

# 'Anomalies' in recruitment for railway's west zone

ANWAR ALI, *Rajshahi*

The west zone of Bangladesh Railway in Rajshahi yesterday selected 78 candidates for the posts of MLSS through irregularities.

The authorities published the primary list of the selected candidates, dropping at least 58 chosen earlier.

The Daily Star has obtained two previously prepared lists. Dated January 8, 2014, both the lists were signed by the six-member recruitment committee and approved by the general manager (west) of the BR.

"We were under political pressure.... We made changes to the lists to fix the errors," said M Abdul Wares,

convenor of the recruitment committee and assistant personnel officer of BR in Lalmonirhat.

Talking to this newspaper on condition of anonymity, several railway officials said the authorities altered the list of selected candidates although there is no such provision in the railway recruitment rules.

Changes were made to the list in exchange for money of around Tk 4 lakh per candidate, they added.

A total of 18,686 candidates applied for the 78 posts of MLSS after the authorities published an advertisement for the recruitment on October 21, 2010.

Of the applicants, 17,928 were called

for viva voce exams, which were held between February 15 and February 22 in the following year in Rajshahi division. In Chittagong division, the exams were held on February 25-26.

On April 16 this year, Supreme Court lawyer Habibur Rahman issued a "demand notice for justice" against the railway authorities, saying that his client Sohail Alam of Chuadanga was included in the first list, but was dropped in the second one.

The attorney said preparing a second list is against the fundamental right of the candidates and is beyond jurisdiction of the recruitment committee which loses official authority after signing the list for once.

# Politics of threats in India

TNN, *New Delhi*

Those loudest in their threats usually have something to fear, and if the fear is of losing an election, politicians can go to any extent.

First Maharashtra deputy CM NCP leader Ajit Pawar was reported to have threatened to deprive a village of water if it didn't vote for his cousin Supriya Sule, the daughter of NCP chief Sharad Pawar. And on Friday, Samajwadi Party leader Mulayam Singh Yadav threatened government schoolteachers in Bulandshahr to either vote for his party or risk losing their jobs. Mulayam Singh has already been slapped with a show-cause notice by the EC.

The EC held Mulayam had prima facie violated the model code of conduct, and gave him time till Sunday (April 20) evening to send his reply, failing which it will take action.

On April 3, while addressing an election rally at Shikarpur Bypass in

Bulandshahr, Yadav had said, "As far as shiksha mitras (ad hoc government teachers) are concerned, we have done it (made them permanent)...we have done it, now give your vote. If you do not vote, we'll withdraw it."

The EC said the provisions of the model code bar a party in power to use its official position for the purposes of its election campaign.

Ajit is now facing a probe ordered by the EC over his alleged threat. Pune collector Saurabh Rao told TOI, "At 5pm, I got instructions from the office of the chief election officer to submit an inquiry report. An inquiry has been ordered." The complaint to the police was moved by AAP's Baramati candidate, retired IPS officer Suresh Khopade.

If this wasn't enough, National Conference leader Farooq Abdullah threatened his party's main rivals, PDP. Talking to reporters after addressing a youth convention at party headquar-

ters in Rajbagh, Farooq said PDP was responsible for the killing of NC workers in south Kashmir.

Meanwhile, UP police lodged an FIR on Friday against a Congress worker caught on camera telling Priyanka Gandhi that he would eliminate AAP's Lok Sabha candidate Kumar Vishwas for speaking against his leader, Rahul Gandhi. The video shows Priyanka saying, "No, no, don't talk like that. Come and meet me later at the Munshiganj guesthouse."

AAP workers claimed the cops agreed to register an FIR only after day-long protests by party volunteers, who laid a siege in front of Gauriganj police station.

"We've got an application from Vishwas for lodging an FIR against Rahul, Priyanka, Chandrakant Dubey, Vinod Mishra and other Congress workers. We'll examine it and take appropriate action," police said.

# N Korea hits out at UN meeting over abuses

AFP, *Seoul*

North Korea hit out early yesterday at an informal meeting of the United Nations Security Council in which the body was urged to slap sanctions on Pyongyang officials responsible for human rights abuses.

Michael Kirby -- the head of a special UN inquiry into North Korean rights abuses -- had told Thursday's get-together convened by Australia, France and the United States that "perpetrators must be held accountable".

"It is necessary to deter further crimes," the Australian judge said, adding that he also wanted the reclusive regime hauled before the International Criminal Court (ICC) for prosecution.

Kirby's Commission of Inquiry on North Korea released a hard-hitting report on the nuclear-armed totalitarian state in February that documented a range of gross human rights abuses, including extermination, enslavement and sexual violence.

"The commission of inquiry therefore recommends to the Security Council the adoption of targeted sanctions against those individuals most responsible for crimes against humanity," he told the informal meeting.

North Korea refused to cooperate with the probe and said the evidence was "fabricated" by "forces hostile" to the country.

# Bashir Ahmed

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in the capital last night.

His namaz-e-janaza will be held at 10:00am at Zohuri Mohalla Mosque of Mohammadpur. He will be buried at Tajmahal Road graveyard, reports private TV channel Boishakhi Television.

Born in 1939 in Kolkata, Bashir stepped into the world of music when he was only 15.

He is one of the very few singers who lent voice to Bangla, Urdu, Hindi and Nepalese songs.

His memorable Bangla playback include Aamake Poratey Jodi, Jare Jabi Jodi Ja.

# Birdem docs

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hospital. Unruly relatives of the dead assaulted and injured Anwar Hossain, Kalyan Devnath and Shamima Akter of the endocrinology department, doctors said.

At the sit-in, the protesters decided to lodge a case against the attackers, said Purabi Debnath, associate professor of ophthalmology.

"We are not holding any tougher programme considering patients' well-being," she said.

Meanwhile, a six-member probe committee headed by Prof Mirza Mahbubul Hasan was formed to look into the matter, according to a press release by the hospital administration.

# Man killed in Khagrachhari gun battle

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Khagrachhari*

A villager was killed and a schoolgirl injured during a gunfight between the activists of the UPDF and PCJSS in the district's Laxmichhari upazila yesterday morning.

The dead is Joy Kumar Chakma, 45, of Jurgachhari village. The injured, Kalpa Rani Chakma, is a class IX student. She has been undergoing treatment at Chittagong Medical College Hospital.

Sajib Chakma, PCJSS assistant press and information secretary, alleged that some armed activists of the United People's Democratic Front (UPDF) came to Jurgachhari to attack Parbatya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samity (PCJSS) men. Jurgachhari is a stronghold of the PCJSS.

But the PCJSS men chased them. Being chased, the UPDF men opened fire indiscriminately, he claimed.

Joy Kumar and Kalpa Rani received bullet injuries. Kumar died on the spot.

Contacted, Shahjahan Hossain, assistant superintendent of police (Ramgarh circle), said the fight took place between the two groups over establishing supremacy in the area.

On receiving information, army men from Jurgachhari rushed to the spot and arrested PCJSS activist Mangal Tripura along with a local gun, a foreign revolver and five bullets while he was trying to escape, he added.

Denying the UPDF men's involvement in the attack, Niron Chakma, press and information secretary of the party, said the attack occurred due to the internal feud of the PCJSS.

Two UPDF activists were shot dead by unknown assailants in Khagrachhari Sadar upazila a couple of days ago.

# Stick to my plan

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suffering from tuberculosis after joining Biman.

The Biman Board accepted his resignation last month with effect from April 17. A director of Biman is serving as the acting MD of Biman.

The Board had requested him to continue for a couple of more months, albeit part time, as it looked for his successor. But Steele decided to leave on his doctor's advice to reduce his workload.

In the interview to The Daily Star, Steele had said there was no corruption at the Biman Board but he maintained that the Board's management at the micro level was an obstacle to efficiency.

He also underlined that a lack of authority of the managing director was a problem. "I cannot hire, I cannot fire and I cannot even make changes as the Biman MD."

Steele suggested that someone who has experience working in the sub-continent be appointed as his successor.

Asked about the allegation of corruption against him in appointing General Sales Agents, Steele said following the allegation he asked the ministry to investigate and a probe committee led by the chairman of the Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh found nothing against him.

On April 9, Biman put a job vacancy ad on its website. It asked deserving Bangladeshis and foreign nationals to apply for the job of Biman MD and CEO.

The last date for applying is May 16.

# Greens vow

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definition and it must remain so".

Bangabandhu Memorial Trust may have endorsed tagging the name of the prime minister's slain brother Sheikh Jamal with the club but it certainly did not endorse the club's illegal occupancy of the public playground, he said.

The club, formerly known as Dhanmondi Club and renamed in 2009, has been at the playground for around five decades without any authorisation. And last year, they barred public access to the playground, making it open only to club members.

Deploying security personnel to bar public access to a public playground is unprecedented, said noted urban researcher Prof Nazrul Islam.

Founder of Gonoswasthya Kendra Dr Zafrullah Chowdhury, who has been living in Dhanmondi since 1948, said that he used to play at the ground in his childhood.

In a written statement, Iqbal Habib said Dhaka South City Corporation and the public works ministry have been ignoring High Court orders since 2004 to free the playground of illegal occupancy and ensure public access there.

Eminent jurist Dr Shahdeen Malik and former national cricketer Gazi Ashraf Lipu, among others, were present at the press conference.

# US not a democracy, it's oligarchy: study

AGENCIES

A new scientific study from Princeton university researchers Martin Gilens and Benjamin Page has finally put some science behind the recently popular argument that the United States isn't a democracy any more.

And they've found that in fact, America is basically an oligarchy.

An oligarchy is a system where power is effectively wielded by a small number of individuals defined by their status called oligarchs. Members of the oligarchy are the rich, the well connected and the politically powerful, as well as particularly well placed individuals in institutions like banking and finance or the military.

For their study, Gilens and Page compiled data from roughly 1,800 different policy initiatives in the years between 1981 and 2002. They then compared those policy changes with the expressed opinion of the United State public. Comparing the preferences of the average American at the 50th percentile of income to what those Americans at the 90th percentile preferred, as well as the opinions of major lobbying or business groups, the researchers found out that the government followed the directives set forth by the latter two much more often.

# What the state must do

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from again. Two years ago, prominent BNP politician Ilyas Ali was abducted in the way Siddique was last week. His party is of the opinion that the group which swooped on Siddique may be the same group which made Ilyas Ali disappear without trace.

Whether or not the assumption is true, the need today, even after all this time since the politician's disappearance, is clear: the nation must be informed, fully and truthfully and without ambiguity, what happened to Ilyas Ali. It is inconceivable that the machinery of the state is in no position to track down his captors, to find the trails down which the one-time lawmaker was taken to oblivion.

In recent times, instances of a disappearance of citizens have added to the horror of "shoot-outs" and "crossfires" to push our sense of fear into increasingly worrying dimensions. In a large number of instances, we do not know the exact figures regarding disappearances, for the media by and large do not report on them. And they do not because many of these disappearances are not reported or admitted by the authorities. A television channel reports, however, that between November and December last year, as many as 24 BNP activists disappeared without trace. That only heightens our worries.

Who are the elements behind such disappearances? And what quarters are responsible for the abduction of people, including children, and

It's beyond alarming. As Gilens and Page write, "the preferences of the average American appear to have only a minuscule, near-zero, statistically non-significant impact upon public policy." In other words, their statistics say your opinion literally does not matter.

That might explain why mandatory background checks on gun sales supported by 83% to 91% of Americans aren't in place, or why Congress has taken no action on greenhouse gas emissions even when such legislation is supported by the vast majority of citizens.

This problem has been steadily escalating for four decades. While there are some limitations to their data set, economists Thomas Piketty and Emmanuel Saez constructed income statistics based on IRS data that go back to 1913. They found that the gap between the ultra-wealthy and the rest of us is much bigger than thought.

Piketty and Saez also calculated that as of September 2013 the top 1% of earners had captured 95% of all income gains since the Great Recession ended. The other 99% saw a net 12% drop to their income. So not only is oligarchy making the rich richer, it's driving policy that's made everyone else poorer.

what are their motives? Why is it that the state security apparatus is unable to identify these elements operating in daylight as also in the darkness of the night?

Abu Bakar Siddique's safe return was effectively a result of the concerted efforts made by the authorities for his recovery. One understands that such efforts cannot always be made by the government for every individual who falls prey to kidnapping. But what one does not understand either is why our law enforcers fail when it comes to restoring other disappeared individuals to their families or tracing their whereabouts once they have been seized by faceless yet vicious individuals and groups.

"Shoot-outs", "crossfires" and abductions eat into the vitals of fledgling democracies. In 1970s' and 1980s' Latin America, disappearances of citizens left societies badly mauled. The struggle yet goes on for people in that part of the world to put their collective trauma behind them and move on.

In Bangladesh, abductions and killings, together with shootings of individuals like Limon, leave democracy pauperised.

And that does not have to be the reality, if serious, well-meaning efforts are yet expended in digging into the truth behind the disappearances of Kalpana Chakma, Ilyas Ali and others, into informing citizens of how bodies with bullet wounds have been spotted at unlikely places in recent times.

# Schools closed

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the organising secretary of the platform's central unit.

On closing all primary schools in the upazila, he said every primary school can announce casual leave for three days in a year. Primary schools in Ishwardi declared a casual leave for Saturday with permission from the primary education department for organising the event, he mentioned.

Each teacher paid Tk 50 for arranging the programme and purchasing the lapel pin, said primary teacher Amirul Islam.

Though the theme of the meeting was upgrading the quality of education, the event turned into a political programme with local political leaders speaking at the meeting.

# Khaleda sees govt link

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green activist Syeda Rezwana Hasan was released in fear of severe consequences for the Hasina administration, she said.

"The government understood that if Siddique was not released, BNP would wage tougher agitation to oust it. So, it had to free him. He would otherwise have had the same fate as missing BNP leader Ilias Ali."

Khaleda was addressing the inauguration of two-day-long seventh national council of Jatiyatabadi Sramik Dal, a pro-BNP labour body, at the Institution of Engineers, Bangladesh in the capital's Ramna. A new committee of Sramik Dal is likely to be declared today.

Killing and forced disappearance have increased a lot as there is no democracy in the country, she said. "The government has shown its prudence by releasing Siddique," she added.

"Many BNP leaders, including Ilias Ali and Chowdhury Alam, have remained missing. I want to ask the illegal regime to immediately release those whom you still keep hostage. You're violating human rights and committing crimes against humanity

every day by abducting people and killing them."

In her speech, the BNP chief compared the Sheikh Hasina-led government to Hitler's autocratic regime and said the present administration must be held accountable for its misdeeds and must step down within a short time.

"Your (the government) days are numbered no matter how much efforts you make to cling to power keeping Ershad [Jatiya Party chief] along...You won't be able to hold on to power for a long time. You have to go," Khaleda said.

She also warned the ruling party that it would face consequences for its misrule.

Reiterating her party's demand for a fresh national election under a non-party caretaker government, Khaleda said that if the current "illegal regime" had the minimum shame it would have quit and arranged an election under a neutral administration.

She accused the ruling party of killing democracy after assuming office "through a voterless election". People are now ready to bring down the government and restore democracy, she said.