

NEW ELECTION COMMISSIONERS

'Partisan' appointments protested in districts

STAR NATIONAL DESK

Awami Jubo League and Bangladesh Chhatra League, youth and student fronts of opposition Awami League, yesterday rejected appointment of the two new election commissioners, saying this has been done with an ill motive to cling to power.

They brought out processions and held rallies in several districts protesting appointment of Justice Mahfuzur Rahman and SM Zakaria. They are 'partisan' persons, appointed so that the Election Commission can take decisions in favour of the BNP-Jamaat ruling alliance, speakers at the rallies said.

Our RU Correspondent reports: Awami Jubo League yesterday took out a procession and held a rally at Shaheb Bazar zero point in Rajshahi city protesting appointment of Justice Mahfuzur Rahman and SM Zakaria as election commissioners.

The processionists chanted various anti-government slogans protesting what they called politicisation of the Election Commission (EC).

City Jubo League President Ramzan Ali led the procession.

Addressing the rally, Jubo League leaders rejected the appointment of the two new election commissioners. The BNP-Jamaat government appointed them in violation of the High Court verdict to cling to power through by manipulating the next general election, they said.

They also claimed that no government in the past appointed such partisan persons in constitutional posts.

They called upon the people to unite to foil the alliance government's evil design to snatch their voting rights by preparing a 'fictitious voter list' with the help of 'their men' in the Election Commission.

Presided over by district Jubo League President Abu Shaleh, the rally was addressed by among others, Jubo League central member Asraf Hossain Nawab, its city unit general secretary Musharaf Hossain and district unit general secretary Assaduzzaman.

Earlier in the morning, Rajshahi city and Rajshahi University units of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL),

student wing of Awami League, jointly took out a procession in the city and held a rally protesting appointment of the election commissioners and killing of its leader Jahangir Kabir.

Addressing the rally in front of AL office, BCL leaders said the new election commissioners were appointed with a motive so that the EC can take decisions in favour of the ruling alliance.

They demanded cancellation of the appointments and threatened of tougher agitation for non-compliance. BCL will not accept appointment of any Election Commissioner unless made on the basis of consensus of all political parties, they said.

The rally was addressed by among other, BCL leaders Abdul Momaim, Zedu Sarker, Ayeen Uddin and Zahid Ali.

Our Gaibandha Correspondent reports: Some hundred Jubo League activists brought out a procession and held a rally in Gaibandha town yesterday protesting the appointment of two election commissioners.

The activists paraded the streets of the town and chanted slogans

demanding immediate cancellation of the appointments.

After the procession, a big rally was held on the premise of district Awami League office, which was also attended by activists of other front organisations of Awami League. It was addressed by, among others, Gaibandha Jubo League President Shah Masud, Jahangir Kabir Milon, Emarul Islam Sabin, Niranjana Kumar Ghosh, Rezaul Karim Bhutta, SK Tasher Ali and Abu Baker Kajo.

Terming it 'politicisation of the Election Commission' they demanded immediate cancellation of the appointments. Otherwise, tougher agitation will be launched to compel the government to cancel the appointments, they said.

The speakers also called upon the people and professionals to observe the countrywide dawn to dusk hartal on January 22, called by Awami League to protest the appointments.

They said the ruling alliance came to power through rigging polls, and now they are trying to cling to power by manipulating the voter list and politicising the Election Commission. People will resist the move, they said.

5 picked up by BSF in Kushtia not returned yet

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

The five Bangladeshi nationals picked up by Indian Border Security Force (BSF) from Bangladesh territory near Moheshpur border in Jhenidah on Friday are yet to be returned.

The matter was also discussed at a flag meeting between BDR and BSF on Saturday, but to no effect.

According to sources in 25 Rifle Battalion in Jessore, BSF picked up the five Bangladeshis when they were moving near Pota border point in Moheshpur upazila in Jhenidah in the evening.

The five persons are Sujon, 25, son of Sirajul Islam; Jamal, 30, son of Saha Alam Tara; Faruk, 28, son of Tayeb Ali; Hasem, 31, son of Abed Ali of Dhaka and Alam, 32, of Seja village in Moheshpur.

According to local sources, the five were friends, who came to visit Alam of Seja village on Thursday.

They went for a walk in the border area near Alam's house. BSF men from Chouhati camp entered into Bangladesh territory and picked up them at gunpoint.

BDR of Samanta camp in Moehspur sent a letter to BSF Saturday morning seeking a flag meeting for return of the five persons.

The flag meeting was held Saturday night at Samatna. Some local people including Samanta Union Parishad (UP) Chairman Abdul Ali attended the meeting. Habildar Gonzer Ali of Samanta BDR camp led the Bangladesh team.

BSF told the meeting that the five Bangladeshis were sent to Chouhati police station and they would have to go through a legal process.

BSF also denied entering into Bangladesh territory and said they arrested the five when they entered into Indian territory.

Bomb blast injures 3 children in Chuadanga

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

Three children including two sisters were severely injured when a bomb went off at a bamboo cluster at Shalika village in Alamdanga upazila in Chuadanga yesterday morning.

Police said Rahima, Halima and Ranu of the village went to collect dried up leaves from the bamboo cluster owned by one B a k k a r . The bomb hidden there earlier exploded when one of the children touched it.

Locals rescued and took them to Alamdanga Upazila Health Complex. They were later sifted to Chuadanga General Hospital in critical conditions.

A case was filed with Alamdanga police station.

133 cattle die in Satkhira in two weeks

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

At least 133 cattle died of an infectious disease of foot and mouth in three upazilas of the district in last two weeks.

More than 300 cattle have been attacked with the disease.

Milch cows and calves are also being attacked with the disease, local people said.

When contacted, Satkhira District Livestock Officer (DLO) Dr Mrinal Kanti Mitra said the disease broke out because of bringing virus affected cattle from India without examination.

"We have sent saliva and blister from tongue and middle wound of hoof of sick cattle to Bangladesh Livestock Research Institute (BLRI), Mahakhali, Dhaka to detect the virus. He said, a three-member medical team headed by Veterinary Surgeon (VS) Dr Lutfur Rahman has been formed to combat the situation in Sadar upazila. Three other medical teams are also working in other areas, he said.

Kushtia hides market buoyant five days after Eid

Tk 20 cr transactions yesterday

AMANUR AMAN, Kushtia

Transactions began in Kushtia hides and skin wholesale markets yesterday, five days after the Eid-

ul-Azha, as the price ceiling fixed by tanners in Dhaka was withdrawn.

Till yesterday afternoon, hides and skin worth Tk 20 crore were transacted in the markets, dealers and wholesale traders told this correspondent.

The transactions may reach Tk 50 crore in Kushtia markets this season, they hoped.

Dealers in Kushtia, the second largest hides and skin market in the country, had stopped sale as the prices fixed ahead of Eid were not satisfactory, sources said.

Dhaka-based tanneries, in consultation with the government, had fixed the prices at Tk 35-42 per square feet for goatskin and Tk 45-Tk 55 for hides. This was lower than the prices at primary markets, dealers here said.

They said they bought goatskin at Tk 50-52 per square feet and hides at Tk 55-60 from people at villages.

But when they came to sell those, buyers at wholesale markets offered lower prices and so they stopped sale. Most of them stored the goods they bought since the Eid day.

Usually, hides and skin from ten southwestern districts and five northern districts are brought to wholesale markets in Kushtia after every Eid. The districts include Rajshahi, Jessore, Natore, Rajbari and Faridpur.

The stalemate in the markets raised a fear of hides and skin being smuggled across the border, where there is a good market for the items from Bangladesh.

Moreover, Kushtia is known for producing the world famous 'Black Bengal' goatskin.

Matiur Rahman, Advisor to Kushtia Hide Traders Association said, like tanners in Dhaka, traders here should also get soft loan from the government during Eud-ul-Azha to stop smuggling of the items across the border.

Due to fund shortage, local traders cannot collect the entire quantity during the Eid and chances of those being smuggled out can not ruled out, he said.



PHOTO: STAR

Mango trees have started flowering indicating that the season of sweet fruits is only three months away. The photo was taken in Barisal.

7X3



PHOTO: A K M MOHSIN

The Ghash Khamar Government Primary School at Bisha Union in Atrai upazila in Naogaon district collapsed in the last rainy season. Nobody knows when the school will be ready again for students.

HOME MINISTRY ORDER

Joypurhat Aug 17 case being sent to Rajshahi STT

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha

The case filed in connection with the August 17 serial bomb blasts in Joypurhat district is being transferred to Rajshahi Speedy Trial Tribunal (STT) as per a directive from the Home Ministry.

Judge Narendra Chandra Das of Joypurhat Special Tribunal on Monday ordered transfer of the case to Rajshahi STT.

Joypurhat police arrested another JMB militant yesterday. He is Abdul Wares, son of Younus Ali of Kumargari village in Joypurhat Sader. Joypurhat Police

Superintendent said Wares was a 'listed' militant and JMB trainer.

After the countrywide bomb blasts on August 17, Joypurhat police arrested 44 people suspecting them to be members of JMB (Jama'atul Mujahideen, Bangladesh) and their involvement in the incident.

Following investigation and confession of some of the arrested persons, police on October 3 submitted charge sheet against 28 of them with Joypurhat Special Tribunal.

One of the chargesheeted accused, Hafizur Rahman, died in Dhaka during interrogation.

Twenty-three of the rest 27 accused were produced before court on Monday for trial.

Defence lawyers pleaded for their bail but the judge rejected the prayers and ordered transfer of the case to Rajshahi STT. The charge sheet was made under sections 3, 4 and 6 of the Explosives Act, court sources said.

"We have nothing to do as the ministry ordered transfer of the case to Rajshahi though we assured a fair trial of the accused persons involved in militant activities", Joypurhat Police Superintendent told this correspondent yesterday.

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