

Irregularities prompt EC to postpone Belkuchi UZ polls

Pro-AL candidate's men take control of polling centres

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sirajganj

Election to Belkuchi Upazila Parishad in Sirajganj was postponed yesterday following allegations that supporters of pro-Awami League candidate Fazlul Haque have prevented voters from casting votes and taken control of polling centres.

But the postponement of the election at around 2:00pm prompted the supporters of pro-AL candidate to go berserk, damaging a microbus of foreign election observers. They also confined Belkuchi Upazila Nirbahi Officer and Assistant Returning Officer Nasir Uddin and some others officials in the rooms of upazila office for five hours.

Meanwhile, polling at Chowdhali Degree College centre in Chowdhali upazila was also postponed after a voter list containing 100 names went missing. However, the voter list was found an hour later.

A clash between supporters of pro-BNP candidate Selim Jahangir and Pro-Awami League candidate Amzad Hossain Milon took place at At Tarash upazila at around 2:30pm, leaving seven people

injured. The injured were admitted to Sirajganj Sadar Hospital and Rajshahi Medical College Hospital.

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) arrested two persons along with Tk 15,900 from Victoria School centre in Sirajganj town while they were distributing the money to the voters in a bid to buy votes. The arrestees are Raju Ahmed and Abdul Awal.

Besides, Ullapara police arrested three more persons, including a woman, from a polling centre, as they were trying to persuade voters to cast votes for a certain candidate.

Sources said the Election Commission postponed the election to Belkuchi upazila Parishad, as supporters of pro-AL candidate took control of about 21 centres. They prevented the supporters of pro-BNP and Jamaat candidate from casting votes.

They also assaulted six people, including a presiding officer and a sub-inspector, during the voting.

Receiving complaints from the supporters of pro-BNP-Jamaat candidate, the Election Commission asked the authori-

ties concerned to postpone the polling.

After the incident, agitating supporters of Upazila AL secretary Fazlul Haque, a chairman candidate, laid siege to the UNO office and damaged a microbus of foreign observers.

At a press conference later, Belkuchi Upazila AL said the returning officer and assistant returning officer postponed the elections on the basis of false allegations made by BNP-Jamaat men.

They said that the polling in different centres was going on in a fair and peaceful manner.

When contacted, Deputy Commissioner Humayun Kabir and Police Super Alamgir Rahman told The Daily Star that the Election Commission has ordered them to postpone the elections following allegations of irregularities.

They also said that they were investigating the allegations.

However, polling in eight upazilas, out of nine, in the district was held amid huge enthusiasm and festivity.

Polls smooth barring minor incidents: AL

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League (AL) has claimed the Upazila Parishad elections were held peacefully across the country despite a few minor incidents.

"The elections were held peacefully despite one or two small incidents," claimed AL spokesperson Syed Ashraf

Islam couple of hours after the local body voting ended yesterday.

Briefing newsmen at AL President Sheikh Hasina's political office, Ashraf, also LGRD and cooperatives minister, contradicted the statements made by the Election Commission that there were party influences in the polls.

He said political parties do not have any influence in the local government elections as their symbols are not used.

"There is no question of being involved in either violent incidents or influencing the polls by Awami League," he claimed.

"Awami League did not take part in the elections as a party. But there were Awami League-supported candidates. Our elected lawmakers did not campaign for any candidates. We tried to follow the electoral code of conduct properly."

Terming the polls violence "sporadic incidents" and outcome of conflicts between ancestors, local relatives and families, Ashraf said those incidents did not have an impact on overall elections.

He also claimed they are happy with the law and order during the polls.

Ashraf, also AL joint general secretary, said although the local government elections are held in different countries based on political parties, the tradition in Bangladesh is nonpartisan.

He alleged EC and the caretaker government tried to reinforce depoliticisation in Bangladesh. "I think local government elections without politics won't bring good to the people largely."

Asked whether they would make future elections party-based in parliament, the LGRD minister said parliament should think on the matter. He expressed the hope that the lawmakers would discuss the process of holding the local body elections in the inaugural session of parliament.

On low turnout, he said there was possibility of less turnout due to heavy cold and as the voters were tired following the national election. "But there was mentionable number of voters' turnout, not too less," he claimed.

He thanked EC, members of the armed forces and law-enforcement agencies for holding the peaceful elections.

Moudud allowed to draw money from frozen bank account

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court (HC) yesterday directed the government to permit former BNP minister Moudud Ahmed to withdraw Tk 5 lakh a month from one of his frozen IFIC bank accounts.

An HC bench of justices Mir Hasmat Ali and Shamim Hasnain also permitted Moudud to deposit money in his savings account with the same bank and withdraw money from it.

On March 5, 2007, following the directives of the National Board of Revenue five bank accounts of the former law minister were frozen in connection with tax evasion.

On May 22 last year, upon a writ petition filed by Moudud, the HC permitted him to withdraw Tk 1.25 lakh per month from the bank account. The court also issued a rule upon the government to explain why the act of freezing the bank accounts should not be declared illegal.

During the hearing yesterday Moudud prayed to the court for directing the government to reactivate his bank accounts. Deputy Attorney General Zafar Imam told the court that the government would make decisions within a week on restoration of the bank accounts frozen during the tenure of the caretaker government.

Death anniversary

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Today is the 13th death anniversary of Mohammad Asad Mian, a well-known businessman and social worker of Old Dhaka, says a press release.

On the occasion, a doa and milad mahfil will be held at his Bongshal residence in the city.

All are requested to pray for the salvation of the departed soul.



US Ambassador James F Moriarty calls on Finance Minister Abul Mal Abdul Muhit at his office in the city yesterday.

DFID assures enhanced financial assistance

UNB, Dhaka

DFID Director General Mark Lowcock yesterday assured Bangladesh of continued and enhanced level of financial assistance as the British development agency was finalising their assistance plan for the country for next few years.

The assurance came when

Lowcock made a courtesy call on Foreign Minister Dr Dipu Moni at her office. British High Commissioner in Dhaka Stephen Evans and DFID head in Bangladesh Cris Austin were present.

During the meeting, views were exchanged on British assistance for Bangladesh channelled through DFID, development priorities of the country and issues of bilateral, regional and international interests.

Lowcock's visit to Bangladesh is to know the development priorities of the new government through holding meetings with different ministries. He said DFID would finalise the assistance plan through consultation and coordination with the government.

Welcoming the delegation, Dr Dipu Moni hoped that the assistance would help Bangladesh meet its development challenges in priority areas such as health, education, food, shelter, climate change adaptation, capacity building, improvement of governance, infrastructure, and trade and investment.

She also called for favourable policies of the UK government in respect of large British-Bangladesh community in the UK.

The discussion between the FM and the British envoy covered issues like cooperation with the UK in counter-terrorism, regional cooperation within South Asia and Saarc contexts, and sending Bangladeshi peacekeepers to a UN Mission in response to a request from the British Prime Minister, said a foreign ministry release.

FF Mahmud Hasan no more

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Mahmud Hasan, founder chairman of Bangladesh Mukti Joddha Sangsad, passed away at Eden Multicare Hospital yesterday at the age of 80, says a press release.

He left behind his three sons and a daughter to mourn his death.

He will be laid to rest at his family graveyard at village Fakir Bazar at Burichang in Comilla after Juma prayers today.

UNB adds: Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday condoled his death.

In a condolence message, she said the country has lost one of its best sons at his death.

She prayed for the eternal peace of the departed soul and conveyed sympathy to his bereaved family members.

'Ensure rights of persons with disabilities'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Disability Welfare Act 2001 is not coherent with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), said the speakers at a conference yesterday.

MK ALAMGIR'S CASE HC stays trial court verdict for 4 months

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court (HC) yesterday stayed for four months a trial court judgment sentencing Awami League lawmaker Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir to 13 years imprisonment in a graft case filed by the Anti-corruption Commission (ACC).

After hearing a stay petition filed by Mohiuddin, an HC bench comprising Justice Muzammel Hossain and Justice Afzal Hossain Ahmed also asked both sides of the case to take steps as early as possible to dispose of the pending appeal against the trial court verdict.

A special court, which was set up on Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban premises on July 26, 2007, sentenced former state minister Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir to 13 years in prison and fined him Tk 10 lakh in this case for concealing his wealth statement the information about the six fixed deposits worth Tk 1.17 crore.

Mohiuddin filed an appeal with the HC against the verdict and upon the appeal the HC earlier granted him bail in the case. The appeal is now pending with the HC.

Getting released from jail on the HC bail in different cases against him, Mohiuddin contested December 29 parliamentary election and was elected a member of the parliament.

Barrister Rafique-ul Huq appeared for Mohiuddin.

They said as an international law cannot be enforced without including it in the national law, it is important to update the act.

The two-day conference titled 'Implementation of UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities' ended at the LGED auditorium in the city.

With the support of Wellesley Centres for Women, an US-based research centre, Bangladesh National Women Lawyers Association (BNWLA) organised the conference with a view to creating an action plan and forming a platform to implement the CRPD.

Speaking at the concluding session, Dr Rangita deSilva-deAlwis, senior adviser of Wellesley Centres for Women, highlighted the importance of reforming all laws related to the welfare of persons with disabilities.

The conference focused on the need for updating all laws including 2001 disability welfare act to make them compatible with the new CRPD, and identifying the

gaps in the legal system in relation to the rights of persons with disabilities.

It called for inclusion of persons with disabilities at the district level committees, a disability cell within every ministry and the formation of a disability rights committee.

The conference also stressed the need for making educational institutions more friendly for the people with disabilities, and a code of conduct for their treatment.

It also called for ensuring the participation of women with disabilities in the process of making laws against domestic violence.

With Jahangir Alam, secretary general of NADPO, in the chair, the conference was also attended by Advocate Salma Ali, executive director of BNWLA, Hedayetullah Al Mamoon, additional secretary to social welfare ministry, Adv Fawzi Karim Firoze, DG of social services department, and Salma Khan, president of Women for Women.

ADMISSION RULES

DU to appeal against HC verdict

DU CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka University authorities yesterday decided to appeal in the Supreme Court (SC) against a High Court verdict that declared admission rules in seven departments illegal as the rules disqualify madrasa students from their admissions.

The decision was taken at a deans' committee meeting of the university with DU Vice Chancellor Prof AAMS Arefin Siddique in the chair.

The HC on Tuesday declared admission rules applied for freshmen admission to the departments of Economics,

English, Bangla, Mass Communication and Journalism, International Relations, Women and Gender Studies and Linguistics which make a bar to the admissions of Aleem graduates.

"The deans' committee has decided to appeal in the SC against the High Court verdict in a bid to maintain the academic freedom and university's autonomy," DU VC Prof Arefin told The Daily Star last night.

He also said they are going to file the appeal by next week.

The HC verdict came following a writ petition filed by five DU admission seekers.

China milk scam duo given death

FROM PAGE 16

"My granddaughter died. She (Tian) should die too, she should be shot. She has brought such harm to the public, to children," said Zheng Shuzhen, of Henan province, who said her 1-year-old granddaughter died in June after drinking Sanlu milk.

"We think Tian Wenhua's sentence is just the beginning. As victims' parents, we want justice for our children and we will call for it through reasonable and sensible means," said Zhao Lianhai, who has set up a Web site to help organize parents whose children were sickened.

The sentences which were the first handed down in the scandal and a recent announcement of a compensation plan for the victims appear to be part of a govern-

ment bid to put an end to the crisis.

During her Dec. 31 trial, Tian admitted she had known of problems with her company's products for months before informing authorities. The scandal was exposed in September.

Tian was also fined 20 million yuan (\$2.92 million) while Sanlu, which has been declared bankrupt, was fined 50 million yuan (\$7.3 million). Three other former Sanlu executives, including one now confined to a wheelchair after he tried to commit suicide last year, were given between five years and 15 years in prison.

Among the 12 sentences announced by Wang outside the court Thursday, two other life terms were handed down, while others were given jail terms of five to 15 years.

In a reflection of the trial's sensitivity, dozens of policemen guarded the courthouse and cordoned off the surrounding area with plastic barriers. Officers told the victims' families to keep about 100 yards away.

Zhao said he and other parents plan to travel to Beijing on Friday to deliver a petition to the Ministry of Health. Zhao and the others say an official compensation plan was put together without their input and does not offer enough long-term help.

Sanlu, along with the other 21 dairy companies involved in the scandal, have proposed a 1.1 billion yuan (\$160 million) compensation plan. More than 200 families have filed suit demanding higher compensation and long-term treatment for their babies.

Authorities detained at least two sets of parents of melamine victims as they attempted to travel to the courthouse, said Li Fangping, a Beijing lawyer who has worked with the parents since news of the poisonings emerged.

Investigations showed that middlemen who sold milk to dairy companies were watering down raw milk, then mixing in nitrogen-rich melamine to fool quality tests for protein content.

Normally used to make plastics and fertilizer, melamine can cause kidney stones and kidney failure when ingested in large amounts. The discovery of melamine in dairy exports such as chocolate and yogurt triggered a slew of product recalls overseas.

DHAKA TODAY

Math Olympiad

Dhaka Divisional Math Festival, a regional event of the 7th Dutch Bangla Bank Prothom Alo Math Olympiad 2009, will be held. Venue: Govt Laboratory High School. Time: 8:30am.

Discussion

Citizens' Parliament will hold a discussion on the expectations from the National Parliament. Venue: National Press Club. Time: 10:00am.

Reception

Shikkhak Samaj will accord a reception to the newly elected lawmaker from Dhaka-7 constituency Dr Mostafa Jalal Mohiuddin. Venue: Azimpur Girls' School and College auditorium. Time: 3:00pm.

Seminar

Kissa Kahini organises a seminar on drama and drama culture. Venue: Natmandal, Dhaka University. Time: 3:30pm.

Book launch

ActionAid Bangladesh organises the launching ceremony of a book titled 'The politics of prevention' authored by David Archer and Tania Boler. Venue: National Press Club. Time: 10:00am.

Reunion

Department of Accounting and Information Systems, Dhaka University and Accounting Alumni Association will organise the 6th reunion of accounting alumni.

Freedom festival

The Liberation War Museum organises a 'Freedom Festival' for the city's school and college students. Venue: Dhanmondi Abahani Playground. Time: 9:00am.

Prize giving ceremony

Kendriya Kachi Kanchar Mela organises the prize giving ceremony of its children's drawing and poetry recitation contests and science fair organised to mark the birth anniversary of Shilpacharya Zainul Abedin, Palli Kobi Jasimuddin and scientist Abdullah Al Muti. Venue: Kachi Kanchar Bhaban. Time: 10:00am.

Drawing contest

Patua Quamrul Hassan Art School in association with Prime Bank organises a children's drawing contest. Venue: Faculty of Fine Art, Dhaka University. Time: 9:00am.

Extended meeting

Bangladesh Judicial Service Association will hold an extended meeting. Venue: Jagannath-Sohel Memorial auditorium, Dhaka Judge Court. Time: 10:00am.

Drama

Norwegian national sami theatre group Beavvas Sami Theatre will stage a play titled 'The Frost Haired and the Dream Seer'. Venue: Shilpakala Academy. Time: 6:30pm.

শিশু চলচ্চিত্র উৎসব

বাংলাদেশ

জানুয়ারী ২৪ - ৩০, ২০০৯

মূল উৎসব কেন্দ্র
কেন্দ্রীয় পাবলিক লাইব্রেরী, শাহবাগ, ঢাকা

অন্যান্য কেন্দ্র: বটিশ কাউন্সিল, জার্মান সাংস্কৃতিক কেন্দ্র, রশ বিজ্ঞান ও সাংস্কৃতিক কেন্দ্র, ইরান সাংস্কৃতিক কেন্দ্র, আলিসস ফ্রেন্ডস দো ঢাকা।

উদ্বোধন: ২৪ জানুয়ারী, শনিবার বিকেল ৪টা
(৩০মার আমন্ত্রিত অতিথিদের জন্য)

নিয়মিত প্রদর্শনী: ২৫-৩০ জানুয়ারী
প্রতিদিন সকাল ১১টা, দুপুর ১২টা, বিকেল ৪টা ও সন্ধ্যা ৬টা

সকল প্রদর্শনী শিশু-কিশোরদের জন্য উন্মুক্ত
বিস্তারিত প্রদর্শনিসূচী মূল উৎসব কেন্দ্রে পাওয়া যাবে

আয়োজক:
Children's Film Society Bangladesh

WEATHER TODAY

Moderate thick fog likely

UNB, Dhaka

Weather is likely to remain dry with partly cloudy sky over the country in the next 12 hours until 6:00pm today.

Moderate thick fog may occur over Rajshahi division and the river basins of the country and light to moderate fog elsewhere over the country during midnight till morning. Met Office said predicting nearly unchanged night temperature over the country.

Highest temperature 29.5 degrees Celsius was recorded yesterday at Cox's Bazar and lowest 10.7 degrees Celsius at Srimongal.

The sun sets in the capital at 5:39pm today and rises at 6:42am tomorrow.

Highest and lowest temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

City/Town	Temperature in Celsius		Humidity in percentage	
	Max	Min	Morning	Evening
Dhaka	22.5	14.0	84	76
Chittagong	26.1	14.5	82	60
Rajshahi	21.8	10.8	100	92
Khulna	24.5	13.5	89	62
Barisal	25.0	12.4	--	76
Sylhet	24.3	13.4	100	83
Cox's Bazar	29.5	14.4	61	54

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23 Jan (Friday)

10:30 am
4 pm
6:30 pm

24 Jan (Saturday)

10:30 am
6:30 pm

Fast Forward

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