

UNION PARISHAD POLLS NEXT MONTH

# Election offices in northern dists face manpower crisis

EAM ASADUZZAMAN,  
Nilphamari

District and upazila election offices in northern districts are facing acute manpower shortage ahead of the region's 'gigantic' union parishad elections next month.

Of the 537 union parishads in eight northern districts -- Rangpur, Dinajpur, Gaibandha, Kurigram, Lalmonirhat, Thakurgaon, Panchagarh and Nilphamari -- elections are scheduled in 534 union parishads, said sources at the regional office of the Election Commissioner in Rangpur.

Tenures of three other union parishads are yet to expire.

In each union parishad there are 13 posts of office

Some 40,000 to vie for 6, 942 posts in 8 dists

bearers including a chairman, nine ward councillors and three female councillors in reserved seats.

Some 35,000-40,000 candidates are expected to vie for all 6,942 posts including 537 chairmen, 4,806 councillors and 1,602 female councillors (in reserved seats) under 534 UPs this time, considering the fact that five candidates on an average contested for each post in recent past UP elections.

"As per the new organogram, 10 officers and employees including one district election officer, one

assistant election officer, one upper division clerk, one accounts assistant, two office assistants, two MLSS, one night guard and one sweeper are to be posted at each district election office. But in Kurigram district election office, there are only five persons," said Zelhas Uddin Ahmed, acting district election officer (DEO) of Kurigram.

Besides, election offices in old, big districts need 13 officials each.

Sources in election offices in the region said there are regular DEO only in Dinajpur and Gaibandha

districts while in Rangpur, Kurigram, Lalmonirhat, Thakurgaon, Panchagarh and Nilphamari, Sadar upazila election officers are working as acting DEO in addition to their regular duty.

In all the eight districts, there are no assistant election officers.

Of the total 58 upazilas in the region, only 25 upazilas have regular upazila election officers (UEO).

In 16 of the 33 other upazilas, UEO of adjacent upazilas are serving as acting UEO as additional duty. In three upazilas, UNOs are performing the duties of UEO along with their regular office work.

In rest 14 upazilas, namely, Saidpur, Boda, Tentulia, Pirganj, Ranishankoil, Birganj, Chirirbandar, Birampur, Hakimpur, Pargachha, Kaunia, Ulipur, Rajibpur and Fulchhari, steno typists are performing duties of UEO, said sources in the regional election office.

Generally, upazila election offices are manned with UEO, an office assistant and an office peon. But in many upazilas, there is even no office assistant.

"Holding union parishad election is much more difficult than that of holding Jatiya Sangsad and upazila elections as the number of candidates in UP elections is several times more," said Nilphamari Sadar UEO Sekandar Ali, also acting district election officer of Nilphamari.

UP elections comprise voluminous tasks like verifying thousands of candidate's affidavits and accounts of election expenditure, providing nomination papers to candidates and sorting those, supplying voter lists to candidates, collection of necessary polls materials from Dhaka and distributing them to centres, in addition to providing training to the polling agents, presiding officers and assistant presiding officers.

Finally, the tasks include collecting, coordinating, counting and publishing election results and maintaining contact with Election Commission office in Dhaka and so on.

"The higher authorities are well aware of the problems. Process is on to appoint manpower to the vacant posts," said Deputy Election Commissioner in the regional election office Suvash Chandra Sarker.

However, the appointment process was hindered as there was a case in the High Court regarding this matter, he added.

# Death of four in road mishap sparks protest

Highway blocked, vehicles attacked in Barisal

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

Locals blocked Barisal-Banaripara-Swarupkathi highway and damaged three buses following deaths of four people in an accident on the road in Babujanj upazila yesterday morning.

The accident occurred when a Sharshina-bound bus from Faridpur with the followers of pir of Sharshina on board hit a rickshaw van at Badla point at around 11:15am, killing the driver of the van and its three passengers on the spot.

The dead are rickshaw-van driver Razzak, 27, and its passengers Bahadur Duari, 25, son of Majid Duari, Salahuddin, 35, son of Abdul Latif, and Humayun Chowkidar, 29, son of Hossain Chowkidar. All the four hailed from Badla village of Babujanj upazila.

Immediately after the accident, locals put up a barricade on the road disrupting traffic for two hours. They withdrew the barricade

at around 2:00pm after AL lawmaker Manirul Islam Moni, local political leaders and the officer-in-charge of Babujanj Police Station assured them of taking action against the bus driver.

According to the bus passengers, the accident took place as the driver lost control over the steering. It (bus) hit the rickshaw van, killing four people on the spot and then plunged into a roadside ditch, they added.

At least 20 passengers of the bus received injuries. Locals rescued the injured and sent them to Banaripara Upazila Health Complex and Barisal Sher-e-Bangla Medical College and Hospital.

The driver of the killer bus and its helpers managed to flee the scene soon after the mishap. A murder case was filed against the driver and helpers of the bus with the police station concerned. Police said they are looking for the accused.



PHOTO: STAR

Forest officials lift onto boat the body of a tiger, beaten dead by locals at Golakhali village in Shyamnagar upazila under Satkhira district early yesterday, to take it to Kalagachhia forest office.

OUR CORRESPONDENT,  
Satkhira

# Villagers beat dead a tiger in Satkhira

A tiger was beaten to death by villagers at Golakhali in Shyamnagar upazila of the district early yesterday.

Around midnight Friday the tiger entered Golakhali village across Momundo river from the Sundarbans, villagers said. It killed a goat there. Hearing dog's barking, locals gathered to find

out the tiger.

Receiving information, the Koikhali forest officials and a local vigilance team came to the place, said

Taufiqul Islam, assistant conservator of forest, Satkhira range. They tried to

catch the tiger with a tranquiliser gun and fired at least 50 to 60 shots.

At about 4:30am, the tiger attacked Nazrul Islam, 35, son of Pagol Sardar of the village. Locals rescued the man and beat the hapless

animal dead.

The forest officials recovered the tiger's body from the spot and took it to the forest office on a boat.

Later it was taken to Kalagachhia forest office and buried there after a post mortem, said officials.

Injured Nazrul was admitted to Shyamnagar upazila health complex.

# Causes of Sundarbans fire need to be pinpointed

QUAZI AMANULLAH, Khulna

Failure to prevent recurrence of fire incidents in Chandpai and Sharankhola ranges under East Wing of the Sundarbans Forest Division (SFD) has become a cause of concern.

Shortage of manpower, logistic support, fire extinguishing equipment and lack of measures to stop careless use of fire and combustible substances are seen as the reasons for fire while reports on findings by probe committees formed every time after the incidents never came to light for reasons unknown.

The forest department in 2009 declared 12 stations, camps and patrol

outposts of Chandpai

and Sharankhola ranges under East Wing of SFD as 'fire zone' considering their importance to protect resources of the forest.

The twelve areas within 30 kilometres of the 'fire zone' are Joymoni, Chandpai, Baiddyomari, Katakhal, Barotala out post, Jiudhara Camp, Amurbunia outpost, Gulshakhali camp under Chandpai range, Dhansagor station, Dhansagor camp and Nangli.

During the last nine years, the East Wing faced 15 fire incidents that damaged different species of trees on over 50 acres of

land.

On earlier occasions, Divisional Forest Officer (DFO) of the East Wing of SFD Mihir Kumar Dey blamed careless use of cookers and leaving of burning butts of cigarettes by woodcutters, honey collectors, fishermen and bawalis for these fire incidents.

However, this time he did not rule out the possibility of acts of sabotage to destroy forest resources.

"I do smell something wrong with recurrence of fire particularly in the East Wing of Sundarbans Forest Division. Report on probe findings will tell it," the DFO said.

"Shortage of manpower makes it quite difficult for

forest department to do round-the-clock patrol duty to stop unauthorised men who enter the forest under different guises with motives. The department needs adequate fund to gear up programmes for creating awareness among the people about use of fire and combustible substances in the forest," he said.

Three 'mysterious' fire incidents that occurred on March 1, 8 and 9 in Nangli camp area under Chandpai Range of the East Wing of SFD burnt down a large number of plants and trees on vast areas.

The probe committee has been asked to reveal the real cause and estimate damage.

# Girl hacked to death

UNB, Sherpur

A teenage girl was hacked to death during a clash over a piece of disputed land at Charsherpur Nigpara village in Sadar upazila yesterday morning.

The deceased was identified as Fazila Begum, 15, daughter of Fazal Haque of the village.

Police quoting locals said there was a longstanding dispute over a piece of land between Fazal and his neighbours.

They said a clash ensued in the morning when Fazal's rival group tried to occupy the disputed land.

At one stage, when Fazila tried to save her father the opponents stabbed her indiscriminately leaving her dead on the spot.

# 16 shops gutted

UNB, Noakhali

At least 16 shops were gutted in a fierce fire at Chatkhil market in Chatkhil upazila early yesterday.

On information, three fire fighting units from Laxmipur district headquarters rushed to the spot and extinguished the blaze with the help of local people after an hour of frantic efforts.

There is no fire service station in the upazila.

The affected shop owners claimed that cash and other valuables worth about Tk 1 crore were gutted in the blaze.

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