

Prof Yunus

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In future, Grameen will bring a new concept of business, which is social business. Today's concept of business is to make profit, but this is a narrow interpretation of business," the microcredit guru told a press conference on the eve of the award ceremony.

Channel i will broadcast the programme live from Oslo City Hall from 6:00pm to 7:25pm Bangladesh time. Besides, it will also broadcast an on the spot exclusive interview with Yunus.

After the prize giving ceremony Yunus will participate in a live interactive session with Cable News Network (CNN).

"Human beings are not only for making money, they are also for changing lives of other people. Doing good to the people is as enjoyable as making profit. Our Grameen Danon is one such endeavour and I want to create more such companies from my prize money. People can take a look at such business and participate."

"From Zobra to Oslo - it is a long journey of 30 years," Yunus looked beaming with joy in describing his achievement of bagging the most prestigious prize in today's world. "This is a thrilling experience for me. It is a beyond imagination. I am grateful to the Nobel committee for selecting us for the prize. It is an effort to connect poverty and peace. That poverty is a threat to peace has never been said before in such a manner and this message needs to be carried forward."

Describing how the peace prize would redefine microcredit, he said the recognition has linked microcredit to poverty reduction, to the fact that microcredit is a tool to reduce poverty.

This has made a big endorsement for microcredit and has proved that the world financial system should be inclusive where there should not be any left-out.

"What happens to the left-outs is an injustice and this is why it is all the more important to get people out of poverty," he stressed.

Yunus said with a deep belief that it is possible to eliminate poverty from the globe. "We have to take one country after another to make them poverty free. We can then set up a museum of poverty where people can come and learn what poverty once meant. I believe it is possible to say goodbye to poverty forever."

As Grameen now wants to reach 100 percent of the poor families in Bangladesh, he feels the winning of the Nobel prize will help the legislators, regulators and activists to sit up and work towards that goal.

But he warned microcredit alone is not enough; it is a tool to unleash the energy of the poor and people need technology to use that energy for a collective social good.

He said it is important for all to take the millennium development goals seriously and cut poverty by half by 2015. Pointing out Bangladesh's achievement, he noted that poverty declined by 1 percentage point a year in 1990s and it is declining by 2 percentage points since then.

"I would say Bangladesh is on the right track to achieve the MDGs. And I believe it will be an exciting example because Bangladesh has a huge population of 145 million," he observed.

Yunus believes Grameen's winning the Nobel will spark a lot of discussions in the board rooms of the conventional banks. It has sent a strong message to them - they can create specialised branches to cater to the needs of the poor.

YUNUS SECRETARIATS IN DHAKA, NY BY EARLY NEXT YEAR

Two offices - Yunus secretariats - will be opened by early next year in Dhaka and New York to coordinate all future works of Nobel laureate Professor Muhammad Yunus.

The plan is that the secretariats will relieve Grameen Bank from organising personal programmes and schedules of Yunus. The new offices will also work on the next vision of the microcredit guru, which is to promote social business.

Choreography plan gets changed
Strict security had forced Nrittanchal, the dance troupe that is to perform at the Nobel Peace Prize ceremony, to change its choreography plan.

Originally it was planned that the 15-member troupe would come down the stage and shower flower petals on the guests. But security requirement has forced the group to change the plan, which will now shower petals on the stage.

It is for the first time that a cultural troupe from the recipient country has been allowed to perform at the prize giving ceremony outside the official Nobel concert. The group will open the ceremony with a welcome dance.

Advisers' hectic

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The other advisers echoed the view. At that point, the president told them that they might leave and that he will go ahead with his move, the sources added.

Earlier in the day, the president summoned the chiefs of the Armed Forces Division and NSI to discuss army deployment. He also signed an order to deploy army and later gave it to the advisers for their approval. But the advisers declined to consent to the order.

ALTERNATIVE PROPOSAL

In the morning, the advisers came up with a new proposal that says the two controversial commissioners-Zakaria and Modabir-will be sent on leave while there will be no new appointment to the EC.

Accordingly, they had initiated a move to convince the AL-led 14-party alliance, but the president did not consent to the move to make Zakaria take time off till the election is over, sources said.

The new proposal came following the opposition of the chief adviser and four-party alliance to the sending of Zakaria on leave. The 14-party combine outright rejected it and demanded implementation of the original proposal regarding reconstruction of the EC, added the sources.

On receiving negative response from the AL and its allies, the council of advisers that prepared the new proposals in the morning's meeting sat again in the evening to review the situation.

The morning meeting that ended at about 1:30pm decided to open another round of negotiation with the two major political alliances with the new proposal.

The advisers however could not open another round negotiation, as the AL remained rigid on implementation of the advisers' original proposal on EC.

Emerging from the four hours long evening meeting, Adviser CM Shaif Sami told reporters that they had initiated some efforts regarding recasting the EC, but the efforts were not successful.

"Some initiatives are still on and we hope a result will come by tomorrow," Shaif said.

Pressed by mobs of waiting reporters, Sami admitted that their efforts hit snags as he said: "The knot now remains stuck at one point and we are trying to resolve it."

To another question, he said the two alliances agreed on certain proposals of the package and the announcement of the revised election schedule and work on correcting voters' list are outcome of the agreements.

ZIA on alert

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airport after Indian television channel NDTV scroll was displaying that an airplane may be hijacked and land in Bangladesh.

"We asked our security officers and all the agencies concerned to enhance security at the airport and keep additional vigil at the entry points after learning of the threat from Indian media reports," said Abdul Awal, chief security officer of the airport.

Around 400-strong security forces including police, Armed Police Battalion and Ansar members are kept on duty at the ZIA in a single shift, he said, adding that their forces always remain on alert at the airport.

They also asked the Deputy Commissioner of Uttara Division of Dhaka Metropolitan Police to keep two platoons of police ready for the airport, he said.

The airport was put on high alert from 12:00noon to 4:00pm when the ZIA authorities restricted entry of general people. Emergency vehicles including ambulances were also kept ready.

Officer-in-Charge of Airport Police Station Abdul Malik said they took sufficient security measures following the information.

However, no additional forces were fanned out at the airport, he said, adding that the alert was withdrawn following information from India that the plane did not take off.

Political leaders

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to find out clean candidates, politicians challenge it by saying you have no right to do so. If you want to do so, then go and float a political party. If needed, may be I shall form a party, but this will not happen right tomorrow," he smiled.

Civil society hands over vision

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(RPO) were formally handed over to the two major political parties - BNP and Awami League.

The civil society recommended bringing massive reforms in the political system, electoral laws, electoral code of conduct and administration.

"If we cannot reduce the election expenditure, no gentleman will come for election contest in future," said Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan.

"The dream of independence will be shattered if we can not free the politics and economy from the grab of massive corruption and terrorism," said Abdul Jallil. He called upon the political parties to be united and fight for freeing the politics from the grip of black money holders and terrorists.

CPD Chairman Rehman Sobhan presided over the Nagorik Forum while CPD executive director Dr Debapriya Bhattacharya conducted the meeting.

Mannan Bhuiyan urged for a consensus among the political parties to accept the election result and not to make the administration politicised after winning the election.

He urged the civil society leaders to take the initiative for a consensus within the parties that no party will boycott parliament or enforce any hartal and blockade, the parliamentary standing committees would be formed within three months and the government will make the tender process transparent and corruption free.

He, however, said he does not expect that the civil society leaders and intellectuals will act as brokers to any particular party.

"We politicians should be more accountable. But have the teachers, engineers, bureaucrats or others no responsibility?" he questioned while addressing Nagorik Forum, organised by Center for Policy Dialogue in collaborate with The Daily Star, the Prothom Alo and Channel i.

Bhuiyan left the programme venue just after his speech to join the four-party rally at the city's Muktangan.

Before that he told the organisers of the Nagorik Forum that he will place the proposals to his party leaders who will endorse the 'acceptable' ones.

Emphasising strengthening the institutions, Mannan Bhuiyan said, "Any reform or activity will not succeed if we do not have enough well-built institutions. For example, the future generation will not be interested to join the bureaucracy if the Public Service Commission is not strong and neutral."

Terminology corruption as a 'big disease', he said the Anti Corruption Commission should be made effective and there should be social movement as well.

He also proposed making the Audit Division more effective against corruption.

On Election Commission reform, the BNP secretary general said, "All the demands raised in this regard were against a few persons. But all the commissioners are to be appointed according to the constitution so that the focus should be on the institutions. Otherwise, everyone will look for particular persons and the movement will continue."

Criticising the tendency to compete in the election after having made some money, Bhuiyan said the gentlemen will not participate in elections if the expenditure cannot be reduced and those who have money will dominate the party.

Appreciating the civil society proposals, Awami League General Secretary Abdul Jalil said his party will consider the proposals and it will reflect in their election manifesto.

"We are committed to establishing an accountable and capable civil administration, independent judiciary, strong local government system, ensuring free flow of information, empowerment of women and the right of indigenous people and minority community," he said.

"You have finalised the recommendations to strengthen democracy, election and political process. We agree with you as we are fighting for a free and fair election and at least 70 people have sacrificed their lives to meet the demand. But implementation of the package proposals placed by the advisers is still uncertain," he said.

"Now you can understand that how much tough it is to hold a credible election by ensuring right of voting," he said.

He agreed with recommendation to reform the Election Commission and said the crisis could not have been created if the previous government implemented their proposals.

He, however, said the decision on amending the Representative of People Order should be kept for the elected government.

It will not be possible to implement the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) within 2015 due to the failure and corruption of the immediate past BNP-led government, he said, adding that even they failed to generate a single megawatt additional power in last five years.

He said that Awami League will adopt a proper plan for implementing the MDG and ensuring energy security.

"All of our initiatives for development are failing due to corruption. Our dream of independence might fail if we will fail to make the politics and economy corruption free. Awami League will step forward with making the Anti-corruption Commission effective," he said.

Talking on the Vision 2021 proposal, Finance and Planning Adviser Akbar Ali Khan said reform in the political parties is one of the most important changes that are required to realise some of the vision's goals.

"The political parties have to take the steps for their own democratisation," Akbar said, adding that without democratisation they will not be able to take accountable decisions.

It is the political parties, rather than the civil society, have to step up to resolve political problems in Bangladesh, he said.

"I do not believe that the two leaders [Khaleda and Hasina] will threaten that the nation has earned

TOP RECOMMENDATIONS

- Disqualifying loan defaulters from elections
- Separate voter lists for the three hill districts
- Deducting from the lawmakers' allowances for absents from parliament
- Public representatives to spend at least 10 days in their localities
- Electing prime minister from the majority party, speaker from the second majority and deputy speaker from the third majority

after so much suffering," Akbar said, adding, "If the political parties are not proactive, no success will be achieved merely by formulating more and more laws."

The use of black money in politics is a problem in most places in the world, Akbar said. He cited the definite influence of campaign finance in the United States.

He, however, urged taking steps to better the situation.

Terminology democracy an 'imperfect' governance system, Akbar cited 71 countries who have similar problems with the voter list as Bangladesh.

"Even in the European Union which criticised us, their Spain, Portugal and Ireland have similar problems with their voter lists," Akbar said.

"We cannot provide any guarantee that there will be problems even if we correct and revise the updated voter list," Akbar said.

In this regard, he stressed the need for Supreme Court orders and guidelines for a permanent voter list.

He also made several proposals including recasting of ballots in case of abnormal casting of votes.

Member of the Nagorik Committee Prof Wahiduddin Mahmud praised Bangladesh's achievement in poverty reduction, as no other country has attempted development with such limited resources, with so many natural disasters and such widespread problems with good governance.

"The Bangladeshi peoples' entrepreneurial spirit, and their reluctance to accept that they will be stuck in the poorer section of society has driven Bangladesh's development," said Mahmud.

Mahmud observed that Bangladeshi sectors that have circumvented the government are the only ones to develop while sectors such as energy have suffered because they have been stuck in bureaucratic bottlenecks.

He predicted that Bangladesh would hopefully become a middle-income country with current trends in poverty reduction.

Nagorik Committee member and Vice-Chancellor of Brac University Prof Jamilur Reza Chowdhury said Bangladesh has to ensure that it becomes a knowledge-based society which will be a prerequisite to survive the 2021 world.

Chowdhury stressed on the need to improve the quality of education and an essential component of it is the integration of the three streams - Bangla, English and Madrasa - of education through a core curriculum.

Nagorik Committee member and Dhaka University lecturer Mahmuda Islam, asked for more parliamentary seats for women so that a greater political empowerment for women is visibly brought to the political centre.

She also asked for an increase in the health and education provisions for women so that they can be and continue to be meaningful and successful representatives.

Prof Abdullah Abu Sayeed, head of Biswa Shahitya Kendro and Nagorik Committee member, said the Bangladesh's lack political experience and the spate of political problems since independence in 1971 is largely to blame.

He said Bangladeshis are experiencing a "democratic dictatorship" that he warned is more dangerous than a "military dictatorship" because it rules under the guise of legality and democracy.

The Daily Star Editor Mahfuz Anam, also the co-organiser of the Nagorik initiative, said the organisers of the committee and the civil society want no other forces but the political parties to be the engine of democracy in Bangladesh.

"Political parties have to shoulder the responsibility for these problems," said Anam, after lamenting Bangladesh's slide into political turmoil 15 years after what he termed "the rebirth of the dream of 1971."

Anam found hope, but was also bewildered, that Bangladesh is the home to both globally renowned success stories, such as Professor Yunus's Grameen Bank, and grim political situations.

CPD Chairman Rehman Sobhan demanded a number of dramatic changes in the current situation if "the caretaker government is to establish sufficient authority to preside over a credible election."

"The conduct of the chief adviser needs to be more transparent, the functioning of the advisory council more democratic, the integrity of the Election Commission must be restored and, above all, the conduct of major political parties has to be less confrontational," Sobhan said.

If these are not implemented, Sobhan warned, "We may end up with confrontations instead of elections or with an election which commands a diminished credibility in the eyes of the electorate as well as the international community."

He said either of these would compromise the legitimacy of future governments and would serve "neither the cause for democracy nor tranquility in Bangladesh."

Sobhan, also a renowned economist, said the demands for honest candidates who are not associated with "acts of violence or command over a sizeable undeclared wealth" are widespread.

He said it is up to the voters to elect honest candidates when parties offer them, so that political parties are assured of not losing a seat if they

nominate an "honest candidate."

Sobhan said Bangladesh's "major organs of governance are approaching meltdowns," as the administration and law enforcement agencies are being compromised by corruption and partisanship, and the judiciary is moving into a phase of partisan warfare.

He did, however, point out "areas of light which punctuate the darkness," by observing positive work of the farmers and remittance earners who have demonstrated their "commitment and professional skill that enhanced our development capacity."

Prothom Alo Editor Matiuur Rahman, also co-organiser of the Nagorik Forum, lamented the failure of the democratic process to mature over the last 15 years and the gradual worsening of the controversies surrounding the current caretaker government.

"We have seen, whether it was Awami League or the BNP who were in power, that they try to capture both the state and the state's institutions," said Rahman.

Rahman said for an effective and accountable government there is no alternative to mass awareness and a non-partisan civil society, where the role of an independent media is indispensable. He said, "It is sad but true that numerous attempts to silence and impede independent journalism continues."

The Nagorik Committee recommendations for bringing reforms in the election and politics include mandatory audit of earnings and expenditures of all political parties, bar on becoming chief of a political party for more than three consecutive terms, bar on a single person becoming head of the government and chief of a political party.

It recommended that the professional bodies should not be affiliated with political parties, issue of women empowerment and gender equality should be declared in the election manifestos and the loan defaulters should be barred from participating in the election.

It also recommended that none should be allowed to contest in more than two constituencies, and number of women seats should be increased with the provision of direct election.

The recommendations further include separate voter lists for the three hill districts in light of the peace treaty, six days of election in six divisions, deduction of allowances for the parliament members for absent days, and making it mandatory that public representatives stay at least 10 days in their locality.

The president to be elected through an electoral college, ensuring vote casting by the minority community without fear and cabinet membership based on local quota, electing prime minister from the party with majority seats, speaker from second majority and deputy speaker from the third majority, are also in the recommendations.

14-party

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reason we have been refraining from declaring our final decision, Jalil, also AL general secretary, said adding that they would formally announce their further programmes today. He also said the caretaker government (CG) would be responsible if the package deal negotiated between them is not implemented.

On Friday the 14-party and its allies issued a 24-hour ultimatum to the CG to implement fully the package deal and said otherwise it will not be possible for them to participate in the next general election within the stipulated 90 days. The alliance also threatened to go for tough movements including non-stop sit-in demonstrations around Bangladesh.

Jalil said the negotiating advisers contacted with AL president Sheikh Hasina and offered the alternative proposal. But his party chief told them that they have been bringing new proposals one after another only to mislead the people and to push the nation into uncertainty.

"There is no scope to discuss any alternative proposal. You [advisers] just let us know about your decision over implementing the package deal that you had given us and we will let you know about our decision," Jalil quoted the AL chiefs saying.

The AL leader said the Election Commission (EC) is not updating and correcting the voter list as per the decision of the CG. He demanded that the EC gives instruction to its field level staff to prepare a draft of the voter list immediately.

Jalil said a correct voter roll is a prerequisite for holding a free and fair election. "We have instructed our leaders and workers to assist the field level staff of the Election Commission in preparing a correct voter roll," Jalil added.

About reshuffling of the administration by the CG, he said the move had no effect in the field level, adding that the CG has still not removed the directors general of NSI, DGFI and Ansar Battalion despite their repeated demands.

Jalil urged his political counterpart BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan to come forward to hold a free and fair election to save the country. Referring to Bhuiyan's statement over 14-party demand for EC reconstitution, Jalil said if the demand is unconstitutional and illegal then why four-party agreed in principle with the advisers' proposal of reconstituting the EC.

He said BNP-Jamaat alliance has long been conspiring to come back to power through holding a farcical election. "But we are demonstrating for a free and fair election," he added.

Senior leaders including Amir Hossain Amu, Abdur Razzaq, Tofail Ahmed, Sarujit Sengupta, Motia Chowdhury, Sheikh Fazul Karim Selim, Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir, Obaidul Quader, Rashid Khan Menon, Akhtaruzzaman, Abdul Mannan, and Dilip Barua were present at the briefing.

Pakistan test launches short-range missile

REUTERS, Islamabad

Pakistan's military successfully test-fired yesterday a short-range nuclear-capable Hatf III Ghaznavi missile with a range of 290 km.

It was the third test launch of a ballistic missile in as many weeks, the military said in a statement.

"The launch came at the culmination phase of the training exercise, which validated the operational readiness of the Strategic Missile Group equipped with Ghaznavi missiles," the military said, referring to the unit that handles nuclear-capable missiles.

Pakistan's Hatf series of missiles is named after an ancient sword mentioned in Islamic historical books.

Pakistan conducted a series of nuclear tests in 1998, shortly after its old rival India conducted similar explosions.

The neighbours have fought three wars since their independence in 1947 and nearly went to war a fourth time in 2002.

Relations have improved since they embarked on a tentative peace process in 2004.

UNDP urges

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endorsed the convention since 2003. Bangladesh and the Maldives from South Asia are yet to sign the convention.

The study, which is the backbone of the two-year-long "Integrity and Anti-Corruption Advocacy Campaign", involved politicians, public servants, business community, opinion leaders, mass media, donors and youths as target audiences.

The campaign is funded by the government of Denmark, said a news release yesterday.

"Bangladesh has lots of potential to accelerate its move towards development and to strengthen this move; we will advocate for endorsing the UN convention against corruption through this campaign," UNDP Country Director Manoj Basnyat said.

The UN anti-corruption covenant mainly highlights the prevention of corruption, international cooperation, criminalisation of a wide range of acts of corruption, asset recovery and an implementation mechanism to facilitate activities like training and technical assistance and economic development.

The "Integrity and Anti-corruption Advocacy Campaign" is focused on changing the mindset of individuals by raising integrity as a means of nurturing good governance.

It will advocate for members of parliament, public servants and other citizens of Bangladesh to voice their opinion and put forward doable actions to make a difference and add value in reducing corruption.

Mugger lynched

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around 9:30pm near the Jatrabari Shikhi area. As the victim cried out for help, locals rushed to the spot and caught the muggers after chasing them.

After beating them up, the mob handed over the hijackers to the police.

Police later admitted them at Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH), where Arif succumbed to his injuries in the early hours yesterday.

Prof Taher killing

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yesterday after receiving bail from the High Court (HC).

Rajshahi Central Jail sources said Mohiuddin, a teacher of Geology and Mining department of RU, was freed as his lawyers showed an HC bench order, dated November 29, granting him bail.

Mohiuddin refused to talk to the media after his release.

RU Islami Chhatra Shibir President Mahbubul Alam Salehi, another suspect in the Taher murder case, was given anticipatory bail from the HC on July 3.

The police in an investigation report to the court said Mohiuddin masterminded Taher's murder fearing damage to his career as Taher found out that he (Mohiuddin) was guilty of plagiarism and piracy in 10 research papers submitted with his promotion prayer, sources said.

"We are now waiting for the high officials' nod to go ahead," said investigation officer of the case Achchanul Kabir, adding that, he had sent a draft charge sheet to the home ministry on May 10 for approval.

Taher's family members and lawyers said, "Getting justice has become uncertain due to the bails." Taher's son Sanjid Alvi Ahmed told The Daily Star that police high officials are delaying submission of the charge sheet, which is allowing the suspects to get bail.

"I met current IGP [inspector general of police] Khuda Bokhs Chowdhury several times when he was in charge of the monitoring cell. He said the case lacked a necessary witness," Sanjid added.

The suspects Zanghir, Salam, Nazmul, and Mohiuddin were arrested within a week of the murder in February.

Correction of voter list

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yesterday.

The visiting field level Election Commission (EC) officials however did not re-enlist the names as they brought with them only a few forms.

Residents of the area alleged that the field level officials, who had been involved in the much controversial recent updating of the list, deleted the names because the persons whose names had been deleted are either supporters or activists of the local unit of Awami League (AL) or its front organisations.

But the field level officials concerned yesterday ruled out the allegation saying that the enlisted persons had not been available at their respective addresses when the officials had gone to their doors during the recent updating of the list.

Several residents of Mohammaddpur, whose names had been deleted from the list, however said they are the owners of their houses, so the allegation of them not being available at the addresses cannot be substantiated.

They also said major irregularities had taken place during the recent updating of the list and now during the current initiative for correcting the updated voter list, the same kind of practices are going on even though the acting chief election commissioner (CEC) himself lives in Mohammaddpur.

One of his relatives is the vice-president of the local unit of BNP, the residents of the area said adding that this relative of the acting CEC is behind the irregularities.

Field level EC staff are showing blatant reluctance to correct the voter list properly, claimed some angry prospective voters.

The EC staff however claimed that they are not properly instructed about the procedures for including and deleting names on the voter list and that they were not even supplied with enough required forms to do the job.

The fourth move for correcting the already once updated voter list remained snail paced yesterday like the first day of the initiative.

Residents of Hossainuddin Khan and Nawabganj lanes of Nawabganj area in the city yesterday told this correspondent that visiting field level officials did not enlist their names although they are eligible to be voters and their names are not on the list.

They wanted to fill up the forms but the visiting officials did not give them the forms and left the area without enlisting them or giving any satisfactory reason for the action, the residents claimed.

"We were not properly instructed about the process of inclusion of voters' names," said ABM Jufikar Ali, a field level official who is also a teacher at Saleha High School in Hajrabangla area.

"We even haven't got the required forms yet," said another field level official Ruhul Amin, who claimed that he had to leave the field due to prospective voters' ire.

Six out of seven field level officials in

Hajaribagh area were seen sitting in the teachers' common room of Saleha High School instead of making door-to-door visits to correct the voter list. Asked why they were not out doing their job they could not give any satisfactory answer.

However, two of them told this correspondent that some of their colleagues had faced wrath of the voters while on duty and that is why they were lounging instead of