

New polling centres allegedly to favour certain parties

Officials propose 258 more centres in 5 districts without consulting 14-Party

STAR NATIONAL DESK

Authorities have proposed setting up of 258 new polling centres in four districts of Sylhet division and in Dinajpur.

Of them, 187 would be in Sylhet division and 71 in Dinajpur. Official sources in the five districts said the proposals were made considering rise in the number of voters in the updated voter lists. Allegations have it that in many upazilas, proposals were made at the behest of local BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami leaders without consulting those of Awami League and other parties.

Deputy commissioners in four districts in Sylhet division approved the proposed new polling centres, prepared by upazila nirbahi officers (UNOs) and upazila election officers (UEOs), sources at Sylhet Election Commission office told The Daily Star Staff Reporter Iqbal Siddiquee.

The final lists will be published in the official gazette after scrutiny. There may be little changes, if needed, they said. Deputy commissioners will work as returning officers during the election.

EC officials in Sylhet said 2472 polling centres have been proposed in Sylhet division, which was

2285 in 2001 election. The proposed number is 786 in Sylhet district against 681 in 2001; 577 in Habiganj against 574; 642 against 602 in Sunamganj; and 467 against 428 in Moulvibazar.

The officials said in the updated voter lists, total voters in the four districts are 57,43,917 for the coming election against 46, 36,285 in the 8th parliamentary election, up by 11,07,632.

The number of voters would be 12,60,503 in Habiganj against 10,34,477 in last election; 11,28,030 against 9,10,937 in Moulvibazar; 14,40, 922 against 11,87,770 in Sunamagnj; and 19,14,462 against 15,03,641 in Sylhet.

The officials refuted allegations of irregularity in preparing the list of polling centres. The lists were prepared by local UNOs and UEOs as per the Election Commission guideline, they said.

However, there are allegations by 14-party alliance leaders that about 50,000 fake voters were included in voter lists in Sylhet district, including 25,000 in Sylhet city. Fake voters were included at the behest of local 4-party leaders, 14-party leaders told several press conferences earlier.

Sylhet district Awami League president ANM Shafiqul Haque told The Daily Star yesterday that there were flaws in voter lists as well as in the list of polling centres.

Officials prepared the lists without consulting Awami League (AL) and its allies, he alleged.

Sylhet City Corporation Mayor and city AL president Badar Uddin Ahmed Kamran said, "We protested gross irregularities in the updated voter list. But none bothered. We would not let them hold election with the flawed voters list".

Our Dinajpur Correspondent reports:

A proposal has been sent to the District Election Office (DEO) to set up 71 more polling centres and 521 booths in six constituencies in Dinajpur, DEO sources said.

Officials of 13 upazilas sent the proposal allegedly without consulting other political parties but the 4-party Alliance.

Of the 71 proposed centres, 31 are in Dinajpur Sadar (Dinajpur-3 constituency); 14 in Khanshama; five in Chirirbandar (Dinajpur-4); six in Parbatipur; two in Phulbari (Dinajpur-5), one in Nawabganj; five in Birampur and seven in Ghoraghat (Dinajpur-6).

No new polling centre was

proposed in Dinajpur-1 (Birganj and Kaharol) and Dinajpur-2 (Biral and Bochaganj upazila).

There were 672 polling centres in the district in last election.

Talking to this correspondent, acting president of Dinajpur Awami League Azizul Imam Chowdhury alleged that they were not aware of the proposal. Election officials did not consult us, he alleged.

Md Iqbalur Rahim, an aspirant for 14-party alliance ticket from Dinajpur-3 constituency alleged that the proposals were sent as per a design by the 4-party leaders here to ensure their victory. The new centres will be set up at places which will be convenient for them, he claimed.

Election officials denied the allegations saying they had informed leaders of all political parties but Awami League leaders did not respond.

When contacted, District Election Officer Md Mokhlesur Rahman claimed that the proposals were sent on the basis of consensus of all political parties.

There are about 18,77,178 voters in Dinajpur, according to the updated voter list.

Major parties urged to field indigenous candidates

RU CORRESPONDENT

Indigenous people in northern districts have demanded nomination of candidates from their communities by major political parties in the coming election.

Indigenous people should be represented in the Jatiya Sangsad for protection of their rights because major parties did not do that in the past, their leaders said at a press conference here yesterday.

Everest Hembram, general secretary of Sankalpa, an organisation of indigenous people in Rajshahi, read out a written statement at the press conference held at Rajshahi Press Club.

He also drew the attention of civil society leaders in this regard.

Sarwar-e-Kamal, general secretary of the Center for Capacity Building of Voluntary Organisations (CCBVO), an NGO, also spoke at the press conference, attended by indigenous leaders Uttam Kumer Khalko and Anil Kumer Murma.

They said around 25 lakh indigenous people belonging to different ethnic groups live in the northern districts.

The indigenous people can not field their candidates in polls because of lack of money. Election is now a game of black money and muscle power, which the indigenous people do not have because they are honest and law-abiding, they said.

Two indigenous candidates contested the 2001 election but lost to money and muscle power, they alleged.

They said, in past five years, foreign donor agencies gave Tk 10 lakh for development of indigenous women in Godagari in Rajshahi but the money did not reach them.

They also reiterated their six-point demand which include constitutional recognition to rights of indigenous people, ensuring security of their life and property and right to franchise without any pressure from candidates of major parties.



PHOTO: STAR

The uncared for Bose Museum and College at the great scientist's birthplace at Rarikhali village in Sreenagar upazila in Munshiganj district.

Another JC Bose birthday set to pass off silently

A CORRESPONDENT, Munshiganj

Another birthday of great scientist Sir Jagadish Chandra Bose is set to pass off today silently.

The Bose Museum at Rarikhali village in Sreenagar upazila, birth place of the scientist, is left uncared for.

His 148th birth anniversary falls today but no organisation--national or local-- took up any programme to commemorate his great contributions to science.

Sir Jagadish Chandra Bose was born in Bose family at Rarikhali village in 1858.

The then British government conferred 'Sir' title on him in recognition of discoveries and contributions in science. It is he who first discovered that plants have life as human beings do.

He also played a pioneering role in inventing Radio. But he did not get the credit as he did



patent his discovery.

His concrete monument built in front of his 300 year-old ancestral house is decaying due to lack of care. A portion of the dilapidated house is being used as a museum. People of all ranks and age visit this museum every day but the lack of care is apparent all around.

Jagadish Chandra has about 100 scientific discoveries to his

credit, which were also lauded by Einstein.

Jagadish Chandra established the Bose Institution in this old building in 1921. The total area of the institution is about 25 acre that includes 8 ponds.

In 1884, Jagdish started his career as a science teacher in the then Presidency College in Calcutta. He retired from Presidency College in 1917 and established the Bose Science Centre to spread research and study on science in the subcontinent.

In January 1, 1903 the then British government honoured him by awarding him 'Night' title.

In 1911 he was awarded the C.I.E. (Crown of Indian Empire) title for his outstanding contributions in science.

He died on November 23, 1937 in Kolkata. His wife Abala Bose died in 1951.

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Rab arrests BCL leader

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Rab yesterday arrested former organising secretary of Sylhet district unit of Bangladesh Chhatra League Bidahn Kumar Shaha from a restaurant in the city. He was also former general secretary of Madan Mohan College Students Union. Sources said Bidhan had gone to the restaurant along with some friends after attending a 14 party rally at the city's Court point area. Police said Bidhan was wanted in a number of criminal cases.

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