul Hossain.

Co-ordinator of Coastal Development Partnership Ashraf Alam Tutu presented the key note paper.

The speakers called for joint efforts by shrimp farmers and stakeholders for environment friendly shrimp farming to boost yield and export. Bangladesh earns Tk 1200 crore in foreign currency every year from export of shrimp and frozen foods produced in Satkhira. The yield can be increased many times if scientific and environment friendly methods are adopted, they said.

They said saline water for shrimp cultivation not only destroys fertility of agricultural lands but also damages the bio-diversity.

Intrusion of saline water in agriculture lands and unplanned shrimp cultivation in South-Western districts of the country are depriving marginal farmers of their livelihood by displacing them from their ancestral homesteads, they said.

Over seven lakh landless people have lost their right to khas land due to malpractice by owners of shrimp

enclosures, they said. About two crore people in 15 districts in the coastal area have become victims of this unjust practice, they said.

Kudrat E Panir said, croplands have lost fertility because of shrimp cultivation which thrives on labour exploitation, muscle power and terrorism.

Women workers at shrimp processing plants are subjected to serious health hazards and inhuman working conditions, he said.

But still, shrimp production per hectare in Bangladesh is much lower compared to other countries. If modern technology replaces the traditional ones, production will increase keeping the ecological balance while labour exploitation will also be reduced remarkably, the speakers said.

Government officials, teachers, students, businessmen, members of civil society, shrimp cultivators, representatives of the local government bodies and NGO representatives took part the workshop.

200 fall sick after taking food at Matlab temple

A CORRESPONDENT, Chandpur

Over 200 Hindu devotees yesterday fell sick after eating fruits served as 'prasad' at a Roth fair at Locknath temple at Kaladi village in Matlab upazila.

Twenty-eight patients including women and children were admitted to the ICDDR,B Health Research Centre at Matab with serious stomach ache and vomiting.

On contact, Dr Ilias, an on-duty physician, said the patients are suffering from serious food poisoning. Hospital sources said many other patients are yet to come to the hospital for treatment.

The priest of the temple, Norottam Boishnab said his family of five members are also undergoing treatment at the hospital.

7 get life term for murder

OUR CORRESPONDENT, B'baria

Seven persons have been sentenced to life term for killing a trader in Nabinagar upazila in the district in 2000.

The convicts are Mansur Alam alias Mon Mia, Hussain Mia, Chuttu, Mina, Alam Mia, Awald Mia, Parves Mia and Sham Mia. They are all from Khagatua village in the upazila.

Of them, Alam, Awlad and Sham are absconding.

They had killed trader Alam Mia in a sequel to a previous enemy, court sources said.

Additional District and Session Judge Md Muhoshin Mulla delivered the verdict on Thursday.

The convicts were also fined Tk 10,000 each, in default to serve prison term for five months more.

Nagorik Committee demands withdrawal of Khagrachhari DC

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khagrachhari

Khagrachhari Parbattya Zila Nagorik Committee, a citizens' committee, at a meeting held at its office here yesterday gave an ultimatum to the government for withdrawal of the Deputy Commissioner (DC) by July 15 otherwise, they threatened a tougher agitation including a half-day road barricade programme from July 16.

While talking to this correspondent, Nagorik Committee secretary Santashita Chakma Bakul alleged that the DC termed the indigenous people outsiders and intruders. Earlier, another ultimatum was given for removal of the DC within June 30, but the government ignored their demand, he said.

RU reopens amid fear of violence: Police deployed

Student bodies threaten agitation if permission to Shibir cadre for exam not withdrawn

RU CORRESPONDENT

Rajshahi University reopened yesterday after a 38-day summer vacation amid fear of violence.

The university halls were opened Friday. As usual, police remained deployed on the campus.

The campus may turn volatile again centring allowing Shibir cadre Mahbub Alam Salehi to appear at Masters final examination, recovery of bombs and firearms from the of hall room of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) cadre Shafin Ahmed and regularisation of jobs of 546 controversially appointed employees, sources said.

A section of teachers and student front of opposition parties on the campus earlier demanded resignation of the Vice Chancellor on the issue of Salehi, a student of Geology and Mining department an absconding accused wanted in connection with the murder of a teacher of the department, S Taher Ahmed.

Salehi is president of Islami Chhatra Shibir (ICS) unit at the

university.

On pressure from Shibir, the university authorities last week gave permission to Salehi to sit for examination.

Geology and Mining departmental academic committee earlier disallowed Salehi to sit for the examination on the ground of shortage of percentage in classes.

During one year, Salehi attended only one class, sources in the department said.

The Progressive Teacher's Association (PTA) in a statement last week demanded resignation of Vice-chancellor Prof Altaf Hossain for allowing Salehi to appear at the examination.

Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) and other left leaning student organisations also demanded resignation of the VC.

On Thursday, leaders of the student bodies met with the VC and told him that they would launch agitation if the permission is not withdrawn.

Police on June 24 recovered six powerful bombs, some bomb mak-

ing materials, two revolvers, foreign wine and phensidyl from the room of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) cadre Shafin Ahmed in Nawab Abdul Latif Hall.

The haul was detected following explosion of a bomb in which Shafin was also seriously injured. Police said the bomb exploded while it was being made. Shafin is undergoing treatment in Dhaka.

Most of the JCD men belonging to its faction led by Likhon remained out of the campus to avoid arrest. Police lodged two cases after the bomb blast.

The 546 controversially appointed staff are agitating on the campus for regularisation of their jobs. They earlier threatened to launch a fresh agitation after the university reopens.

Besides, there may be violence between the two rival factions of JCD on the campus, sources said.

Proctor Prof Enamul Haque, when contacted said there is apprehension of trouble but 'we are also ready to tackle such situation'.

Illegal signboards cause accidents in Sirajganj

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sirajganj

Over 100 illegal signboards erected on both sides of Dhaka-Bonpara highway in Hati Kamrul area in Sirajganj are causing problem in vehicular movement and road accidents.

According to sources, some advertising agencies and owner's of different companies constructed the massive signboards on government lands with the help of some local musclemen backed by ruling party men and dishonest officials of Roads and Highways Department.

Land grabbers have allowed such signboards on condition of monthly or yearly share of rent. Local cadres of ruling parties and a section of dishonest officials R & H Department also get shares of the rent.

Locals said, the illegal signboards obstruct vision of drivers of vehicles, causing accidents frequently.

When contacted, Roads and Highways Executive Engineer Aminul Islam in Sirajganj said steps would be taken after investigation.



PHOTO: STAR

Some of the massive illegal signboards erected on grabbed lands along both sides of Dhaka-Bonpara highway in Hati Kamrul area in Sirajganj.



PHOTO: STAR

The Moulvibazar unit of Jatiya Puja Committee formed a human chain in the town on Friday protesting the government move to relocate Ramna Kali Mandir in Dhaka city.

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