

Army starts election duty today

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parliamentary seats, as 154 candidates have been elected unopposed since they were the lone candidates in their constituencies.

According to officials of the Election Commission (EC), army personnel will remain deployed at different important spots in district, upazila and metropolitan areas.

The decision came from a high-profile meeting on December 20. The EC convened the meeting attended by top officials of security agencies, Armed Forces Division (AFD), deputy commissioners, and superintendents of police.

Along with the army, navy personnel will work in different coastal areas as per the decision of the meeting.

Meanwhile, army personnel have been seen at different districts since December 20. EC officials said army men might have arrived in different districts for winter exercise, not for election

duties.

Two days after that meeting, the EC sent a letter to the AFD regarding deployment of armed forces personnel.

In the letter, the EC mentioned that the army would help ensure safe traffic movement on roads and highways in addition to maintaining law and order during the elections.

An official of home ministry yesterday told The Daily Star: "We have prepared a draft on how many armed forces personnel and law enforcers will be deployed. We have sent the draft to the Election Commission for vetting. After getting the nod from the commission, we will issue a circular in this regard."

"In the draft, we have also drawn up a working plan for armed forces personnel, and law enforcers," he added.

A senior assistant secretary of the EC

Secretariat confirmed that they had received the draft on Tuesday evening.

Contacted, an Election Commissioner told The Daily Star: "As today (Wednesday) is public holiday, we have not seen the home ministry's letter. We will be able to tell about it tomorrow (today)."

But the sources in the EC said around 50,000 armed forces personnel might be deployed in the elections.

Returning officers in coordination with the AFD officials would finalise the deployment plan, the sources added.

Meanwhile, the EC has installed eight closed circuit (CC) cameras inside and outside the EC Secretariat buildings as part of strengthening its security.

Additional security men have been deployed there for the last couple of weeks.

AL aloof, alone

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a proper election. For example, in five out of six seats in Dinajpur (one seat is already uncontested), the AL's main opposition is the Workers Party. In the last three elections, the Workers Party bagged a total of about 1,500 votes in all these seats together.

The AL becomes even more isolated at home as 154 candidates, more than half the seats in the House, of this one-sided election are already elected, without even one vote cast. There were no other candidates. And voters did not need to walk up to the polling stations.

This has made the AL even more isolated from its voters. With the BNP remaining outside the race, half the voters find no place in the political process. And half of the remaining voters do not need to vote to 'elect' their MPs as

they have already crossed through the line unopposed. The rest half have no choice and see no real reasons to vote.

So we are going to have a parliament totally unrepresentative.

Bangalees being so electrifyingly political, they love to vote because it is the only opportunity they get to have some say in state affairs. Now they know they don't even have that right.

In the international arena the situation is no better.

All countries except India have already made it known that they have no reasons to consider this election a free, fair and participatory one. The US, EC and the Commonwealth have declared they will not send any election observers.

Diplomats of all western countries feel it

is a non-sense election that does not enjoy their endorsement. Many of the diplomats wonder on what level their governments would engage with the new government if formed through such a farcical election. This will have grave implications for the country's development.

And the AL, the oldest political party of the country with a long tradition of struggle for democracy, has also become isolated from its own mien.

The party that was led by great men like Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy, Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhashani and Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman today looks like any other party, miles removed from democratic values.

ARREST OF VOIP GANG

37 foreigners hid info of their stay

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The 37 foreigners, who had been arrested with a huge quantity of illegal VoIP equipment on Sunday night, had been living illegally in the rented house in the capital's Uttara.

As per rule, a landlord must report to the local police authority about a foreign tenant, mentioning the purpose of his visit and the duration of stay.

The landlord also must submit details of a foreign tenant's passport to the authority, Khandaker Rezaul Hasan, OC of Uttara Pashchim Police Station, said yesterday.

"But the owner of the six-storey house at sector 12 did not submit papers of 32 Taiwanese and five Chinese tenants to us," he said.

The foreigners had been living in the house for the last one and a half years.

Latifunnesa Shamsuddin is the owner of the house and her manager Faruque Hossain used to communicate with the tenants from the owner's side.

Earlier, a case was filed against the arrested foreigners for running VoIP business illegally. On Tuesday, a Dhaka court placed them on a two-day remand in connection with the case.

Both Latifunnesa and Faruque are accused in the case and they are also on the run, said police.

Rab-1 sources said the foreigners used to pay Tk 2.75 lakh a month as house rent for the six-storey building, and one of their vehicles, which were seized during the drive on Sunday, had no valid documents.

The foreigners preferred to go out only in their vehicles and local people seldom got the opportunity to see them in broad daylight, said several neighbours.

During the raid, the law enforcers also seized 37 passports from the spot. However, the Rab team did not find passports of 14 among the 37 foreigners.

Kismat Hayat, commanding officer of Rab 1, yesterday said the foreigners came to the country as tourists and extended their stay several times.

However, it was not clear how they managed to get extension of their visas from the immigration office, he said.

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Six cannons

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Zhou insisted his cannons would not have caused any harm and civil police in Xingyang, Henan, central China, confirmed he had not broken any laws.

Each costing 100 yuan (around £10), Zhou deployed the cannons to protect his home when he became insecure, according to ECNS.

But a local official said they did not plan on demolishing the house and insisted this would not be done until an agreement had been reached.

The community is being relocated, and just 34 of 340 households are allowed to stay.

Some of those moved on said they had been offered compensation and resettlement. Others claimed they did not have a paper agreement.

One 85-year-old resident, Feng Baosen, said his house was demolished two months ago without his knowledge.

Feng claimed the government gave them 4,000 yuan (£400) and did not concern themselves with the relocation.

The government said all demolitions were agreed to by residents.



Bayzid, driver and owner of a bus, at the burn unit of DMCH yesterday. Criminals torched his bus, which was requisitioned by police, at Bangla Motor intersection Tuesday night. He jumped out of the burning vehicle but landed on his face. He cannot speak now. The wife of Abu Mia, right, feeding him at the burn unit yesterday as the trucker is all bandaged and it is too painful for him to move his arms. Criminals on Tuesday night torched his cattle-laden truck at Sitakunda, Chittagong, killing seven cows and injuring his helper too.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

How could they do it?

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between her sobs.

Partha Shankar Paul, resident physician of the burn unit, said 14 percent of Faizul's body was seriously burnt. The injuries were on his face, hip and legs.

In the arson attack, traffic constable Ferdous Khalil was killed instantly while the driver of the bus Bayzid was also burnt.

Seeing the vehicle on fire, Bayzid jumped out the driver's window and hurt his mouth from the fall, rendering him unable to speak.

His family told The Daily Star that Bayzid was the breadwinner of his family of six. He bought the bus last year, putting in all his life's savings along some loans. It looked like his bus would have to be written off.

Meanwhile, relatives of the deceased constable Ferdous Khalil took the body to his village in Gaibandha yesterday after a namaj-e-janaza at the Rajarbagh Police Lines.

Khalil's brother-in-law Abdul Jalil said, "I don't know how his wife and children will look at Khalil's horribly charred body when I, a physi-

cian, cannot look at it."

Meanwhile, three people burned in earlier arson attacks died yesterday at DMCH.

The deceased were trucker Nazrul Islam, who got burned when his vehicle was set on fire in Gazipur on Monday, and trucker Shahinur Rahman and his helper Mazidul, who suffered burns when their vehicle was set ablaze in Sirajganj on Saturday.

Mazidul's sister Sumi Begum said her brother had a lifelong dream of becoming a driver one day "but that dream will never come true".

Shahinur Rahman, who suffered 70 percent burns, died around 11:30pm last night. "I want to see my wife and my parents now as I don't have much time," he was saying throughout the day.

His family had started fro Dhaka from Naogaon yesterday afternoon.

An Awami League leader of Monirampur in Jessore was admitted to DMCH with burn injuries last night. Mehera Ali, 65, was attacked with a petrol bomb at his home in Monirampur Tuesday night. He has 25 percent of his body burnt.

Aftab Ahmed murdered

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Dhaka Medical College morgue said the Ekushey Padak winning photo journalist had been strangled.

Police and the victim's family members suspect that his driver Kabir, who was appointed on December 1 and could not be traced after the body's recovery, might have killed him for money.

Aftab, who had served the Bangla daily Ittefaq as chief photographer, saved Tk 1.5 lakh for a trip to India for treatment. According to the family, he had the whole amount or some portion with him, which the driver took away after the killing.

Aftab had been living alone in a flat on the second floor of a four-storey building at West Rampura.

His daughter Afroz Ahmed Borna, assistant librarian of National University, lives in Gazipur with her family, and his son Monoar Ahmed Sagor in Jessore where he works.

Aftab used to have his dinner before 9:00pm, said his son-in-law ASMG Faruk. His dinner plate was seen untouched yesterday and that meant he might have been killed before his dinner time the day before.

"He [Aftab] suffered a brain stroke and had old-age complications. He was supposed to go to India today [yesterday] but he had lately deferred his visit to the first week of January."

Driver Kabir used to stay in the attic of the building but a few days ago, his father-in-law asked him to stay elsewhere on receiving an allegation of theft against him, Faruk added.

Borna also suspected Kabir of committing the murder. She said her father told her in a phone conversation around 6:00pm on Tuesday that he had had an altercation with Kabir that day but did not tell her of the issue.

The deceased's part-time house help Nasima Begum told The Daily Star that Aftab's cell phone was switched off and the flat was locked from inside when she came in the morning.

"I repeatedly rang the doorbell at 8:30am but did not get any response."

She then went to the adjacent flat and peeped through a glass ventilator into Aftab's bedroom.

"Everything in the room was scattered and uncle was lying on the floor," Nasima said.

She called Borna and informed her about the situation.

Around 10:00am, Rampura police recovered the body.

On information, officials of the Criminal Investigation Department also rushed to the spot and collected evidence.

Ikrumul Haque, tenant of the flat next to Aftab's, said the television at Aftab's flat was on at high volume throughout the previous night.

Kreepa Shindhu Bala, officer-in-charge of Rampura Police Station, said police were searching for the driver.

Meanwhile, the Jatiya Press Club expressed grief over the unexpected demise of the veteran journalist and offered its condolences to the bereaved family.

The body is now at the DMCH morgue. It will be buried at Azimpur graveyard today on the arrival of his son from Jessore. A namaz-e-janaza will be held at the Press Club after zuhr prayers.

Hailing from Mohipur village in Rangpur, Aftab joined as a photographer of daily Ittefaq in 1962. He captured some images of the 1971 Liberation War and Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

He was awarded Ekushey Padak in 2006. On December 16, 2010, miscreants took away his award and other valuables from his