



A hawker at Kamalapur Railway Station falls asleep over another sleeping colleague in the afternoon. They were supposed to be busy selling newspapers then but the number of train travellers has drastically fallen as the opposition's blockade continues to target trains.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

## Bureaucracy OSD-strung

FROM PAGE 1

Momen's batch mate Sheikh Abdur Rashid, who ranked first in the BCS merit list, also had a similar fate. From home ministry deputy secretary he was made OSD in January 2009.

The practice of making officers OSDs continued to persist. Since 2009, the number of OSDs took a leap from 250 to 650.

Initially, many officers were made OSDs over political reasons, but in the end it was promotions without enough posts that caused the rise in the number of OSDs. Some officers have also been kept idle due to professional misconduct and poor performance.

Currently, four secretaries, 39 additional secretaries, 338 joint secretaries and 100 deputy secretaries are sitting idle as OSDs. Posting them is almost impossible as there are not enough posts vacant.

The OSD secretaries are Md Ebadot Ali, Mohammad Mahbubur Rahman, Md Nurul Haque and Md Mosharraf Hossain Bhuiyan.

An OSD has no other duty except for attend-

ing office and signing the attendance register. He or she gets salary and other benefits, excluding transport allowance.

Cabinet Secretary Musharraf Hossain Bhuiyan said, "We have already posted some of them and trying to post some more. But the problem is that there were so many promotions and hardly enough vacant posts."

Senior Secretary of Public Administration Ministry Abdus Sobhan Sikder blamed excessive recruitment and promotions for so many officers on OSD.

Successive governments have made many civil servants OSDs and spent crores of taka paying for their salaries and benefits. According to a recent report of the public administration ministry, a total of 3,605 officials have been made OSDs between 2004 and 2012.

Many OSD are now engaged in different activities. Some joined multinational or private companies while some are studying or writing books. There are also few who are just spending time with their families.

Meanwhile, the policy deprived the country from their services for years and impacted the civil service negatively.

Recalling history, a senior official said in 1952, the then Pakistani government first used the OSD option to probe a shooting incident.

"Judge TH Ellias was made OSD for probing the incident and he was asked to submit the report within three months," the official said.

In independent Bangladesh, the Bangabandhu government in 1974 first made some Bangladeshi officials stranded in Pakistan OSDs to place them on their return to Bangladesh.

Military ruler HM Ershad, now chief of Jatiya Party, during his nine-year tenure made only a few officials OSDs as punishment for addressing an anti-Ershad rally.

The OSD provision, which was originally introduced to promote, transfer or train civil servants, began to be misused for political gains by the last BNP-led four-party government and the outgoing AL-led government.

## Death warrant for Mollah

FROM PAGE 1

over when Mollah could be executed and whether he has the right to file a review petition with the apex court.

Attorney General Mahbubey Alam told The Daily Star that the issuance of execution warrant had cleared the way for the government to execute Mollah.

"There is no legal obstacle to executing Abdul Quader Mollah now, since he has no right to file any review petition with the Supreme Court against its verdict awarding him death penalty," he said.

The attorney general claimed that a convict usually could file a review petition with the Supreme Court against its verdict under article-105 of the constitution but the article would not be applicable for Mollah since he was a war-crimes convict.

He further said war criminals could not

get relief under article-47A (2) and the International Crimes (Tribunals) Act, 1973, does not allow Mollah to file a review petition.

Meanwhile, defence lawyers for Quader Mollah sent a notice to the chief prosecutor's office saying that Mollah would file a review petition with the Supreme Court shortly after getting the certified copy of the verdict.

Advocate Shishir Manir, a lawyer for Mollah, was adamant that his client had the right to file the petition. He hoped to get the certified copy of the apex court's verdict today.

If the court rejects the review petition, Mollah could be put to death after 21 days and before 28 days of the rejection order, he said, adding that Mollah and his family members would decide on praying for presidential mercy.

Replying to a question, Shishir claimed

that it would be illegal if the government executed Mollah without giving him the opportunity to move a review petition.

Court sources said the whole procedure of Mollah's execution could also be halted by the Supreme Court if it passed a stay order.

On February 5, the Tribunal-2 sentenced Mollah to life imprisonment but the Supreme Court on September 17 awarded him the death penalty. The full verdict of the Supreme Court was released on Thursday.

Additional Secretary Main Uddin Khandaker of the home ministry told The Daily Star that his office yesterday received the warrant of execution.

State Minister for Law Qamrul Islam said the government would execute Quader Mollah as soon as possible.

## Last breath of Mandela was his own

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and religion.

The nationwide day of prayer marked the formal start of a week-long state funeral for the man who forged a new multi-racial South Africa from the discredited remnants of the apartheid era he helped to dismantle.

The anti-apartheid champion, who became South Africa's first black president, had been repeatedly hospitalised with lung troubles in recent years and had often had to rely on artificial ventilation.

The Sunday Times said grandson Mandela had been urgently summoned from the village of Mvezo in the Eastern Cape province to his grandfather's bedside.

Also present were senior members of the ruling African National Congress that Mandela once led, and religious leaders who comforted family and friends.

According to the City Press weekly, close family had been allowed into his room in twos and threes for a final private moment.

"The family was very strong, but the mood was sombre. The toughest moment came when the military arrived to collect Madiba's body around midnight," The Sunday Times quoted someone who was there as saying.

"When they came down from his room upstairs with his lifeless body, followed by Mandla, it started to sink in that Madiba was gone."

Throughout Saturday night, large crowds gathered outside the house in Johannesburg where Mandela passed away aged 95.

At times they lit candles and linked arms in silent remembrance, but then, as if to lift the mood, one group or another would burst into song and the entire crowd would join in and dance in celebration of a life that

transformed their country and inspired the world.

It was a sentiment that President Jacob Zuma had encouraged ahead of yesterday's day of prayer.

"We should, while mourning, also sing at the top of our voices, dance and do whatever we want to do, to celebrate the life of this outstanding revolutionary," Zuma said.

As well as the steady pilgrimage to his Johannesburg residence, crowds gathered in Qunu in the Eastern Cape, in Soweto and outside Capetown's City Hall.

The president was to attend a Methodist Church in a predominantly white Johannesburg neighbourhood, while former president Thabo Mbeki was to join prayers at a synagogue in the city.

Inside the Regina Mundi Catholic church in the once blacks-only township of Soweto and once used as a sanctuary by anti-apartheid activists during police raids, a single candle illuminated a portrait of Mandela with a raised-fist salute as parish priest Sebastian Rossouw called Mandela "a light in the darkness" and praised his capacity for "humility and forgiveness".

The prayers were to be echoed a continent away in London, where Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby, spiritual leader of the world's 80 million Anglicans, would lead a remembrance service.

The extraordinary depth and breadth of Mandela's appeal will see heads of state of every political stripe rub shoulders with leaders across the religious spectrum and marquee names from the worlds of sports, art and entertainment during the funeral events.

US President Barack Obama and his wife Michelle along with three former American

presidents, Brazilian leader Dilma Rousseff, Palestinian leader Mahmud Abbas and 47 other heads of state and government have confirmed to be among 80,000 people attending a vast memorial service tomorrow in the Soweto sports stadium that hosted the 2010 World Cup final, South Africa's foreign minister Maite Nkoana-Mashabane said yesterday.

The commemorations will culminate in Mandela's burial on December 15 in Qunu -- the rural village where he spent his early childhood.

Among the many world leaders scheduled to attend the funeral are French President Francois Hollande, the British and Canadian prime ministers David Cameron and Stephen Harper, Mexican President Enrique Pena Nieto, Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas and UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon.

Talk show queen Oprah Winfrey and singer-activist Bono are expected to be among the celebrity mourners.

In a statement, Mandela's family compared the loss of their adored patriarch to the trauma of separation during his long incarceration in Robben Island.

"The pillar of the family is gone, just as he was away during that 27 painful years of imprisonment," the statement said.

"As a family we commit ourselves to uphold and be guided by the values he lived for and was prepared to die for."

"Chief among these is the lesson that a life lived for others is a life well-lived," it said.

Mandela's body will lie in state for three days from Wednesday, with his coffin taken in a cortege through the streets of Pretoria each morning to allow as many people as possible to say farewell.

## What will this election deliver?

FROM PAGE 1

If that happens, this will mean that one third of the parliamentary constituencies will have representatives elected uncontested and one-third of the nine crore voters of the country will have no scope to exercise their franchise. They will have no say in the election.

If the number of unopposed MPs-elect rises to 100, this will exceed the record created at the farcical February 15 election in 1996. As many as 49 candidates nominated by then ruling BNP were elected uncontested in that election, held amid a boycott by the AL, Jatiya Party, Jamaat-e-Islami and other parties.

In another farcical election held in 1988 amid a boycott by most opposition parties, 18 candidates nominated by the then ruling Jatiya Party, led by General Ershad, were elected uncontested.

And 22 candidates nominated by the BNP-led four party alliance were elected unopposed in the eventually cancelled January 22 polls in 2007.

Eleven candidates nominated by the then AL were elected uncontested in the country's first parliamentary election held in March 1973.

None was elected uncontested in the participatory and competitive elections held in 1986, 1991, 1996 [June 12], 2001 and 2008.

The other interesting side to the ensuing parliamentary polls slated for January 5 relates to the contesting parties. After the withdrawal of the Jatiya Party from the electoral race, there will be no party in the race that will be able to challenge the AL in any of the constituencies. None of their candidates will be able to win in any constituency without the support of the ruling AL.

After the withdrawal of the Ershad-led Jatiya Party, the Anwar Hossain Manju-led Jatiya Party will emerge as the second largest political party with 46 candidates. Its chief Manju is now an adviser to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina with the status of a minister. What is the strength of his party, born before the 2001 parliamentary polls after breaking away from the Ershad-led JP?

In the parliamentary polls in 2001, it fielded 140 candidates and bagged 2.43 lakh votes with no seat. In the last parliamentary polls held on December 29, 2008, it fielded 7 candidates and bagged only 7,818 votes. The question of its winning any constituency simply does not arise.

The Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal will appear as the third largest party with 41 valid candidates. Its chief Hasanul Haq Inu and two other party leaders were elected MPs at the 2008 polls on AL support. Inu is now a minister in the election-time government led by Sheikh Hasina.

At the 2001 polls, none of the JSD's 76 candidates was able to win. They together, however, bagged 1.19 lakh votes.

This time too, the JSD is contesting the polls slated for January 5 as an alliance partner of the ruling AL. The AL may support five or six JSD candidates to help them win the elections.

The polls scheduled for January 5 will in no way be a participatory one in terms of the number of contesting parties and candidates. Only 20 out of 41 registered political parties have nominated their candidates. The number has already declined to 19 as the lone candidacy filed by the Muslim League was found invalid by the returning officer.

The number may decline further with the Jatiya Party making known its decision to quit the race. Two or three Islamic parties have claimed they did not nominate candidates for the polls, but somebody filed applications seeking candidacies by using their names. Even the name of the Bangladesh Jatiya Party, a component of the BNP-led alliance, has appeared in the list of 20 parties.

At this point, there are 728 candidates for the January 5 polls.

Finally, the number of parties and contesting candidates may be record lowest in the two decades since the restoration of democracy in 1990 after the fall of the autocratic Ershad regime.

As many as 2363 candidates and 75 political parties took part in the 1991 polls held after Ershad's fall. In the controversial February 15 polls in 1996, 1987 candidates and 41 political parties took part.

In the same year, that is 1996, the seventh parliamentary polls were held in June with the participation of 2293 candidates and 81 political parties.

The eighth parliamentary polls held in October 2001 were also participatory with 2563 candidates and 54 political parties taking part.

Following the imposition of some restrictions on political parties and individuals regarding their contesting the parliamentary polls, the number decreased in the 2008 polls. Yet 38 out of 39 registered political parties and 1567 candidates contested the election, which remains on record as one of the best electoral exercises in Bangladesh's history.

Considering all the above facts the claim that the general election slated for January 5 will be a participatory one and will provide people with the right to choose their representatives by exercising their franchise will definitely have credibility problem.

The wisdom of holding such an election is highly questionable and whether a credible representative government will emerge from it is doubtful.



Ignoring police request not to sell petroleum products openly, a shop is set up on Kuakata-Patuakhali highway selling diesel, lubricant and more worryingly petrol on Saturday. Petrol sold from such shops could easily end up in the wrong hands, which could be making petrol bombs.

## Death valley

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Ejaha had a long-standing dispute over a piece of land with two Jamaat-Shibir men of the village -- Piklur Morol and Abul Khayer Morol. The two could not be reached for comment.

In the last two and a half weeks, six AL men and a freedom fighter have been killed in the southern district allegedly by Jamaat-Shibir men amid hartals and blockades enforced by the BNP-led 18-party alliance.

District AL leaders say the killings were planned to weaken the morale of the ruling party. Police suspect that members of Jamaat and Shibir, key partners of the main opposition BNP, are taking advantage of the ongoing political turmoil and committing murders.

The killing spree has panicked the locals, including the leaders. Journalists are thinking twice before going to areas away from the district town.

Insiders say the ruling party is failing to put up a strong resistance due to a weakened organisational base compared to that of the Jamaat. The district-level leaders could not build up rapport with the lower tier ones.

Besides, they said, the party grassroots have felt deprived in the last five years, as the district law-makers have often rewarded their sidekicks and close relatives rather than the local leaders.

Of the recent killings, the one of freedom fighter Mohammad Alauddin, 65, in Kaliganj on December 3 has been much discussed.

Alauddin had slept in the veranda as usual, said his daughter Fatema Khatun. In the dead of night, unidentified criminals hacked him in the head and, taking him for dead, dumped him in the nearby pond.

"We rushed him to Kaliganj Health Complex that very night. Doctors suggested shifting him to Satkhira Sadar Hospital for better treatment. But it was not possible because of the blockade," she told this correspondent.

The freedom fighter died the next morning. On November 21, Jamaat-Shibir men hacked to death Debhata upazila AL organising secretary

Abu Raihan at Parulia Bazar around 8:30pm, said Mohammad Shahidullah, a cousin of the deceased.

"There were several hundred people there, but no one came forward to protect him," he told The Daily Star. Police recovered Raihan's body half an hour after the killing.

Mahmudur Rahman, 40, general secretary of Khord Union Parishad Jubo League, was beaten to death by "activists of anti-liberation forces" at Alaipur on November 26, said his brother Md Amanullah Aman.

The same day, local Swetchhasebak League General Secretary Rabiul Islam, 45, was hacked to death when he was talking to people at Notun Bazar.

On December 3, Jamaat-Shibir activists intercepted Giasuddin and Nazmul Haque of Itagachha village in Talbaria area as they were heading to the district town on a motorbike.

They beat the two with rods and sticks, leaving Giasuddin, a Jubo League activist, dead on the spot, said Nazmul.

On the night of December 5, a group of 10-12 Jamaat-Shibir men stormed the house of AL activist Sirajul Islam in downtown Satkhira and shot him dead, said Islam's wife Amena Khatun.

Satkhira Jamaat Ameer Abdul Khaleque, a former MP, however, denied that their men were involved in the murders, saying AL's internal feud must have led to the killings.

On the other hand, Satkhira district AL general secretary Nazrul Islam said Jamaat-Shibir men had committed the murders, alleging that police were not taking action against the culprits.

Satkhira Superintendent of Police Molla Jahangir Hossain said most of the killings were perpetrated by the Jamaat-Shibir men. "We have taken additional measures to prevent such killings."

Police said a suspect has been arrested in connection with Raihan's murder.