

Inmates lead sub-human life at govt vagrant centre

MAHTABI ZAMAN

Inmates live in sub-human condition at government vagrant reception centre in Mirpur in the city due to sheer neglect of the authorities concerned.

In 1995, the public works department declared the building of the centre at Section-1 abandoned, but the vagrants are still brought and left there to stay at the risk of their life.

At present around 90 inmates are living at the centre, and of them 50 are staying at the safe custody of the authorities, and the rest are living as vagrants.

According to The Vagrancy Act 1943, the centre is to rehabilitate beggars and physically and mentally challenged people, and provide training to them so that

they can earn their own livelihood. But in practice drug addicts, lost children and adults, sex workers and hawkers are brought to the centre to live all together.

The centre does not provide any bed or mosquito net to the inmates.

An unhealthy environment always prevails there. Floors are littered with dirty materials and the air of the room is full of bad odors.

In the rainy days, water trickles down the roof and the wall making the rooms more stinky and dampy.

Most of the inmates are mentally challenged. They often defecate at their living place while the staffs force them to clean the place by themselves.

Lack of water is a regular and

acute problem here. As a result the toilets are almost unusable. Due to lack of water, other inmates also defecate inside their rooms and on the stairs of the building.

While visiting the centre recently, the inmates were found to cook their food by themselves.

"The inmates prepare their food themselves by turn and they are served with rice three times a day" said a caretaker of the centre.

Most of the inmates, specially the children, are suffering from skin diseases.

"A paramedic visits the centre once a week and prescribes medicines for the patients," claimed a staff, adding that a bed in a room is the only equipment of his clinic.

No recreational facility is available at the centre and the

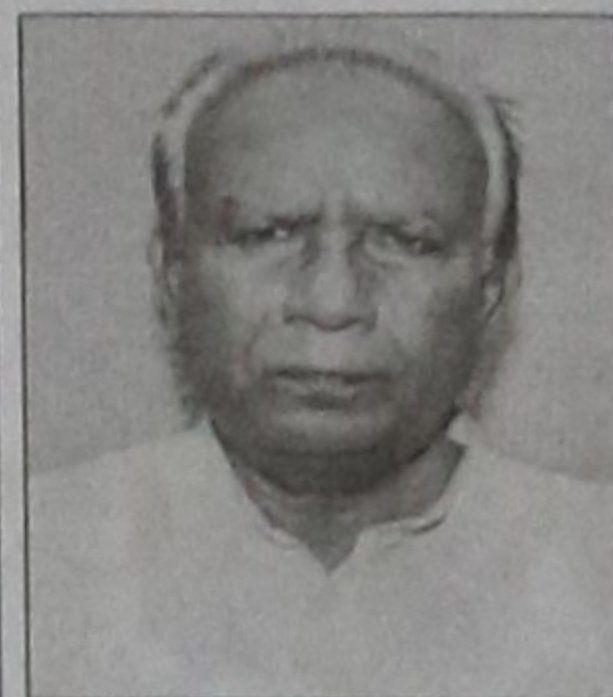
children remain confined to their room. As they are mostly street children they remain busy with fighting and quarrelling among themselves.

A good number of mentally challenged girls were also found at the centre. Two of them were found pregnant. Most of the times, the inmates remain busy quarrelling with each other.

Sources said some officials often take the inmates especially the girls to their home to work as domestic help, and after couple of years they are again brought back to the centre.

There is a so-called training centre here but most of the time it remains closed due to lack of teacher. Besides, due to lengthy government procedure the centre lacks necessary equipment to impart vocational training, added a staff.

Profile of ministers, state ministers



STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Ramesh Chandra Sen

Newly appointed Minister for Ministry of Water Resources Ramesh Chandra Sen was born at Ruhia village in Sadar upazila in Thakurgaon district on April 30 in 1940.

He obtained his graduation from Dinajpur Surandranath College in 1963. He had been serving as an honorary teacher of Ruhia High School since 1970.

Ramesh got involved with politics of Awami League (AL) since his student life. He was elected Vice-President of Thakurgaon District Awami League in 1979.

He became president of District Awami League in 2003.

In December 29 parliamentary elections, he was elected a member of parliament (MP) from Thakurgaon-1 constituency.

In his electoral pledges, he said to people that he would work for overall development of the area. He also promised to solve problems of educational institutions in the area.



Dr Afsarul Amin

Dr Afsarul Amin, a physician and a businessman, was born on January 1, 1952 at Pahartali in Chittagong.

Son of late Dr Fazlul Amin and Hazera Khatun, Afsarul obtained his MBBS degree from Chittagong Medical College in 1979.

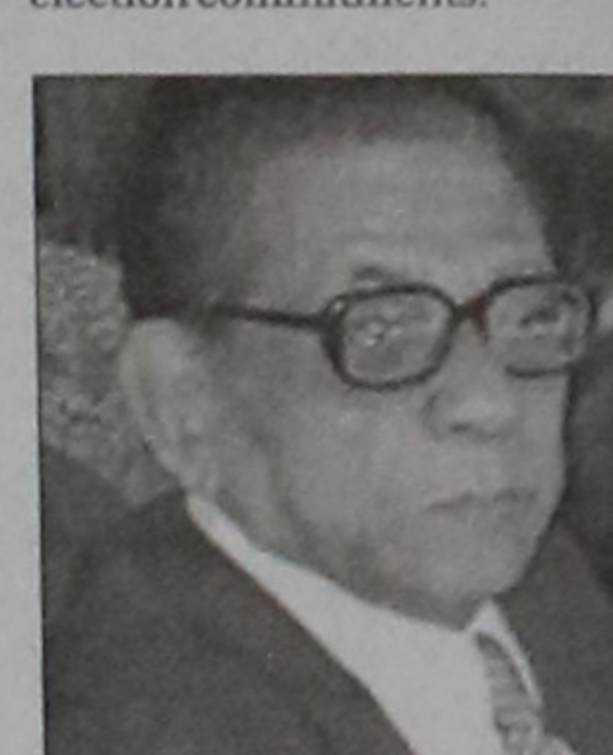
He got involved in student politics of Bangladesh Chhatra League since his student life and became its president.

Being imbued with the noble cause of independence, Afsarul also participated in the liberation war in 1971.

He was the vice-president of South Kattoli Ward unit of Awami League for long until he became the relief and social welfare secretary of Chittagong city unit AL in 1992.

Afsarul was elected organising secretary of Chittagong city AL unit in 1997 and joint secretary in its last convocation on June 27, 2006.

Elected from Chittagong-9, the minister pledged to fulfil his election commitments.



Enamul Haq Mostafa Shahid

Newly appointed Minister for Ministry of Social Welfare Enamul Haq Mostafa Shahid yesterday urged the officials of his ministry to work together for changing the fate of deprived people in society.

He said this while addressing the officials of his ministry and different departments.

He further said that his ministry would work for betterment of the distressed, help-

less, orphans, disabled and vagrants.

He also advised the officials to work sincerely for welfare of disadvantaged people.



Dr Abdur Razzak

Born in 1950 in Tangail, Food and Disaster Management Minister Dr Abdur Razzak has been involved in politics since his student life.

He completed his graduation from Bangladesh Agricultural University in 1971 and did his PhD from Purdue University in the USA in 1983.

A former director of Bangladesh Agriculture Research Council, Dr Razzak

took part in anti-Ayub movement, six-point movement and 11-point mass movement. He was also jailed for his involvement in such movements.

Dr Razzak, a freedom fighter, was a company commander during the Liberation War. He was the first person to hoist the national flag in Tangail in independent Bangladesh.

He was the secretary general of Bangladesh Agronomist Institution in 1996-97.

He was also elected a member of parliament from Tangail-1 constituency in the eighth national parliamentary election.

In his electoral pledges this year, he said that he would take steps to establish Dhanbari as a full-fledged upazila, bring gas pipeline to the area and meet the demands of indigenous people.

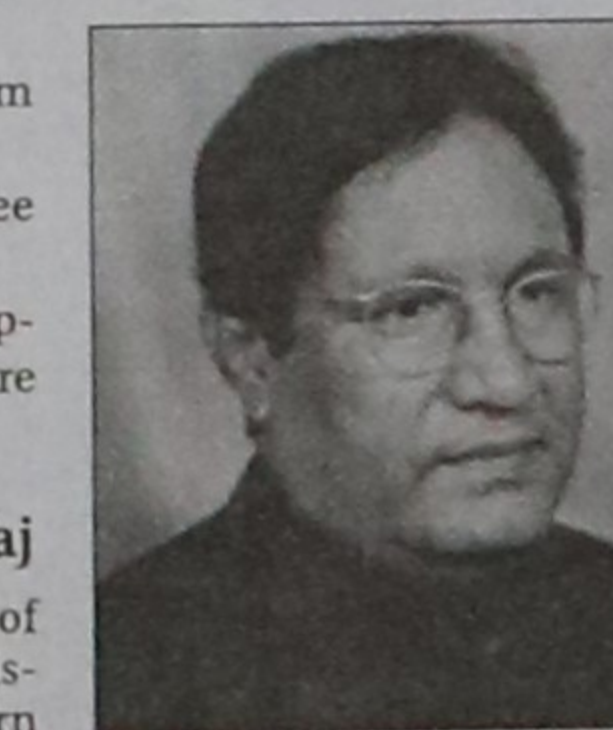
Yafes Osman

Newly appointed State Minister for Information and Communication Technology Yafes Osman was born in Chittagong on May 1 in 1946.

Son of prominent poet Shawkat Osman, he passed the Secondary School Certificate examination from Chittagong Muslim High School in 1963. He did his graduation in Architecture from Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology. He was elected the Vice President of the Engineering University Central Students' Union in 1970.

He got involved in politics as a member of Bangladesh Chhatra Union. Later, he joined Awami League and became its Science and Technology Secretary.

The state minister is a freedom fighter who fought the liberation war of Bangladesh in Sector No-2 in 1971.



Ahad Ali Sarker

State Minister for Youth and Sports Ahad Ali Sarker was born in 1951 in Natore.

A valiant freedom fighter Ahad defeated former deputy minister Ruhul Kuddus Talukdar Dulu's wife Sabina Yasmin.

Ahad, who survived the August 21 grenade attacks on Awami League, got involved in politics from his student life. He was the president of Natore Nawab Siraj-ud-Doula Govt

College unit of Bangladesh Chhatra League.

After the August 15 tragedy in 1975, Ahad was arrested while he was reorganising party workers during the martial law of Ziaur Rahman. He suffered detention during the martial law of HM Ershad.

He was elected twice as Natore Sadar upazila parishad chairman in 1985 and 1990. In the last parliamentary elections, he lost to Dulu by a nominal margin of votes.

Supply of gas in the region was the first priority among his election pledges. He also pledged to try to implement the Narad and Halda canal project, among others.



Dr Hasan Mahmud

Newly elected State Minister for Foreign Affairs Dr Hasan Mahmud was born on June 5, 1963 at Rangunia upazila in Chittagong.

He completed his BSc Honours and Masters in Chemistry from Chittagong University (CU) in 1987 and 1989 respectively.

The minister obtained his higher degree on international politics from Geneva in 1996. He did another post-graduation in Environmental Science from Breeze University of Brussels in Belgium in the same year.

Dr Hasan obtained his PhD degree in Environmental Chemistry from Limburg University in the years of 2000-2001.

He has been doing politics since his student life. He was the senior vice-president of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) unit at CU in 1986 and president in 1989-90.

Dr Hasan performed as the general secretary of Belgium chapter of Awami League (AL) since 1995 until he returned home in 2001. He had been the assistant personal secretary (APS) to AL chief Sheikh Hasina since November 2001.

At the same time, he was also the central secretary for forest and environment affairs of the party.

Dr Hasan, who ran in the general elections from Chittagong-6 constituency, pledged to take initiative to rebuild Mariamangar embankment to save all the unions from the Karnaphuli erosion.

He also said that he would try to make Rangunia free of terrorists and would build road and other infrastructures.

VGF cards to be increased for ultra-poor: Dr Razzak

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Newly appointed Food and Disaster Management Minister Dr Abdur Razzak yesterday said they will increase the number of VGF (vulnerable group feeding) cards for ultra-poor people soon to give them relief from price hike of essentials.

"Prices of essentials have to be reduced keeping consistency with the income of people," he said

while talking to newsmen on the first day at his Secretariat office.

He said propaganda is going on that the present government had pledged to the people to feed them rice at Tk 10, adding, "Neither such a commitment has been made in the Awami League's election manifesto, nor such things have been told anywhere else."

Pointing to the current rate of food production,

the food minister said the growth of food production did not increase at an expected rate which was supposed to be. The growth rate of production was 8 percent in 2000 and it marked a decline in 2001.

The government has now a stock of 12.55 lakh tonnes of food and the stockpile will be increased by fulfilling the existing warehouses and establishing new ones, he added.

Work to restore past glory of golden fibre

Jute minister urges officials

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Textile and Jute Minister Abdul Latif Siddiqui yesterday urged all to work together to restore the past glory of golden fibre.

He told this at a view exchange meeting with the officials on the first day of work at his office at the ministry. They discussed about the current situation of the jute and textile sector.

Comparing the sector to a sinking ship, he urged all to work together to revive the sector. He also asked all officials to work sincerely to implement the Vision 2021 from now on. Secretary of the ministry, handloom board chairman, BTMC chairman, acting BGMC chairman and executive director of JDPC were present at the meeting.

My main task is to facilitate process to try war criminals

Says Tajul Islam

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

State minister for Liberation War Affairs Captain (ret'd) ABM Tajul Islam said that his main task would be to facilitate the process of trying war criminals, as it was one of the major poll pledges to countrymen pronounced in the Awami League (AL) manifesto.

"The trial of the war criminals has to be done and people gave us mandate for an end to it," the newly appointed member of the council of ministers said in an exclusive interview with The Daily Star.

Tajul, also the liberation war affairs secretary of AL, asserted: "I will advocate this case and make sure that it is done."

"Trying the war criminals is an issue that must be

addressed for the sake of the country's next generation," he said.

"You should put an end to the issue or stop from commenting over it because people of this country want to get rid of this burden," the state minister said at his Banani residence yesterday.

He said voters especially women and young generation took the issue seriously and voted for AL-led grand alliance with a hope that the AL would bring war criminals to book.

Referring to the United Nations (UN) assistance in setting up a special tribunal to try the war criminals, he said that the process had already commenced.

Steps to be taken for graft-free edn director

Says Nurul Islam Nahid

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Newly appointed Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid yesterday said necessary changes as well as stern actions would be taken to free the education sector of corruption.

"Corruption has grasped all levels, including education sector. We will not be tolerant of corruption, irregularities and wastage. Necessary changes and stern actions will be taken very soon," he added.

Nahid, also in charge of primary and mass education ministry, said Awami League government would give priority to bring illiterate people under the light of education and prevent students from dropping out.

"At present, around 44 lakh

students admit to class one in every year, but only 22 lakh students can complete primary level. We will give attention to reduce the dropout rate," he said on the first day of his office.

Sheikh Hasina government will prioritise education, because half of the total population still remains illiterate and around 50 students are dropping out at primary level, he added.

The minister confirmed that all education programmes would be continued so that no obstacles might be created due to power changeover, adding that his government will also give priority to ensure quality education from primary level to tertiary level.

Obituary

METRO DESK



Masuma Khanam, wife of late Abdul Jalil Khan Choudhury, former director of food in Satkhira, passed away yesterday at the age of 83, says a press release.

She left behind her three sons and three daughters to mourn her death.

Death anniversary

METRO DESK



Today is the 33rd death anniversary of Mohammad Sirajuddin, chairman and managing director of Modhumita Group, says a press release.

Qulkhwani

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Qulkhwani of Mosamat Amena Begum, aunt of Sheikh Abdul Kader, general secretary of Joy Bangla Sangskritik Oikya Jote, will be held tomorrow at her residence in Munshiganj, says a press release.

On the occasion, a milad mahfil will be held after Zohr prayers.

Razia Begum

Qulkhwani of Razia Begum, wife of late Advocate MA Rageb, will be held at her Baridhara residence after Asr prayers today.

DHAKA TODAY

Talent hunt

The final selection of the Dejuice-The Daily Star talent hunt competition will be held. Venue: The Daily Star office. Time: 2:30pm.

Launching ceremony

The launching ceremony of the book 'Khuni Korai' by Shawkat Osman will be held. Venue: Words 'n Pages. Time: 4:30pm.



Mostafizur Rahman Fizar

Newly appointed State Minister for Environment Mostafizur Rahman Fizar was born at Phulbari upazila in Dinajpur on November 29 in 1953.

He obtained his LLM degree from Rajshahi University.

He was elected member of parliament in seventh since 1986. In the seventh parliament, he served as the chairman of the standing committee on disaster management and relief ministry. He also served as members of the parliamentary standing committee on public accounts and on communication ministry.

Fizar who was elected from Dinajpur-5 constituency on Awami League ticket on the December 29 elections pledged that he would ensure supply of agricultural apparatus with a lesser price and diesel, fertiliser and pesticides in fair price. He also pledged to take initiative to construct roads, bridges and culverts in the area on priority basis.



Captain (ret'd) ABM Tajul Islam

Newly appointed state minister for liberation war affairs ministry, Captain (ret'd) ABM Tajul Islam was born in Brahimbaria district on May 5, 1951.

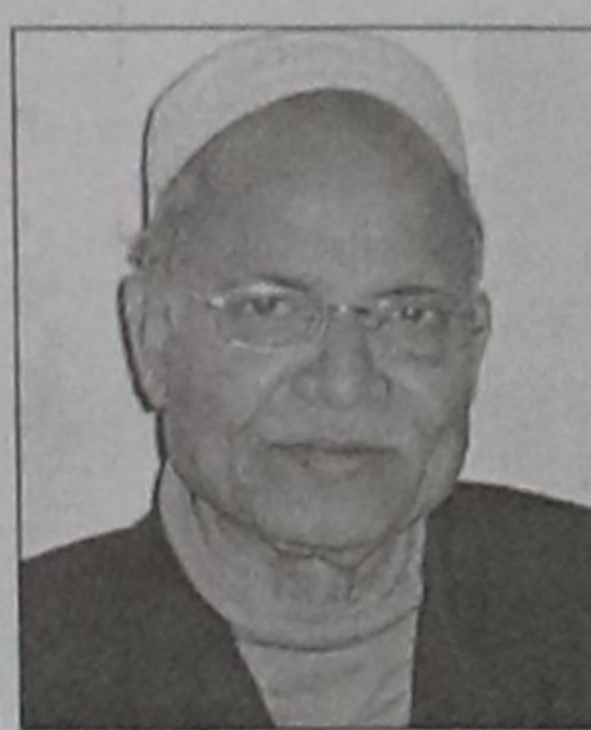
He studied Economics at Dhaka University. He took part in the War of Liberation and joined Bangladesh Army. During the war, he fought in Sector-3.

He was arrested after the assassination of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and was forced to go premature retirement in 1976.

Tajul was elected president of Banchharampur Upazila Awami League (AL) in 1984. He was elected as the first secretary of Liberation War affairs of AL.

He was elected as a member of parliament from Brahimbaria-6 constituency in 1996 elections.

Tajul Islam pledged to the people that he would work together with people of every stakes and take steps to prevent river erosion.



Rezaul Karim Hira

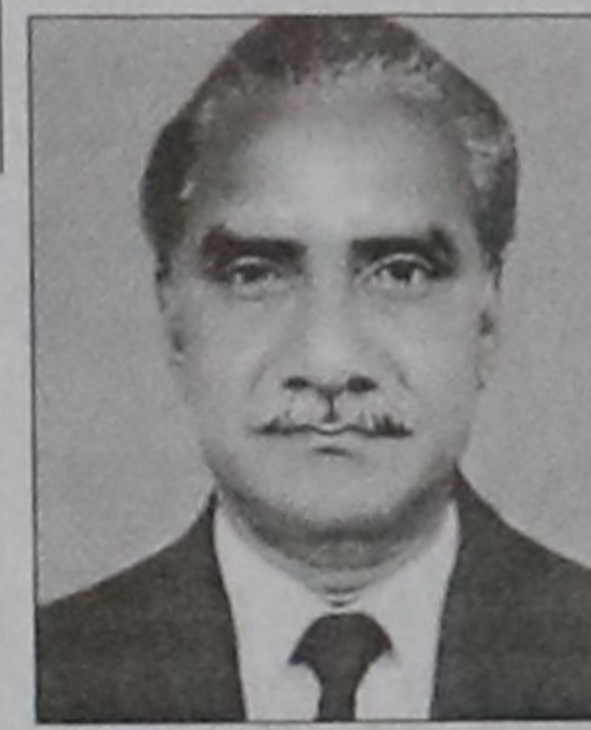
Land Minister Rezaul Karim Hira was born on December 1 in 1942 in Jamalpur district.

After completing his matriculation, he, also a businessman, started his career in politics. He took part in the War of Liberation and served as a joint convener of Sangram Parishad formed by Awami League (AL) being the general secretary of Jamalpur Mohokuma AL.

He also served in Jamalpur Central Cooperative Bank as its director, vice-president and president. He was also the vice president of Jamalpur district AL.

Rezaul was elected as member of parliament in 1996 and 2001 elections. He served as a member of the standing committee on cultural ministry in the eighth parliament.

In his electoral pledges, he said that he would implement the long-standing demand to build a bridge in Nandina Ferihat.



Abdul Latif Biswas

Newly appointed Minister for Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock Abdul Latif Biswas was born in Belkuchi upazila in Sirajganj district.

After passing the Dakhil examination, he was admitted to Belkuchi Degree College where he obtained his graduation degree in 1986.

He entered into politics during his student life and joined Bangladesh Chhatra League.

Biswas, also a businessman, was elected chairman of Dowlatpur Union Parishad twice in 1983 and 1988. In 1988, he contested and won from jail.

He was elected a member of parliament (MP) in 1986 with Awami League ticket.

In December 29 parliamentary elections, he was re-elected a lawmaker from Sirajganj-5 constituency.

In his electoral pledges, he said that he would strive hard to rejuvenate sick handloom industry and protect the area from erosion by the Jamuna.



Dipankar Talukder

Newly appointed State Minister for CHT Affairs Dipankar Talukder was born on December 12, 1952 at Rangamati Sadar upazila.

Dipankar completed his matriculation from Bandarban Govt High School in 1968 and HSC from Dhaka College in 1971. He did his honours degree in English from Dhaka University in 1975.

The minister, also president of Rangamati district unit Awami League, joined the party in 1973 and was made foreign affairs secretary of the central committee of Bangladesh Chhatra League.

He also served as the secretary of Rangamati district AL from 1986 to 1989. He was made the district unit president in 1990.

Dipankar was elected as a member of parliament for three times in 1991, 1996 and 2008.

Implementation of the CHT Peace Treaty, ensuring gas supply and turning the Rangamati Govt College into a university are among his electoral pledges.



Tanzim Ahmed Sohel Taj

Tanzim Ahmed Sohel Taj, son of the country's first prime minister Tajuddin Ahmed, was born in Kapsasia upazila under Gazipur district on January 5 in 1970.

He obtained Bachelor of Business Administration degree from American University in Bulgaria. He completed his masters from Gordon University in the USA in 2008.

He was elected member of parliament in 2001 with Awami League ticket. He served as a member of standing committee on youth and sports ministry.

Tanzim was appointed the state minister for home affairs.



Begum Munnujan Sufian

Newly appointed State Minister for Ministry of Labour and Employment Begum Munnujan Sufian started her political career in 1968 as president of Khulna Girls' College unit of Bangladesh Chhatra League.

Graduated from Khulna Girls' College in 1969, Begum Munnujan is wife of Prof Abu Sufian, a prominent labour leader and freedom fighter who

was later gunned down by the army at Daulatpur in Khulna city.

Also a freedom fighter and pioneer of democratic movements, she entered into labour politics a few months after tragic death of her husband.

Munnujan Sufian who became a member of Awami League central working committee in 1996.

She was elected a member of parliament (MP) from Khulna-3 constituency in 1996 from reserved seats for women.

In her electoral pledges, she said she would try to reopen closed jute mills and reinstate sacked workers. She also said she would take step for supply of gas to Khulna through pipelines.