

Fresh Voters' List

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Mohammad Ali and M Munsef Ali, who had opined in writing to revise the existing electoral rolls.

But the CEC did not consider the opinion of the two election commissioners and directed the EC secretariat to take preparation to prepare a fresh voter list.

The last meeting of the EC took place on August 6.

After taking the voter roll decision on August 7, CEC MA Aziz told reporters, "There is no need to have a consensus of all three members."

Replying to a query whether it was a consensus decision, he also said, "We took the decision on the basis of public opinion expressed in last July's dialogue on the voter list."

The CEC since then has not called any meeting of the EC to review the preparation of the voter list.

By this time, four files had been sent to the two election commissioners on recruitment of the officials for preparing the voter list, but each of the files received a note of dissent from the two. The CEC, however, had approved the recruitment drive.

EC secretariat officials have said that preparations for the voter list are going on in full swing. Recruitment of the enumeration officials will be completed by November 15, they added.

Secretary of EC secretariat SM Zakaria Monday told journalists that the enumeration will start from January 1.

Election Commissioner AK Mohammad Ali, who along with M Munsef Ali disagreed with the CEC's decision, however said they do not yet know what is going on in the name of voter list preparation.

"Nothing is being done in accordance with the decision of the election commission, rather things are being done merely in the name of the commission," Election

Commissioner AK Mohammad Ali yesterday told The Daily Star.

"Election commissioner M Munsef Ali and I have opined that the existing voter list should be revised while the chief election commissioner all by himself has decided to go for a fresh voter list. Had the majority view been considered, our opinion would have come out as the decision," the election commissioner said.

Despite repeated attempts over the last two days, the CEC could not be reached for comment.

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday, former chief election commissioner Justice Abdur Rouf said each decision of the EC should be based on opinion of the majority of the commission members.

"The chief election commissioner himself is a commissioner of the commission. He will have the deciding vote if the commission comprises more than one member and is split on any issue," Justice Rouf added.

Echoing the same view with Justice Rouf, former chief election commissioner Abu Hena said everything should be done through discussion at the election commission.

"In my tenure we sat almost every day and took decision. Such a situation never prevailed at that time," he told The Daily Star.

Former CEC Justice Sultan Hossain Khan, however, said there is no specific constitutional obligation that the EC will have to take a decision in the light of the majority view.

"The decision will not be invalid if the chief election commissioner takes it unilaterally. There is no obstacle in implementing the decision even if the other election commissioners dissent from it," Justice Sultan, also the chairman of the Anti-Corruption Commission, told The Daily Star yesterday.

Eid ticket scalping

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failing to book cabins on launches. Those who could procure tickets had to pay much higher than the normal fare.

Sources said a group of scalpers in league with launch crews have booked most of the cabins until the Eid Day. No cabin ticket is to be found at the ticket counters for November 1 to 4.

Some unlucky ticket seekers said the scalpers are selling a single-berth cabin ticket for Tk 1200 to Tk 1,500 and a double-berth one for Tk 1,700 to Tk 2,500 for the Dhaka-Barisal and Dhaka-Bhola routes, depending on the quality of the launch service.

Real price of a Dhaka-Barisal or a Dhaka-Bhola single-berth cabin ticket ranges from Tk 500 to Tk 700 and a double-berth one ranges from Tk 750 to Tk 1,000.

When The Daily Star correspondent yesterday asked for a double-berth cabin ticket at the ticket counters of some Dhaka-Barisal and Dhaka-Bhola launch services for November 1 or 3, the counter staffs said no ticket was available.

After a short negotiation, Amir Hossain, a ticket clerk for Flotila, a Dhaka-Bhola launch, directed the correspondent to a scalper who demanded Tk 2,000 for a double-berth cabin and Tk 1,200 for a single-berth one.

"What do you think of the price of the tickets? Today (Tuesday) you can buy tickets from me but these tickets will not be found after a day," he said.

"Every year newsmen write about us but it has no effect on our business," said a scalper who was selling tickets for Suravi-6, a Dhaka-Barisal launch. He said the crisis of advance tickets has been created by the ruling BNP leaders and its activists as they already booked a large number of cabin tickets.

The deck tickets will also be sold at a high rate ranging from Tk 50 to Tk 100 from October 31 to Eid day, said launch masters.

"We decided to raise the price of a deck ticket to Tk 180 from Tk 130," a launch master of Dhaka-Bhola route told this correspondent.

A number of passengers said if the government does not take corrective measures, the launch crews will charge many times higher than the normal fare during the couple of days immediately before the Eid.

Meanwhile, on the occasion of Eid ul Fitr, Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Corporation (BIWTC) decided to arrange special steamer services along with its regular services from October 31 to ensure safe and comfortable journey of the homebound passengers, according to a press release.

Other than these steamer services, from November 1 to the eve of the Eid, sea trucks will run twice a day from Kumira to Guptachara at 10:30am and at 3:30pm and from Guptachara to Kumira at 8:00am and 1:00pm.

At Paturia, Mawa and Chandpur ferry terminals, special measures will be taken to meet the urgent situation, the corporation said.

Kamalapur Railway Station

A large crowd queued up yesterday morning in front of the ticket counters at Kamalapur Railway Station well ahead of their opening time to buy advance tickets. Tickets for October 31 to November 3 were not on sale yesterday. Advance tickets for only October 30 were being sold.

Advance tickets for October 31 will be sold today, tickets for November 1 will be sold on October 27, tickets for November 2 will be sold on October 28 and tickets for November 3 will be sold on October 29, the station authorities said.

But a reliable source said most of the first class and other comparatively good tickets have already been booked by the legislators, leaders and the activists of the ruling party.

"We always keep some tickets for very important persons (VIP) especially ministers and parliament members and in this context we have kept some tickets for November 1 to 3," said Saidur Rahman, an officer of Kamalapur Railway Station.

A person may buy four tickets at a time. "What can we do if the scalpers stand in line for buying tickets?" said Ashruf Uddin, assistant commerce officer of the station.

During the visit to the station yesterday this correspondent saw beefed up security with a mobile court, Government Railway Police, Bangladesh Rifles and police squads deployed to check any untoward incident. Members of Rapid Action Battalion were also patrolling the station frequently.

Extra compartments will be added to the trains and tickets for passengers who will travel standing in the cars will not be sold in advance, said the authorities.

Clarification

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Denying any negative involvement in garment sector, Incidin Bangladesh in a clarification said it is closely working with business sector and the government to ensure fair trade and thereby protect both the business and workers' interest in the readymade garment (RMG) sector.

The NGO also said it has been working for almost a decade to protect and promote global market access of the country's RMG sector and thereby protect the livelihood of the workers in the sector.

ETV chairman

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The court also issued a rule upon the home secretary, the inspector general of police (IGP), the officer-in-charge (OC) of Kafur Police Station and Farjana Shilpi to show cause within 24 hours after receiving the order as to why the police action against Salam and his relatives should not be declared illegal.

After hearing two separate petitions filed by Abdus Salam, two High Court benches passed the orders.

Uttara OC

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On September 22, the OC intercepted the car of Anis near Azampur Eidgah in Uttara and asked him to get down from the car. The OC, accompanied by Ripon, seized the car and took him and the car to Uttara Police Station.

As Anis asked them why he was arrested the OC told him that there was a mugging case against him, Sumi said. The OC in collusion with others beat Anis to death and she came to know about her husband's death two days after the arrest, she complained.

After the hearing, Metropolitan Magistrate Mohammad Mizanur Rahman directed the additional inspector general (AIG) of Criminal Investigation Department (CID) to take necessary steps against the accused after an investigation.

Sangsad

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decide whether it will join.

Prior to commencement of the sitting at 4:00pm, the business advisory committee in a meeting will decide the duration of the session as well as bills to be placed before the House.

The session summoned mainly to meet the constitutional obligations is likely to witness a few workdays.

If the government continues the sitting over 18 working days, AL lawmakers' membership will be at risk, as they have already been absent for over 70 consecutive workdays from the parliamentary sessions.

Rules of procedure of parliament states that the seat of a member shall fall vacant if he or she remains absent without leave of the House for ninety consecutive sitting days.

Huda blames

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complaints with nearby police stations when he was told helpless passengers are compelled to pay extra.

He said the government increased the bus fares following the recent fuel price hike and new fare charts have been given to operators of all routes. He, however, admitted bus owners may be charging extra without his knowledge.

The minister also suggested putting up resistance to unfair activities of bus operators to the commuters.

"There was a riot in India when authorities upped the fare by one-paisa, whereas there is no resistance when the operators increased the fare by several taka," he said.

Huda said, "The government cannot take actions until and unless you lodge complaints or put up resistance."

The minister also admitted the government did not interfere when the operators of diesel-run buses put pressure on the CNG-driven bus operators to raise fares, though the CNG price was not increased.

Huda, however, did not agree with reporters that he or his government has failed to maintain discipline in the transport sector. "You always see our failure. Show me where I have failed?"

He observed that people did not face any difficulties due to the conflict between two groups of bus operators. "This is not a big issue. You better try to understand the improvement the transport sector witnessed," he told the reporters.

Huda further said this is a free economic society and the government cannot interfere in all the nitty-gritty details.

He, however, said the government will look into the matter of extra bus fares and sales of tickets in the black markets before the Eid.

DRU President Shafiqul Karim and General Secretary Shakhawat Hossain Badsha, among others, were present.

Vegetables

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Early winter vegetables, including cauliflower, cabbage and spinach (palang shak), whose prices were quite high, were also of poor quality as untimely rains badly affected their cultivation.

"Wholesale traders have raised vegetable prices as the supply was inadequate. As a result, it has become very difficult for us to make some profits unless we sell the items at higher prices," said Karim Mia, a retailer at Mirpur kitchen market.

"It is not true that we are doing a brisk business because the higher the prices are, the less the common people buy," he claimed.

"It seems a supply shortage of vegetables will continue for some days," said Abdul Hakim, a wholesaler at Kawran Bazar yesterday.

A pair of tiny cauliflower was selling at Tk 40 yesterday against Tk 30 three days ago, a pair of small cabbage was also selling at Tk 40 yesterday, up by Tk 10, while Spinach sold at Tk 60 a kg and newly harvested potato at Tk 60 a kg.

Palwal sold at Tk 20 a kg yesterday against Tk 12 to Tk 14 three days ago, while aubergine sold at Tk 36 a kg, and okra at Tk 32 a kg.

Bean prices ranged between Tk 50 and Tk 80 a kg. Indian tomato was selling at Tk 60 a kg and bitter gourd at Tk 32 a kg.

According to the monitoring cell of the Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE), early winter vegetables and other seasonal crops have been heavily damaged by rains recently.

Petrobangla boss

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Chowdhury officer on special duty (OSD), replacing him with AKM Jafarullah, member of the Planning Commission. Iqbaluddin is due to retire on October 30.

Sources said a business lobby has been pushing for the removal of Osmani since the June ouster of state minister AKM Mosharrar Hossain from the energy ministry and appointment of Mahmudur Rahman as the adviser to the ministry, in the context of some big investment negotiations.

"There is not a single allegation of corruption against Osmani and his removal could not come at a worse time since he was playing a crucial role in the negotiations of some foreign investment proposals," said a ministry source.

Under Osmani, the Petrobangla was raising some issues on coal mining, which some business lobbies did not like.

The energy ministry standing committee led by Sardar Shakhawat Hossain Bokul MP grilled Osmani at a meeting on Monday, holding him responsible for gas and power crises.

The committee alleged that because of Osmani, the Ashuganj-Monohardi pipeline project implementation was delayed by two years, creating crisis in gas supply. Osmani was blamed for "slow decision" in other schemes as well.

The Ashuganj-Monohardi project was supposed to commence operation in July 2004 and the latest deadline is set

for July 2006.

Sources said the project has been delayed not because of Petrobangla, but because of a quarter of opportunist people in Monohardi of Narsingdi, the constituency of Bokul.

When the project was progressing, these people erected different structures in the pathway of the pipeline and started asking for high compensation from Petrobangla for giving it the right of way.

The energy ministry then formed a committee with a joint secretary and the deputy commissioner of Narsingdi. The committee came up with a proposal to pay these people off with Tk 17 crore to obtain the right of way for the pipeline.

While the amount was an additional expenditure of questionable nature, the constituency's MP played a silent role in delaying the pipeline project by two years, the sources added. "There is no role of Petrobangla or Osmani here," said a source involved in the pipeline project.

Dinajpur-1

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Jamaat lawmaker Mohammad Abdullah Al Kaf in September.

According to the election schedule, the last date for submitting nomination papers is November 8.

Scrutiny of the nomination papers will be held on November 9, while the last date for withdrawal of candidature is November 17.

Blood gets scarce

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The rest comes from professional donors, whose blood is deemed to be too risky to use.

As Taslima, in spite of all her connections, failed to manage even a single bag of blood from a safe source, finally had to give in as the operation time neared. She was left with no other option but to buy blood from the professionals.

Sandhani Central Committee (SCC) President M Anarul Islam Anar and DMCH Blood Bank Medical Technologist Golam Kibria confirmed the existence of an acute crisis of blood in Ramadan, which Kibria termed a typical feature of the month.

Anar said the SCC collects some four to five hundred bags of blood a month, but during this month the collection amount goes down to 200 to 300 bags. As a result, he added, "Every day in Ramadan we have to turn down requests of four to five persons for blood."

Anar also pointed out that, while the situation remains reasonably bearable until mid-Ramadan, it

becomes scary in the second half of the month. "Anticipating the crisis ahead, we had held more frequent blood collection programmes in the months before Ramadan. But our stock ran out in the first half of the month," he described.

Another patient at the DMCH, M Mahmudullah, 75, of Bed 11, Ward 6, was also awaiting a surgical operation for urologic problems. His son Nazir Ahmed had desperately searched for two bags of 'AB' positive blood for a couple of days. But every time he returned empty handed. Finally, he bought blood from two professional donors for Tk 1,100.

"Everybody said he was fasting. When I requested to give blood after Iftar, they said they felt very weak at that time and if they gave blood they might not be able to say Tarabi prayers," Nazir told The Daily Star.

But, the principal of Karwan Bazar Ambar Shah Hafizia Islamia Madrasa and Orphanage, Hafez Moulana Mufti Md Khairullah, said donating blood in emergency situations does not spoil the fast.

Indo-Bangla

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team headed by Hossain's counterpart VK Duggal.

The Bangladesh delegation also comprises the joint secretaries of home and foreign ministries.

The meeting is expected to address certain rough edges in Indo-Bangladesh relations over issues relating to the security concerns of both the countries, officials here said.

While India will press for more tangible action by Bangladesh against the alleged activities of northeastern Indian insurgents in that country, Bangladesh is likely to renew the plea for handing over "Bangladeshi criminals" who fled to India, they added.

According to them, New Delhi will express its concerns over the insurgency and the activities of other "militants" taking shelter in that country.

Even though Bangladesh has been assuring India that it will not allow its territory to be used by militants for anti-India activities, New Delhi is of the view that militant outfits and their leaders continue to operate from across the border.

The sources further said border fencing, arms smuggling and steps to carry out joint patrolling to check cross-border crimes will also be discussed

during the parleys.

New Delhi, the sources said, is expected to suggest appointment of nodal officers on both sides to check trafficking in women and children besides setting up of a joint border working group.

The issue of release of a BSF watercraft seized by the Bangladesh authorities a few years back would also form part of the agenda.

The Bangladesh delegation is also expected to meet Indian Home Minister Shivraj Patil during its stay here.

The last round of home secretary-level talks between the two countries was held in Dhaka in September last year.

A certain bitterness crept in the ties between the two countries after BDR chief Maj Gen Jahangir Alam Chowdhury's comment that some Indian criminals along with the Bangladeshis ones took part in the August 17 bomb blasts in Bangladesh.

The Indian foreign ministry had reacted to it sharply saying it was out of keeping with the friendly relation between the two countries. Gen Chowdhury on his return to Dhaka said that his remarks were "distorted" by a section of the Indian media.

Plan to make vaccine

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allow its drug manufacturing companies to copy Tamiflu, the drug patented by Roche to treat human cases of bird flu, without first securing a license from the leading Swiss company.

"We will deliberate on various patent laws and we will meet the manufacturers thereafter. We will try to get international collaboration on the subject. I'm sure that even if it's a patented molecule, considering the widespread public health concern about it, we don't have to wait until the public health emergency really breaks out," Indian Health Secretary P K Hota told reporters here yesterday evening.

"We are in the process of ensuring that vital supplies must be available within the country, whether it is drugs, vaccines or any other supplies. These are legal matters which need preparatory practice," he added.

Huda trashes

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chief of a newly formed convening committee.

Meantime, Communications Minister Nazmul Huda who leads a faction at a press meeting with reporters trashed the expulsion decision yesterday.

"We will go with our programmes and I don't care who has expelled me," Huda told the newspersons at Dhaka Reporters Unity.

At a press conference at South Hall of Supreme Court Bar Building, the JAF faction led by Aminul said they will also hold due conferences of three divisions prior to the central conference.

JAF President TH Khan explained their position as to why they expelled Huda after the minister dissolved the central committee and declared himself the chief of a new convening committee.

"They [Huda and BNP Law Secretary Advocate Joinul Abedin] were repeatedly running anti-JAF constitutional activities and seriously damaging the forum's image by giving statement against its top leaders," Khansaid.

On Joinul's statement that Huda met TH Khan three days ago at his residence with a proposal of forming a convening committee with Khan its chief adviser and that Khan agreed with him, Khan admitted of the meeting.

But he told Huda to work jointly in line with the JAF standing committee decisions and proposals taken at lawyers' grand rally to avoid division among lawyers, the JAF chief added.

Barrister Aminul Haque and lawyers of his group including Khondoker Mahbubuddin Ahmed, MP were present.

Secretariat

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Law Minister Moudud Ahmed is in Ghana and Environment Minister Tariquul Islam in Kenya to attend conferences while State Minister for Home Affairs Luffozzaman Babar is in Saudi Arabia for Umrah.

Khurshid Jahan Haque, minister for women and children affairs, Shajahan Siraj, minister for jute and textiles and Alamgir Kabir, state minister for housing and public works are sick.

This correspondent visiting a number of ministries yesterday found many officials and staff "not so busy" at their desks.

Works slow down during the Ramadan and overseas tour of the prime minister and some senior cabinet members has added to it, said a high official wishing anonymity.

However, with the Saarc (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation) summit only a few days ahead, the foreign ministry is working in full swing.

Saarc secretariat

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event a success, secretariat officials said.

They said final touches are being given to different matters relating to the twice-postponed 13th summit and the secretariat is looking forward to productive deliberations that will take the two-decade-old regional forum into the third decade with more action-oriented programmes for closer cooperation in various fields among the member countries.

The Saarc since its emergence has brought the member states into closer framework of cooperation in various areas ranging from trade and commerce to sports and culture.

New avenues are being explored for cooperation and the coming summit is expected to provide a fillip to the quest for multi-dimensional cooperative ventures aimed at improving the socio-economic condition of the vast segment of people in the region.

The secretariat is working in consultation with the member nations on the agenda and other issues pertaining to the heads of government meeting.

16 PBCP men

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from the villagers.

As villagers did not have any arms in their possession the criminals became angry and started shooting at them. The gang killed Nasiruddin, Ashanoor, Murad Ali, Kutu, Kausar, Arshad Ali and Jalaluddin on the spot while two others, Shamsheer Ali and Mujibar Malitha, succumbed to their injuries in Chuadanga General Hospital.

Md Yunus Ali of the village Kulbilla filed a case with Damurhuda Police station against the 16 on the next day.

The case was investigated by Sub-inspector (SI) Saidul Islam of Damurhuda Police Station. The charge sheet was filed on March 18, 1996.

Yunus, the plaintiff, was killed by unidentified criminals at Chuadanga in 1998. The murder weakened the nine-murder case as his deposition was vital for trial, said Special Public Prosecutor Advocate Abu Zafar.

Jamaat mother body

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Reporters Unity auditorium.

Briefly describing militancy, its goals, cadre recruitment and training, funding, access to arms and its national and international network, the AL leader cited recent and past incidents to explain his contention.

In his paper, Sayeed said Jamaat was revived in the politics of Bangladesh from its Pakistani predecessor, and it was Ziaur Rahman who restored the anti-independence forces and placed them in the cabinet.

Although Jamaat started political activities with a small number of party members in the then East Pakistan in the '50s, it gathered 650 'Rukan' and one lakh associate members in 1982 against only 425 'Rukan' and 40,000 associate members in '68-69, the papersaid.

Based on the ideologies of Abul Ala Moududi of Pakistan, Jamaat is a fundamentalist party that uses religion as political capital, and has recruited 33 percent of the party men from the younger generation and 66 percent from educational institutions, Sayeed said.

Militancy was rooted in former Jamaat chief Golam Azam's call to turn the country into an Islamic state in a bid to take a tough stand against India by rejecting secularism and Bangalee nationalism, he said, quoting from Azam's books.

Jamaat and its student wing, Islami Chhatra Shibir, in their efforts to establish Islamic rule are directly linked to the madrasas that are involved in militancy, he said.

Sayeed named three madrasas -- Darul Ulum Madrasa at Lalkhan Bazar and Hathazari and Al Jamiyatul Islamia at Paturia in Chittagong -- as the breeding grounds for militants, saying they run around seven thousand Kawmi madrasas in the country.