

# No change in poll schedule

Says Election Commissioner Sakhawat Hossain

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

Election Commissioner Brig Gen (ret) M Sakhawat Hossain yesterday said there is no scope for changing the election schedule announced by the Election Commission that is committed to completing the polls by December this year.

One can go to the court if he or she wants any change in the schedule for parliament and upazila elections, he said at a view exchange meeting with local elites and probable candidates for upcoming parliament and upazila parishad elections.

"As we are committed to completing the polls by December this year, there is no scope for changing the election schedule announced by the Election Commission. We will hold the upcoming parliament and upazila parishad elections at any cost," he said.

"Earlier many parties demanded polls as early as possible but now a few of them are demanding change in the election schedule," he said at the meeting held at Patuakhali deputy com-

missioner's conference room in the afternoon.

"All candidates for parliament or upazila parishad election should strictly follow code of conduct introduced by the Election Commission. If any candidate disregards the code of conduct, legal steps will be taken against him," he added.

Addressing the government officials, he said, "Any negligence in election-related activities will not be tolerated. If anybody shows irresponsibility in their election duty, proper legal action will be taken against him."

They must follow all directives from the Election Commission during election to ensure a credible election, he said.

"There will be no scope for vote rigging in the upcoming elections as we have already introduced a voter lists with photograph."

He urged the political parties and elites in the society to extend help and cooperation for successful holding of the polls.

Showing a new ballot box that will be used in upcoming polls, he said there remains no scope to manipulate the election by



Brig Gen (ret) Sakhawat Hossain addressing a view exchange meeting on the upcoming election at the conference room of Patuakhali DC office yesterday.

snatching ballot boxes from polling centres as a specific number is kept for every box and opening the box would not be an easy task.

Representatives from political

parties including Awami League, BNP, Communist Party of Bangladesh, Jamaat-e-Islami, Jatiya Party, Gono Forum, took part in the meeting, among others.

## Vow to resist drug abuse

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sathkira

It was a different day for the people of small Sathkira town as over 500 people, most of them youths, at a rally vowing to resist drug abuse and drug peddling.

Sathkira Police Superintendent Abu Sufiyan was the chief guest at the function.

Udayan Sangha, a newly floated youths' body organised the rally on Sathkira Community Centre premises to create awareness among youths against drug use. Sadar thana OC Abdul Kader Beg was also present. It was chaired by its president Syed Hasan Imam.

Addressing the rally, the SP said stern action will be taken against any member of law enforcing agency if found sheltering drug peddlers.

He urged the people to identify and nab corrupt policemen.

He also urged the youths to play more active role to free the society from drug abuse.

Speakers at the meeting said drug abuse can be controlled to a large extent if law enforcers remain vigilant and do not shelter drug peddlers and traders.

They also called for launching a social campaign to create awareness against drug use.

## Hijbut holds meeting under police protection

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Hizbut Tahrir leaders who were released after arrest earlier as militant-suspects held a discussion amid police protection in the city yesterday.

They threatened to launch a movement against the government branding them as brokers of capitalist powers.

Hijbut joint coordinator Kazi Morshedul Haque, senior member Ahmed Zamal Iqbal, members Moniruzzaman Masud and Masud Kausar

addressed the meeting, among others.

Some 10 Hijbut men including Iqbal, Moniruzzaman and Kausar were arrested on September 18 but released two weeks later as police said they did not find anything to sue them.

Police were deployed at Rajshahi Chambers of Commerce and Industries auditorium where the discussion was held.

Around 50 Hijbut members and their supporters took part in the discussion.

The speakers said launching

movement against the 'present rulers is mandatory for Muslims as they implement secularism, instead of Islamic political ideologies'.

They said Islam prefers Khelafat as a system to rule as it is free from the weaknesses of existing ruling system.

They said, people witnessed democratic, autocratic, military and emergency rules in last 37 years. These are same types of government which are implementing agenda of other countries.



Hizbut Tahrir leader Muniruzzaman Masud addressing a discussion at Rajshahi Chamber of Commerce and Industries auditorium yesterday.

## CLIMATE CHANGE FALLOUT IN BANGLADESH

# 2 lakh killed, Tk 41,300cr assets destroyed in 10 yrs

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

Bangladesh is paying the higher cost in the world for climate change caused by developed rich countries.

This was stated by speakers yesterday at a discussion meeting on 'Bangladesh at the verge of catastrophe due to climate change: Coordinated combined efforts and partnership needed'.

The program was organised by the Coastal Climate Change Action Group (CCCAG) of Youth in Action on Climate (YAC) and Youth Citizen Rights Alliance of Nagorik Uddoyag

at Barisal Development Society (BDS) auditorium marking one year of Sidr.

The participants urged the government to keep in mind that 2.20 core people of the country will be environmental migrants by 2050 due to climate change.

Within a decade (1991-2000), more than two lakh people died and Tk 41,300 assets were damaged only in agriculture and infra-structural sectors in Bangladesh, caused by 93 natural calamities.

Between 1973 and 1987, drought damaged 21.8 lakh tonnes of food grains and flood destroyed

another 23.8 lakh tonnes of crops.

Rivers are losing navigability, causing massive erosion and landslides killing people all due to climate change, they said.

The discussion was presided over by Prof. Md. Hanif Barisal divisional forest officer Sayedur Rahman, was the special guest.

Zakir Hossain, chief executive of Nagorik Uddoyag, as conductor of the program, presented the keynote paper.

They said coordinated and joint efforts are needed at home and abroad to create world opinion to take steps immediately to face the climate change.

## Still haunted by Sidr horror

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

All of them had their sad stories of losing near and dear ones.

At the meeting arranged to commemorate the Sidr victims in the area, the survivors yesterday recalled the fateful night a year ago when the super cyclone wreaked havoc in the southern region.

The Sidr that ran at a speed of 240 to 260 km per hour accompanied by tidal surge left a trail of devastation in vast areas in southern districts as it claimed many human lives and destroyed cattle, crops and dwelling houses, said speakers at the meeting held at Tafalbari Collegiate School ground.

The discussants, mostly Sidr survivors who lost their near and dear ones as well as their homes on November 15 night last year, were bemoaning the tragic death of their children, husbands and wives.

Sharankhola upazila nirbahi officer, chairmen of local union parishads, NGO officials and journalists visited the Sidr-affected areas where people are still struggling for survival with hope to get help for rehabilitation.

"It was a touching scene when I along with others visited graves of Sidr victims in Southkhali union," said Sharankhola UNO Zahurul Islam who attended the programme as chief guest.

Termining measures so far taken for rehabilitation as inadequate, the UNO said 709 victims were buried at Southkhali while 63 others are still missing.

"I tried my best to save my wife Neharun Begum, 62, when she was being swept away by tidal surge. But in vain," said Noor Ali, a fisherman hailing from Baluabunia, at the meeting. He recovered Neharun's body the following day.

Southkhali UP Chairman Anowar Hossain presided over the meeting.



CELEBRATING NABANNA: Indigenous farmers harvest paddy in a festive mood at field in Rangamati hill district on the first day of Bangla month of Agrahayan yesterday.

## JHENIDAH-4

# 3 BNP offices, four aspirants

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jhenidah

Rival factions in Kaliganj upazila BNP have opened three offices, intensifying the intra-party feud.

A faction led by former lawmaker Shahiduzzaman Beltu has opened an office at Nimalta bus stand in the town.

About 200 yards away, another office has been opened at the same bus stand by party men loyal to acting mayor of Kaliganj Pourashabha Mahbubar Rahman.

The third one at Kolabus stand belongs to the group led by former Chhatra Dal president Hamidul Islam Hamid.

The three leaders of the factions are nomination aspirants from Jhenidah-4 constituency and holding party meetings separately.

Besides, Mousumi Nasrin, joint convener of Rajshahi University (RU) unit of Jatiyatibadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) is seeking nomination from Jhenidah-4 constituency.

Party insiders said, the intra-party feud intensified centring the planned December 18 election.

Mizanur Rahman, Trilochonpur union BNP secretary, said if this feud in BNP continues BNP will lose this seat in the upcoming election.

Shahiduzzaman Beltu, elected from Jhenidah-4 in 2001 polls, is on the run since 1/11 as he faces two cases for alleged extortion, one filed on August 26 and the other on September 12 with Kaliganj police station.

Most of the leaders and activists will not work for Beltu in the coming polls, many party men claimed

while talking to this correspondent. They want a change in nomination in the constituency.

Starting his career as a contractor, Beltu joined BNP from Jatiya Party.

The infighting intensified following expulsion and counter-expulsion of party men by rival factions, which threw the grass-roots party workers in utter despair, said Aynal Hossain founder president of Kaliganj upazila BNP.

Reformist Beltu along with Shahidul Islam Master, former lawmaker from Jhenidah-3 constituency, called a meeting in Dhaka on October 10 and expelled Moshur Rahman. This was a retaliatory move as Moshur Rahman was allegedly behind expulsion of Beltu earlier, he said.

Tabibur Rahman Mini, former secretary of Kaliganj BNP, alleged that Beltu amassed wealth illegally during his tenure by using party men who realized toll from government projects, markets and other sources.

Beltu should be punished as he tarnished the image of BNP in the area, he said.

Nomination aspirant Hamidul Islam Hamid however declined to open his mouth. Party high-ups will decide nomination, he said.

Acting mayor of Kaliganj, Mahbubar Rahman, said Beltu has lost and the party will lose the seat if he is nominated this time.

## 4 NGO officials arrested in Mymensingh

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

Police yesterday arrested four officials of an NGO on charge of misappropriating its fund at Kuripara in Muktagachha upazila.

The arrestees are Arif, 35, manager of Muktagachha unit of Paribesh Unnyan Foundation, its area manager Farid, 36, assistant manager Abdul Kader, 30 and field officer Helal Uddin, 32.

The four took Tk 15 lakh from its head office on Thursday to disburse among 30 members of its area office in Muktagachha, Paribesh Unnyan Foundation executive director Md Abdur Rashid said.

They informed the head office Friday night that the total money was not disbursed and rest of it was kept in the office to disburse later on, he said. The same night, some employees of the head office were sent to Muktagachha to monitor their activities. But the arrested officials staged 'a false drama' in name of robbery in the early hours of yesterday to eat up the money, Abdur Rashid alleged.

Being informed, Muktagacha Police Station officer-in-charge (OC) Md Asaduzzaman rushed to the spot and arrested three officials.

During an interrogation, they confessed to their involvement in the crime. Later police recovered Tk 5 lakh from the residences of Arifur Rahman and Farid Ahmed Khan in Mymensingh town and Tk 30,000 from Helal Uddin of Muktagachha. Police also arrested Abdul Kader from Mymensingh and recovered Tk 2 lakh 50 thousand from him. They are trying to recover the rest amount, the OC said.

## Bikalpodhara to contest from Tangail-2

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

Bikalpodhara leader Munirul Islam at a press conference held at Tangail Press Club yesterday expressed his intention to contest the upcoming parliamentary elections from Tangail-2 (Bhuapur-Gopalpur) constituency.

Munirul, also publicity secretary of International Farakka Committee and former vice president of Bangladeshi Society in New York said he decided to contest the polls for development of his constituency and welfare of its people.

In this constituency, Abdus Salam Pintu of BNP defeated Awami League (AL) candidate Khondokar Asaduzzaman in the 2001 parliamentary elections.

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