

PDB complaint centre turned into party office

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Nilphamari

Pro ruling party workers' and employees' of Power Development Board (PDB) in the town have turned the complaint centre of local PDB into the district office of Jatiya Bidyut Sramik League, much to the annoyance PDB clients coming there for service.

After inauguration of a new two-storey building at Sabujpara, the district PDB office was shifted there in mid-2011 while the previous office was being used as an official complaint centre.

The complaint centre is attended by PDB employees to record clients' complaints and arrange remedy, said PDB officials and locals.

Visiting the building on Monday, this correspondent found a signboard marking 'district office of Bangladesh

Jatiya Bidyut Sramik League' hanging on the front wall.

At the spacious main room, some PDB employees and outsiders were gossiping loudly and others were playing cards.

Even in the adjoining congested room, now being used as complaint centre, some employees were seen gathering, making it difficult for PDB clients to identify the on-duty staff who would receive the complaint.

Power connection given to the complaint centre has been extended illegally to the Sramik League office where electric bulbs and fans remain on almost round the clock.

"We the clients find the complaint centre repulsive as PDB employees gather and gossip about politics or other things there," said Golam Mostofa, a PDB

client of Shantinagar area in the municipality.

Farhad Hossain, president of the district unit of Bangladesh Jatiya Bidyut Sramik League, claimed that they were using the 'abandoned' PDB office building with due permission and it was inaugurated for the purpose by central leaders of their organisation a couple of years ago.

On the other hand, Executive Engineer of district office of PDB Rubel Ahmed said, "The old office building, now serving as the complaint centre, is an extended part of local PDB office. There is no scope to give permission to set up any trade union office there."

"However, authorities have to turn a blind eye to such acts of pro-ruling party trade unions during all governments," he added.



PHOTO: STAR

Pro-ruling party workers and employees of Power Development Board (PDB) in Nilphamari town have occupied the complaint centre of local PDB and made it district office of Jatiya Bidyut Sramik League, much to annoyance of the clients coming there for service.

Hoarding side of hartal

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the risk of vandalism and violence," said Md Shakhawat Hossain, a wholesale trader found passing idle hours at a warehouse stuffed with sacks of brinjal.

Early Sunday, he along with some other traders brought in more than 12 tonnes (one tonne = 1,000 kg) of brinjal to Karwan Bazar from the northern district of Bogra. With transport and other costs, each kilogram of brinjal cost them Tk 37, said Helal Uddin, a mate of Shakhawat.

Yesterday morning, they sold nearly 4 tonnes of brinjal at a rate of Tk 42 and decided to stop for the day expecting poor supply would shoot up prices from today.

"If any truck agrees to transport goods, it would charge a very high fare, putting an effect on the prices," said Shakhawat, adding that it meant, prices

of brinjal may go up to Tk 50 a kg.

His friend Helal said that the price hike would depend on the turnout of customers and the demand.

However, if everything goes according to plan, they would make a jackpot profit of Tk 1,04,000, which would put extra pressure on customers.

Shamsul Islam, a trader who brought in cucumber to the capital from Sherpur, and vegetable retailer Mohaiminul Islam of Karwan Bazar are also eyeing to make a bounty from the possible hike in cucumber and radish prices.

"Not all vegetables can be kept on hold as they are perishable. But the quality of my cucumbers will not be compromised if I hoard them for a day," said Shamsul.

Meanwhile, retailer Mohaiminul yesterday kept a 120-kg sack of radish intact and was found selling other vegetables, like beans,

brinjal, papaya and green chilli.

He claimed of purchasing radish at Tk 28 a kg yesterday. "The price of radish is on the rise," he argued for his hoarding of goods, adding that he hoped to sell the vegetables at Tk 35 per kg today (Tuesday), as supply had declined.

At retail level, many commoners felt the effect of shutdown on vegetables and other commodities.

Retailers were found asking higher prices for potato, cauliflower, cabbage, brinjal, tomato and bitter gourd on the grounds of inadequate supply for the shutdown and higher transport costs.

The price of potato rose to Tk 18-20 from its Thursday price of Tk 16-18.

Mohammad Momin, a retailer at Motijheel, said vegetables prices soared between Tk 5 to Tk 10 a kg or per piece yesterday from the previous day.



PHOTO: STAR

Local Awami League men erect tin-roofed structures, grabbing five decimals of khas land beside Sindhurkhan Bazar in Srimangal upazila of Moulvibazar.

AL men occupy khas land, build shops

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Moulvibazar

The ruling party men have grabbed five decimals of khas land beside Sindhurkhan Bazar in Srimangal upazila and built 12 structures their, locals alleged.

Md Jasim Uddin, leaseholder of the bazar, said local AL men Kabir Miah, Sanjoy Roy, Abdul Malek and Abdul

Munnaf illegally occupied the khas land three months ago and erected 12 shops on it.

A local AL leader, on condition of anonymity, said no one dares to protest the illegal occupation of the land by his party men, fearing harassment.

Abdullah Al Helal, chairman of Sindhurkhan Union Parishad, said he informed the authorities concerned of the matter, but to no effect.

During a recent visit to the

area, this correspondent tried to talk with the land grabbers, but they refused to meet him.

Srimangal Upazila Nirbahi Officer (INO) Md Asfaul Haque Chowdhury said they will take necessary actions against the land grabbers.

Contacted, Prokash Kanti Chowdhury, additional deputy commissioner (revenue) of Moulvibazar district, said he was not aware of the matter.

All ministers

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Suranjit Sengupta said the current ministers would soon resign to facilitate the formation of an all-party government.

Talking to reporters at the secretariat yesterday, Finance Minister AMA Muhith said an all-party government would be formed on the premier's return from Sri Lanka on November 15.

Hasina will leave for Sri Lanka on November 14 to attend a Commonwealth summit and return home the next day, said the PM's Assistant Press Secretary Asif Kabir.

At yesterday's cabinet meeting, Hasina told her colleagues that she had invited the main opposition BNP to send names of its lawmakers for inclusion in the interim cabinet and the ministries it wants.

Hasina, also president of the ruling Awami League, told them that she was confident

that the BNP would take part in the next election, and asked them to prepare for the polls.

However, speaking at a press briefing at party's Nayapaltan office yesterday, acting BNP secretary general Fakhrul Islam Alamgir reiterated that the BNP wouldn't join the all-party polls-time government as proposed by Hasina.

Advising her cabinet colleagues to be cautious, the prime minister said the ruling party lawmakers might face many odds ahead of the polls.

"She asked us to stay alert and tackle any odd situation calmly," another minister told The Daily Star on condition of anonymity.

Senior ministers, including Muhith, Syed Ashrafur Islam, Matia Chowdhury, MK Alamgir, Shafique Ahmed and Latif Siddique took part in the discussion, added the cabinet member.

INTERIM CABINET

The size of the interim cabinet

would depend on whether the BNP joins it or not, said several ministers.

Senior AL leaders Amir Hossain Amu, Tofail Ahmed, Suranjit Sengupta, Matia Chowdhury, Syed Ashrafur Islam and Obaidul Quader, among others, are likely to be included in the polls-time cabinet, they said.

Amu and Tofail don't hold any portfolio now.

Part from incumbent Commerce Minister GM Quader, one or two Jatiya Party lawmakers might be inducted into the interim government, according to sources.

Workers' Party President Rashed Khan Menon, Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal President Hasanul Haq Inu, Liberal Democratic Party Chairman Oli Ahmed and Bangladesh Jatiya Party Chairman Andaleev Rahman Partho might also make it to the election-time cabinet.

10-yr jail for culprits

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sentenced to up to 10 years in jail or a fine of Tk 5 lakh or both.

However, if a formalin licence holder fails to comply with any condition of the licence, the person could be awarded a maximum seven years' jail, the draft of the proposed act said.

A maximum of five years' jail term could be awarded to a person who provokes someone to commit offences under this law and in case an offence committed, the offender and the

instigator would have the same punishment.

The proposed act also has a salient provision that if any false case is lodged under the act, the complainant of such case could be sentenced for up to four years in jail.

Once it becomes a law, the government would form a committee to prepare rules for providing formalin licences, said an official of the commerce ministry.

The state would reserve the right to issue licences for importing and producing

formalin but deputy commissioner of districts would issue licences for carrying, storing, selling and using formalin.

Additional Secretary of the commerce ministry Monoj Kumar Roy said, "Early this year the commerce ministry prepared the preliminary draft of the law and changes were brought three times after consulting with stakeholders."

The proposed law would be sent to parliament for enactment.

SNIPPETS

Fire at jute mill in Comilla

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Comilla

A devastating fire at Usha Jute Mill in Snanagar area on Dhaka-Chittagong highway under Chandina upazila gutted a large quantity of raw materials, jute products and machinery on Sunday night. Lutfur Rhman, deputy general manger (DGM) of the mill, said the fire originated from an electric short circuit at 10:30pm. On information, five fire fighting units rushed from different upazilas rushed to the spot and doused the blaze after three hours of frantic efforts. The loss caused by the fire could go up to Tk 10 crore, said the DGM.

Land feud leaves 12 hurt

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kishoreganj

At least 12 people were injured in a clash between two rival groups in Gopdighi union under Mithamoin upazila yesterday. Police and locals said, a group of people, led by one Ashrafur, clashed with the men of Dudu Mia over fixing demarcation line of a disputed land in Kuribarha Haor of the upazila, leaving a dozen from both sides injured.

12 rescued from traffickers

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole, Jessore

Members of Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) rescued 12 youths at Putkhali border in Benapole yesterday while they were being trafficked to India. Farid Uddin, in-charge of Putkhali 23 BGB camp, said on secret information, a team raided the border area and rescued the youths. The youths hailed from different areas of Faridpur and Jamalpur districts, said Farid.

Arms, bullets seized

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jessore

Members of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) seized one kilogram gun powder, one 9mm pistol, two shooter guns and 11 bullets in Barandipara area of the town yesterday morning. However, none was arrested in this connection. Major Jahid, in-charge of Rab-6, said on secret information, a team raided the house of one Nannu and recovered the arms, bullets and explosives. Nannu, an accused in local AL leader Nazrul Islam murder case, was absconding since long.

All-party

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parties took part. Of them, only the eight above-mentioned political parties managed to have representation in parliament, according to the Election Commission.

Headed by Hasina, the current cabinet has representation of the AL, Jatiya Party and Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal.

Dilip Barua, chief of Samyabadi Dal, a component of the AL-led alliance, was made technocrat minister on January 6, 2009, the day the cabinet was formed.

Later, Workers Party was offered to join the cabinet, but it refused to do so amid the changed political situation.

Formation of the all-party polls-time administration may, however, face further blow if Jatiya Party chief HM Ershad prevents his party men from joining the government at the last moment, according to political analysts.

Talking to The Daily Star, some leaders of the AL, BNP and Jatiya Party echoed the same view recently.

As they put it, Ershad, a former military dictator, has always been an unpredictable man. Over the last one year or so, he has been publicly speaking of quitting the AL alliance, and yet he has not quit. But notably, his party is not with the AL to counter the 18-party's street agitation.

Despite pressure from within the party, they added, Ershad could not leave the ruling alliance, fearing consequences as there are still several cases pending against him. But in the coming days, if the situation allows, he may quit the alliance and refuse to join the all-party government.

Former adviser to a caretaker government M Hafizuddin Khan and eminent jurist Shahdeen Malik said if all the parties having representation in parliament do not join the new cabinet, it cannot be called an all-party government.

But regardless of the prevailing situation, the prime minister is determined to go ahead with her plan to form an "all-party" polls-time government, sources close to Hasina said.

Headed by Hasina, the cabinet may have 20-22 members, most of them likely to be freshers, the sources said, adding that the current cabinet members would resign before the formation of the new cabinet.

AL insiders, however, said they would keep urging the main opposition party to nominate its MPs for the new cabinet, which will start functioning after the Election Commission announces the polls schedule in the middle of this month.

But what if the BNP and Jamaat boycott the polls?

AL Presidium Member Kazi Zafarullah told The Daily Star recently that election would then be held without them, as the polls must be held in line with the constitution and there was no option of violating it.

Uneasy calm in Pabna villages

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The extortionists had planned to frame his son Rajib Saha for maligning Islam on Facebook after Babul refused to pay them.

The arrestees are Alamgir Hossain, Sanwar Hossain, Md Helal Molla, Abdul Jalil Mia, Milon Hossain, Daud Biswas, Rezaul Karim Biswas, Rubel Hossain and Rezaul Karim.

Locals said four of the arrestees are supporters of the BNP.

Four teams of police raided their houses in different areas of Khetupara, Ataikula and Gourigram unions and made the arrests early yesterday. The raids began just after midnight and continued until morning, police said.

"Our efforts to nab the culprits continue but are being hampered due to hartal duties of the cops," said Abu Bakar Siddique, assistant superintendent of

police in Pabna.

He added police have already identified a number of those involved in the attacks and looting as well as the assault on police when they were trying to lift a blockade on the Pabna-Dhaka highway at Bonogram bazaar on Saturday.

The blockade was imposed by a group of people demanding Rajib's "execution".

"We have identified many from the video footage, photographs of the attacks and statements of victims, locals and witnesses," the police officer told The Daily Star at Ataikula Police Station.

Involved in the attacks and looting were hundreds of people, all of whom are yet to be identified, he said. "Our efforts to identify all the culprits and arrest the already identified persons will go on

together.

A three-member probe body was formed yesterday to investigate the incident of Saturday. Headed by Additional District Magistrate Munshi Md Moniruzzaman, it has been asked to submit a report in three days.

Babul filed a case with Ataikula Police Station on Sunday night accusing 2,000-3,000 people of the attacks on and looting of his Sahapara house. Twenty persons were named in the case.

Sub-Inspector Nazmul Haq Bepari of the police station filed another case on the same night, accusing 2,000-3,000 people, mostly unnamed, for blocking the highway and attacking cops with brick chips. The attacks on the cops coincided with the attacks on the Hindu houses.

Sub-Inspector Meherul

and constables Mizanur Rahman and Abdul Gafur said he of the police station were injured, the SI said in the case.

Police are looking for Babul's son who went into hiding after a group of youths alleged that he had maligned the Prophet. They caught Babul and confined him to a shop at Bonogram bazaar.

Rescued by locals and police, he is now under Ataikula police custody for safety.

But groups of people attacked the Hindu houses for about two and a half hours in Sahapara and Ghoshpara, which are very close to Bonogram bazaar.

Meanwhile, Sahapara, Ghoshpara and Bonogram bazaar areas were tensely calm yesterday evening. Although the Hindu families who had fled their houses during the attacks are now back, they are still

living in fear.

"We are ashamed of what happened in our area. It has destroyed generations of old glory of co-existence of Hindus and Muslims," Yunus Ali, 70, a trader and freedom fighter, told The Daily Star at Bonogram bazaar.

Local Awami League leader Abdul Gafur said he and some others started consulting with the local Hindu community so as to comfort them.

Nazrul Islam, vice president of Pabna unit of Swachhasebak Dal and a trader at Bonogram bazaar, said Rajib Saha -- not all Hindus -- should be punished if he has maligned the Prophet.

Bonogram Bazaar Bonik Samity president Hariprada Saha said Muslims should take the lead in restoring the trust of the Hindus.



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Director Procurement & Development

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