

'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 Sohel 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 playbacks include Aamake Poratey Jodi, Jare Jabi Jodi Ja.

Birdem docs

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hospital. Unruly relatives of the dead assaulted and injured Anowar 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.

Egyptian leftist submits bid for presidency

AFP, Cairo

Egyptian leftist Hamdeen Sabbahi yesterday submitted the documents required to run in next month's presidential election, in which he is likely to be the only rival to former army chief Abdel Fattah al-Sisi.

Sabbahi is currently Sisi's sole challenger after lawyer Mortada Mansour announced he was withdrawing his candidacy, although there is another day before the expected end of the registration period.

Sisi, who is riding a wave of popularity after ousting Islamist president Mohamed Morsi last July amid massive street protests, is widely expected to win the May 26-27 election.

"With God's will, we will wage a great and victorious battle," Sabbahi told supporters after submitting his candidacy to the electoral commission.

Sabbahi has surpassed the 25,000 signatures from citizen supporters required to officially register his candidacy, gathering 31,100 signatures from 17 provinces, according to his campaign team.

Sabbahi was accompanied by scores of supporters, who cheered him on and chanted: "Sabbahi is the symbol of freedom!"

They carried boxes containing the signed forms to be delivered to the electoral committee.

Police still clueless

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kidnapping.

The investigators said they were trying to track down the abductors and uncover their motive on the basis of Siddique's statement before a Narayanganj court on Friday.

"We are looking for some suspects based on what he said before the court yesterday [Friday]," Monirul Islam, spokesperson of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, said at a press briefing at the DMP's media centre yesterday.

"On the basis of his [Siddique] deposition, the law enforcement agencies have taken some steps and employed all possible techniques," he said.

Asked about the suspects, the DMP joint commissioner said they would not disclose anything at the moment for the sake of investigation.

He said they were in touch with the victim and his family members, and hoped to arrest the mastermind behind the abduction soon.

Rapid Action Battalion is also working on the abduction case.

A gang of seven to eight criminals abducted Siddique, managing director

of Hamid Fashion, while he was returning to the capital from his factory at Fatulla in Narayanganj by his car around 2:30pm on Wednesday.

The kidnappers freed him near Mirpur Ansar Camp on Thursday night.

Meanwhile, the driver of the CNG auto-rickshaw that Siddique hired to reach home from Mirpur gave a statement before a senior judicial magistrate in Narayanganj.

"The passenger [Siddique] stopped me at Mirpur Kazipara around 10:30pm Thursday. He hired the auto-rickshaw for going to Central Road," said driver Hafizur Rahman in his statement.

Police stopped them at Kalabagan. "They took us to Dhanmondi Police Station after learning the passenger's identity," he added.

A five-member team formed by the police headquarters to assist the investigators visited the crime scene and Hamid Fashion yesterday, reports our Narayanganj correspondent.

Siddique yesterday went to Hamid Fashion where the staff welcomed him with flowers.

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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 Laxmichhara 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 Chittagong 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 (Rampur 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 Zafnullah 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 Shahdeeb 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 States 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