

Ensure security

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The farmers said they used to earn a lot by selling vegetables in the previous winters.

But they cannot recover the production cost this time, let alone make profits, they added.

The production cost of each kilogram of bean is Tk 10. But the farmers said they had been selling the produce at Tk 1-2 for the last few weeks, as they could not send the products to the other parts of the country due to political unrest.

Farmers of cauliflower, cucumber, and other crops also face the same problems.

Attacks on vegetable-laden vehicles have been rampant these days. Expressing worries, the farmers urged the opposition parties to refrain from the destructive politics, which cost them financially.

The organisation's secretary Siddikur Rahman Moyez, farmers Md Abdul Jalil, Kitab Mondol, Abdul Bari, Jahidul Islam, Aminur Rahman Babu, Habibur Rahman, among others, spoke.

JSC results today

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education boards, on websites and through SMS from 2:00pm.

Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid will formally announce the results at a press conference at his ministry at 1:00pm on the day after handing over a copy of the results to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at 10:00am.

The results will also be available at www.educationboardresults.gov.bd, a common website of all the education boards. The results will be published in the grading system. The candidates can also obtain their results through short message service (SMS) to mobile phone operators.

The examinations were supposed to begin on November 4, but could not be

held because of the opposition's shut-downs. The tests began on November 7 with more than 19 lakh class-VIII students from the country's 27,748 schools and madrasas taking them. Some 10,07,655 girls and 8,95,091 boys had registered to sit for the exams this year.

But the authorities had to struggle to hold the exams for political turmoil centring on the upcoming national elections. A number of examinations had been rescheduled and the authorities had to hold the exams at the weekends to complete the tests.

Eight general education boards and one madrasa board conducted the examinations, which were held at 2,420 centres.



A truck loaded with sand is parked blocking BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia's residence at Gulshan in the capital last night. Police told The Daily Star that they parked four trucks around the opposition leader's home but did not say why.

PHOTO: STAR

Dhaka-bound trips turn nightmare

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Many train passengers travelling to the capital were subjected to ordeal, as they were asked to get off halfway without giving any reason.

About 10,000 train passengers heading for Dhaka were asked to disembark at different points in Tangail, Joydevpur, Tongi and Mymensingh. They struggled to find any other means of transport to make it to the capital as transport owners had stopped bus services.

Only one of the 51 Dhaka-bound trains from different districts reached the city since Friday midnight.

In the capital, most public vehicles were kept off the streets, causing problems to hundreds of commuters. Many office-goers were seen waiting for buses for long at different points.

Talking to The Daily Star at Gabtoli bus terminal, Belal Hossain, an employee of a private firm, said he had waited for a bus for several hours at Farmgate and finally travelled to Gabtoli by a rickshaw for double the usual fare.

On condition of anonymity, a staff of Darshana Bilas Paribahan at the bus station said they suspended their services on instructions from the bus owners' association. The transport company mainly operates on Dhaka-Chuadanga, Dhaka-Jhenidah and Dhaka-Magura routes.

Shakil Mahmood, who works at a private company, said, "I waited for a bus for nearly an hour. Then I tried to hire a CNG-run auto-rickshaw. But it proved very difficult as many others were also looking for auto-rickshaws."

"Finally, I reached my office around two and a half hours later," said Shakil, who travelled from Uttara to Karwanbazar.

Cashing in on the situation, many auto-rickshaw drivers charged extra fares.

Shakila Sharmin, a banker, said, "I usually travel from Mohammadpur to Motijheel by a CNG-run auto-rickshaw for around Tk 130 to Tk

150. But today all auto-rickshaw drivers asked for Tk 250 to Tk 300."

Speaking to The Daily Star, many transport owners admitted that they didn't operate buses on instructions from government high-ups. But, none of them wanted to be quoted.

They said pro-government transport leaders on Friday night asked them not to operate buses to and from the capital.

A number of bus and launch owners said they suspended services, as law enforcers "advised" them to do so for security reasons.

Pro-ruling party transport leader Khandaker Enayet Ullah said, "Many transport owners have reduced the number of vehicles plying to and from Dhaka in fear of violence."

Besides, police had also requisitioned many buses for using them during the election, said Enayet, also secretary general of Bangladesh Sarak Paribahan Samity.

However, Rafiqul Hossain Kajol, president of the Association of Bus Companies, alleged that pro-Awami League transport owners and workers forced many bus operators to stop the services.

"They [pro-AL men] beat up transport workers at Gabtoli, Mohakhali and some other spots, where the workers tried to operate buses," alleged Kajol.

Romesh Chandra Ghosh, managing director of Shyamoli Paribahan, said they stopped running buses since yesterday morning in fear of violence.

Meanwhile, road transport associations called a two-day strike from yesterday morning in Chittagong, Rajshahi, Rangpur and Khulna divisions, protesting the recent vandalism and arson attacks on buses by the opposition men. They also demanded arrest of the attackers.

In Lalmonirhat, not a single bus left for the capital since Friday night though tickets were sold to many passengers in advance.

Asadul Islam Lavlu, owner of Aninda

Paribahan, said, "We are not running buses on instructions from the local administration."

Lalmoni Express Train had been halted at a station in the district since Friday, reports our correspondent.

On administrative orders, bus service had been suspended in Sylhet since 7:30pm on Friday.

Tera Mia, secretary of Dhaka-Sylhet Luxury Coach Sramik Union, said, "Unwritten restrictions were imposed on running buses and coaches to the capital."

Fearing vandalism at different points on routes to the capital, the leaders of Bangladesh Sarak Paribahan Malik Samity also asked them to suspend the services, he said.

The union leader said police had also asked them not to operate buses to Dhaka on security grounds.

Similar picture was seen in other districts as well.

River communications between the capital and different districts were mostly suspended, as launch owners had cut down the number of vessels to and from Dhaka.

Preferring anonymity, a launch owner said ruling party high-ups had asked launch owners to suspend services to prevent opposition men from coming to Dhaka to take part in today's programme.

"It is not possible for us to run businesses ignoring their [ruling party men] instructions," said the launch owner.

Usually, 50 to 60 launches carrying around 40,000 passengers arrive at Sadarghat launch terminal from different southern districts every day, but only 19 vessels arrived yesterday, said Siaful Haque Khan, joint director (port) of Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority.

Ferry service on Mawa-Kewrakandi route was normal but speedboat services on the route remained suspended.

Defer Jan 5 elections

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Renowned jurist Rafiqul Haque said the January 5 polls can be deferred up to 90 days even after the dissolution of the ninth parliament within the constitutional framework.

As per constitution, parliament members must be directly elected by the people, he pointed out, but 154 candidates have already been elected uncontested to the tenth parliament.

Two top leaders of the Awami League and the BNP must realise that the national interest is far above their partisan interests, and they have to engage in dialogue after deferment of the election to sort out the nature of election-time government, added Rafiqul.

There is no constitutional bar to holding the 10th parliamentary election within 90 days after the dissolution of the current parliament, said Asif Nazrul, professor of law at Dhaka University.

Elections have to be free, fair and inclusive for the legitimacy of a democratic government, said Prof Rehman Sobhan, chairman of CPD.

Referring to the February 15 general election in 1996 without the participation of the major opposition party, he said, "Let's not repeat the same follies that can be averted."

Criticality of the situation is deteriorating day by day. So both the leaders of the AL and the BNP have to sit in dialogue with patriotism for the sake of democracy and public welfare leaving their partisan whims aside, he added.

"We don't want the January 5 election," said Syeda Rizwana Hasan, executive director of Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association.

Both the opposition and ruling party leaders are turning a blind eye to the risks they are creating for the people and democracy with their obstinate political stances, said Dr Iftekharuzzaman, executive director of TIB.

Deferment of such a meaningless election is now a demand of majority people, said former adviser to a caretaker government Hossain Zillur Rahman.

Prof Abdullah Abu Sayeed, chairman of Bishwa Sahitya Kendra, said both the major political parties are dictatorial. It is easy to oust a military dictator, but extremely difficult to unseat an elected dictator.

Prof Anisuzzaman, a supernumerary professor at Dhaka University, said bloody violence, arson and sabotage in the name of political programme have devastated public life, economy and education. So the top leaders of the two major parties must sit for a cordial dialogue.

Manzur Elahi, former adviser to a caretaker government, warned that the country might head to extremism unless the two major political parties reach an agreement.

Barrister Mainul Hossain said the 15th amendment to the constitution is intended to establish a one-party rule and it is an impossible task to hold multi-party elections keeping this amendment in the charter.

Mahfuz Anam, editor and publisher of The Daily Star, said what is meant by general election is not going to happen on January 5.

"The constitution envisages that the voters will elect their representatives through direct elections to parliament. But what is going to happen in the January 5 election goes against the very spirit of the constitution," he said.

With 154 out of 300 parliament members already elected uncontested and elections to the rest of the seats without participation of the opposition parties will virtually result in the entire 10th parliament elected uncontested, he added.

Such elections will bring even worse political confrontations and cause loss of lives and public property, he said, and the Election Commission, which has already lost credibility, should also be reconstituted.

He suggested that the people must be resolute in making sure that such elections are not held. Instead, the ninth parliament, which is still in force, should convene a session to sort out who should head the all-party election-time government, maybe with the help of the president.

Moderated by distinguished fellow of CPD Dr Debapriya Bhattacharya, the discussion was addressed by Farooq Sobhan, president of Bangladesh Enterprise Institute, Rokia Afzal Rahman, president of Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry, among others.

No pledge for making wealth reports public

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In its manifesto for the 9th parliamentary polls, the party had vowed that the powerful people would have to submit wealth statements annually and the wealth statement and source of income of the prime minister, cabinet members, parliamentarians and their family members would be made public every year, a promise that the party has failed to keep.

AL president Sheikh Hasina, also the prime minister, unveiled the party's manifesto titled "Bangladesh moving forward" for the January 5 polls at Bangabandhu International Conference Centre yesterday.

She announced that the party would enact laws to ensure accountability of the MPs for their actions in and outside parliament.

When asked, AL presidium member Noohul-Alam Lenin, who was involved in drafting the manifesto, told The Daily Star that bringing transparency in the income and wealth of all was a key focus of the manifesto.

Though most of the opposition parties including the BNP have boycotted the elections, the Awami League said, forging a national consensus to keep the democratic process uninterrupted and making the 10th parliament effective were their priorities.

Besides these, the party set seven more priorities: ensuring peace and stability in the country by eliminating militancy, terrorism and communalism; completing the trials of war criminals and executing the verdicts; strengthening the National Human Rights Commission and appointing an ombudsman; strengthening the Election Commission; making the local government system more effective through decentralization of power; taking tough actions against black money, extortion, tender manipulation and bribery and making the ACC stronger; and freeing the law enforcement agencies from political influences.

The party also vowed to try those who were involved in killing, arson attacks and disrupting peace in the country to foil the war crimes trial.

The ruling party made the promise to ensure equal treatment of the people irrespec-



24,000MW electricity by 2021

Job for all unemployed youth

No law against Quran, Sunnah



Sheikh Hasina unveiling AL's election manifesto at the BICC yesterday.

tive of their faith, culture, gender and social status. It, however, said the party would not enact any law conflicting with the Quran and Sunnah.

The manifesto, dedicated to the young generation who would exercise their voting right for the first time in the upcoming elections, included vows to ensure employment and healthcare for all, to rid the capital city of traffic congestion and the educational institutions of dirty politics and session jams, and to give more attention to science and technology, health, women empowerment, gender equality and welfare of children, juveniles and youths.

The party, if voted to power, also promised to fully implement the CHT Peace Accord.

The party, in its 2008 manifesto, had set the year 2021 as the deadline to realise their visions. This time, the party said, it would announce a new plan, Vision-2041, if it formed the government again.

"Our primary target is to implement Vision-2021 and the long term plan is to elevate Bangladesh to the level of the developed countries by 2050," Sheikh Hasina said while announcing the manifesto.

With a view to making Bangladesh a real middle-income country by 2021, the party pledged to increase the per capita income to \$1,500 from existing \$1,044, the growth rate to

10 percent from the existing 6.2 percent and to reduce poverty rate to 13 percent from the existing 26 percent in the next seven years.

The AL manifesto also included the promise to take the electricity generation capacity to 24,000 MW from the existing 10,000 MW and ensure electricity connection to every household in the country.

Another bridge over the Padma river in addition to the ongoing one, a second Jamuna bridge, a modern international airport, the proposed deep seaport in Sonadia, a circular rail route around Dhaka city and the Dhaka-Chittagong Expressway were also promised in the manifesto.

In her concluding speech, the AL chief thanked the people for their overwhelming support to her government over the past five years and sought vote for 'boat' symbol in the upcoming polls.

Senior party leaders, members of civil society, freedom fighters, representatives of professional bodies, business leaders and a few diplomats were present on the occasion.

The ruling party announced its manifesto only a week before the January 5 national elections to be held in 146 constituencies out of 300 as 154 candidates are set to be elected uncontested.

Dropped off midway

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thorough search, police picked up 150 passengers suspecting them to be BNP-Jamaat activists heading for Dhaka to attend the opposition's "march for democracy" programme today.

Station Master Jalal Uddin of Gharinda Railway Station said, "No train will be allowed to start for Dhaka from Tangail station until they get directives from the higher authorities."

Khaleque and 500 other passengers were asked to get off and told that the train would return to Nilphamari. This put many passengers, including women and children, in trouble.

Amid the chilly weather and with luggage, Khaleque's first thought was to catch an auto-rickshaw or a human haulier to get to Tangail Bus Terminal.

Khaleque reached the terminal on a three-wheeler only to be more frustrated. No buses were leaving the terminal for Dhaka. He had no idea how he would reach Dhaka, which is 100km away.

Soon some others, who were forced to get down from Neelsagor train, arrived at the terminal.

After waiting there for a couple of hours, Khaleque and other passengers managed a minibus and started for Dhaka at 11:10am. However, they did not make it to Dhaka itself.

A group of stick-wielding people stopped

the minibus when it reached DEPZ in Savar around 1:30pm, driver of the vehicle Swapan told The Daily Star.

Khaleque, a trader from Jaldhaka of Nilphamari, said, "We hired a CNG-run three-wheeler and finally reached Mirpur, ending our long journey."

Thousands more suffered similar ordeals as passengers travelling on trains from different directions were forced to get down in Joydevpur, Tongi and Mymensingh.

Many managed to reach Dhaka but not without going through untold sufferings.

"Two trains -- Subarna Express and Mohanagar Provati -- reached Dhaka but only the Airport Railway Station, not their final destination Kamalapur Railway Station," said a senior railway official seeking anonymity.

"The government harassed a large number of passengers to stop a small number of BNP-Jamaat men," said a railway official.

A total of 51 trains were supposed to reach Kamalapur yesterday but none made it due to directives from government high-ups. The railway lost Tk 5-7 lakh as it had to pay passengers their money back when they returned their tickets.

Asked why trains were stopped on their way to Dhaka, Railway Minister Mujibul Haq said the step was taken "to prevent subversive acts and save people's lives".