

Rural students

FROM PAGE 20
In Dhaka board, only eight schools of the top 20 are outside of the capital. However, all of them are either in metropolitan or municipality area.

Of the top 160 institutions in the country, 79 are public schools in districts. They have quality teachers and most of their students are from well-off families.

Most of the remaining institutions are either cadet colleges or run by a specific defence force such as the army.

In Jessor board, 13 of the top 20 institutions are public schools, while the rest are either cadet colleges or specialised schools. The pattern is almost similar in the other education boards.

More than one third of the total GPA-5 achievers are from Dhaka board. A total of 17,595 students obtained the highest grade in this board. Of them, 10,231 are from Dhaka metropolitan area.

Under this board, pass percentage in the capital is 94.80, while it is 69.23 in Shariatpur, 74.48 in Netrokona, 74.32 in Manikganj, 76.11 in Faridpur, and 76.75 in Madaripur districts.

Talking about the trend, educationist Prof Syed Manzoorul Islam said as rural Bangladesh is the main focus area for the country's development, the standard of education must be improved at rural levels.

"We need to intensify our training programmes for rural teachers and modernise those schools, as has been done by Sri Lanka. Besides, we need to update our training systems as well," he observed.

The parents also have to be reminded of their responsibility, mentioned the Dhaka University teacher. "If parents take the responsibility of rural schools and lend due support, the scenario might change."

He stressed the need for allocating more from the GDP for education to improve the situation.

"We should focus more on enhancing quality education rather than the pass rate. For that, we have to build libraries in rural schools, encourage children to read and increase teachers' salary and status," added Prof Manzoorul.

Teesta Deal

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meeting of National Water Resources Council.

"Accordingly, sharing and management of water of international rivers should be finalised after giving due cognisance to the views of the states and this should be stated in the National Water Policy," the statement added.

Making its stand clear on the water policy, the West Bengal government said the Indian government should consider the views of state governments in the matters of conservation, development and management of water resources while finalising the national water policy.

The Teesta treaty could not be signed during Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's visit to Dhaka in September last year following last-minute objections to the draft agreement by Mamata, who was concerned over its impact on the availability of Teesta water for irrigation, power generation and drinking in northern part of the state.

Mamata then set up a one-man commission headed by leading hydrologist Kalyan Rudra to assess availability of water in the Teesta round the year. Rudra last week said he had completed his studies and was ready to submit the report if asked to do so.

Indian leadership has repeatedly assured visiting Bangladeshi leaders that New Delhi had been trying to evolve a consensus on the Teesta water-sharing issue.

On the erosion issue, Mamata Banerjee's government said erosion caused by inter-state and international rivers were affecting millions of people and should be declared as a national problem.

Changes unlikely

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People Order, it must have elected committees.

But signs are there that today it will be a repetition of the last council, held in July 2009, which re-elected Sheikh Hasina president and empowered her to pick other office bearers. Syed Ashraful Islam was unopposed elected general secretary.

Moreover, the council of Dhaka city unit on Thursday made it almost clear that Sheikh Hasina will have the power to decide on all the positions in the central body.

Arranged after a gap of 10 years, the city unit council has authorised Hasina to form the party's city committee. Even an election commission was not constituted as required by the party charter.

Party sources said Hasina might announce the city committee along with the new central committee after the national council.

It is also possible that the national council, which is around five months behind schedule, will allow the present central committee to continue until the next council in December 2015.

AL Presidium Member Matia Chowdhury, also agriculture minister, said the party is holding the council to honour the registration rules.

There would be no major changes in the party leadership, structure, charter and declaration paper through today's council though these are required by the electoral laws, she added.

But, Matia said, the councillors have been elected at the grassroots level and in this case party discipline and constitution have largely been followed.

The election of councilors is an interesting side of the national council. Councillors could not be elected in line with the party constitution as councils of its metropolitan, district and upazila units are long due.

Councils at only eight of the 72 organisational district units and not more than half of 460 upazila units were held in the last three and half years.

The post of either president or general secretary of so far 18 organisational districts remains vacant while both the posts remain vacant in four districts.

Councils have been due in at least 10 organisational districts over the last 15 years, party sources say.

Therefore, the councillors who were elected before the 2002 national council will join today's council like they joined in 2009.

AL Organising Secretary Khaledi Makhmuud Chowdhury MP, however, claims the AL has never violated its constitution. "Awami League is the only party that follows the party constitution largely."

2 killed

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confirmed.

A witness of the accident said two buses -- one from the Mirpur end and other from the Novo Theatre -- crashed into each other at Biman Crossing of Bijoy Sarani road.

The two buses rolled over and dashed a vegetable-laden van parked along a footpath near Crescent Lake Road.

Passers-by rushed to the spot and found Kalam and the vegetable vendor injured. They were admitted to Pangu Hospital.

Kalam was purchasing vegetable at the time of the accident, the witness added.

Aklima and Salam were found lying dead on the spot. They were passengers of Shikor Paribahan, which was coming from Mirpur end of the road.

No one of the inter-district bus service Hanif Paribahan that was coming from Novo Theatre end was injured in the accident, said Abdul Momen, officer-in-charge of Sher-e-Bangla Nagar Police Station.

Relatives of Aklima said she was going to Demra from Mirpur-11 to meet her husband there.

Selim's son Md Imran said his father was going to join his work at Jatrabari from Mirpur-11.

Changes unlikely

Kushtia district AL General Secretary Azgar Ali said they have sent a list of 81 councillors, most of who are nominated, to the party high-ups.

He could not say whether the councillors would be elected in the next three months through councils at the respective units as per the charter.

AL Organising Secretary AFM Bahauddin Nasim told The Daily Star the party has completed all necessary preparations for the council.

"A festive mood is prevailing among the party leaders, workers and supporters centring the council," said Nasim, also the chairman of the disciplinary committee for today's council.

The Awami League has invited leaders of different other political parties, business and professional bodies, heads of religious institutions, intellectuals, cultural personalities, envoys of different countries and elites of the city.

Lawmaker Rahmat Ali has been made the chief election commissioner for the national council, AL Deputy Office Secretary Mrinal Kanti Das said.

Last night, the Awami League Central Working Committee (ALCWC) held a meeting and discussed the preparation for the council. The meeting has been adjourned till today.

The ALCWC, the highest decision making body of the ruling party, will be formally dissolved after ending the meeting hours before the national council.

The possibility of coming back of some senior leaders -- known as the reformists -- to the ALCWC has become slim as Hasina rejected a proposal to increase the size of the committee.

In the 2009 council, AL stalwarts Amir Hossain Amu, late Abdur Razzaq, Tofail Ahmed, Suranjit Sengupta, Abdul Jalil, Saber Hossain Chowdhury, Sultan Moshammat Manna, Ahmed and Mahmudur Rahman Manna, among others were dropped out of the central committee amid criticism for their "move to reform" the party during the last military-backed caretaker government.

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Road repair

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residents of many places complained that repair work of roads in their locality started only when the minister paid a visit there.

But the repair work was stopped as soon as the minister left the place, he said referring to his conversation with a cross section of people in different districts.

He advised the engineers to restore public confidence by continuing their works so that people can believe the repair work would continue without the presence of a minister.

The RHD is responsible for maintenance and repair works of around 21,000 kilometre roads across the country.

Engineer Md Mofizul Islam, president of the samity, presided over the inaugural session of the conference held at the RHD office in Tejgaon.

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Fog disrupts

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10.7 degrees Celsius in the capital.

The authorities suspended ferry services on Paturia-Daulatdia route at 12:01 midnight due to a thick blanket of fog, said Ashraf Ullah Khan, manager (commerce) of Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Corporation (BIWTC).

Huge traffic congestion in ferry and launch terminals of the routes kept thousands of people stranded until service could be resumed at 9:00 am.

Masters of Ro-Ro ferries Karamat Ali and Bir Shrestha Motiur Rahman were forced to anchor in the mid-river for hours after being unable to see through the thick fog, reports our Manikganj correspondent.

Our Madaripur correspondent reports, masters of four ferries plying the Maowa-Kawrakandi route were forced to cast anchor in the mid-river to wait for hours since 12:00 midnight.

Around 300 vehicles remained stranded on both ends of the waterway due to the suspension of ferry service till yesterday morning.

Biting cold and cold related diseases were taking a heavy toll on the homeless people of the Aila-affected areas in the coastal districts, reports our Satkhira correspondent.

General hospitals and private clinics in Lalmonirhat district were seen overcrowded due to the influx of patients suffering from cold related diseases.

Farmers and day labourers were the worst sufferers as they could not go out for work due to the cold snap sweeping across the district, reports our Lalmonirhat correspondent.

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No alternative to Hasina

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The authorities had the opportunity to retain the party helm for so long.

When her attention was drawn to this fact, political scientist Prof Dilara Chowdhury said, "I am more than sure no other democratic country in the world has such a record."

Hasina's archrival Khaleda Zia, chairperson of the main opposition BNP, is also in the race. She has been leading BNP for the last 28 years after its founding 35 years ago. It is certain that she will be made the party chief for another term when BNP holds its national council next year. Compared to her party's age, Khaleda's record is thus somewhat stronger than that of Hasina.

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