



Supporters of municipality mayor and Awami League leader Ahedul Islam Hazra bring out a procession in Kotalipara of Gopalganj, demanding removal of the Kotalipara upazila nirbahi officer. Earlier, the UNO didn't allow Ahedul to enter the exam hall where the latter's son was taking SSC exams yesterday. Right, the UNO office locked by ruling party men.

PHOTO: BANGLAR CHOKH

UNO in trouble

FROM PAGE 16
following, who wouldn't tolerate this. Infuriated, they locked the UNO office and demanded his removal. And the upazila nirbahi officer (UNO) had to leave the upazila under Rab escort.

It all happened at Kotalipara upazila of Gopalganj yesterday.

Kotalipara municipality mayor Ahedul Islam Hazra, also a former organising secretary of the upazila Awami League, was present at Kotalipara Public Institution centre since 9:30am.

Upazila AL General Secretary SM Humayun Kabir and some other local leaders of the party were accompany-

ing Ahedul.

They didn't leave even after the exam started at 10:00am, and around 10:15am, the mayor wanted to enter his son's exam hall.

"Quite logically, I turned down the plea and asked them to leave the centre," said UNO Zilal Hossain.

After the mayor and others left, activists of local AL and Chhatra League brought out a procession in the upazila complex area at 11:00am. They chanted slogans demanding removal of the UNO from Kotalipara and locked the UNO office.

However, the ruling party men

opened the lock around 2:00pm after Gopalganj Deputy Commissioner Khalilur Rahman went to the upazila on information. By the time, Zilal Hossain had left Kotalipara.

The UNO headed for Gopalganj town from the upazila in his own car as the elite force provided security, said Gopalganj Rab-8 Commander Maruf Hossain.

Contacted, Ahedul rejected all the allegations against him, saying, "It was just a misunderstanding between me and the UNO."

He claimed his supporters neither locked the UNO office nor demanded the UNO's removal.



No fetters could tie her down

S DILIP ROY, Lalmonirhat

Having no use of any hands since birth and being born in an ultra poor family would probably kill off any aspirations one might have. Not Arifa Akhter though.

The 16-year-old did not sit on the bench like all her fellow SSC examinees did yesterday on the first day of this year's exams. She got on a table and started writing with her right foot.

With a pen between her toes, she started writing on the answer script while the left foot stabilised the paper at the Lalmonirhat Boys' High School exam hall in her district town.

And her handwriting (foot writing rather) is properly neat, which her fellow classmates with two working hands admit.

Mousumi Akhter said Arifa's leg writing is better than that of their hands writings. Arifa is a little slow but her writing is neater, she said.

Daughter of Abdul Ali and Mamta Begum of Shahitiri in Lalmonirhat, Arifa, a student of humanities group at Fulgachh High School, was happy after the first test yesterday.

She hoped to do even better on her next exam.

"Hand writing is for normal students, leg writing is for me," said Arifa, adding, "I know how to write well with my right leg, and my left leg always helps."

She said she had gotten used to doing everything with her legs since childhood.

"As I'm with disability, I get 25 minutes extra time for the tests ...," she said.

Mother Mamta said "Arifa always shows interest in studying, and she keeps herself busy for this. I help our daughter during her bathing, eating, and dressing up, but she does the rest herself."

Arifa's father Abdul Ali, 64, is a labourer with Tk 200 daily wage.

"I had never been able to provide the support she needed for her studies and our daughter never asked for anything. I have been trying my best ...," he said hoping Arifa would do well in the SSC.

Fifth among her siblings, Arifa is among the top brilliant SSC candidates from her school. She got a GPA-5 in Junior School Certificate (JSC) examinations. While at primary school, she was the best student, said Shahjahan Ali, the headmaster of Fulgach High School.

Railway security bill passed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Jatiya Sangsad last night passed the "Railway Nirapatta Bahini Bill, (Railway Security Force) 2016" with the provision that allows the authorities to arrest anyone without warrant.

The bill said the Railway Security Force would not need the approval of a magistrate to arrest someone if there was "reasonable" apprehension that the person would harm the railway.

The bill was passed in voice vote despite opposition from a Jatiya Party MP.

Railways Minister Mujibul Haque

placed the bill in the House as an amendment to the Railway Nirapatta Bahini Ordinance, 1976.

The minister said the amendment was prepared to preserve railways' assets, constitute a disciplined security force for it and maintain them properly.

"The railways security force will be regarded as a disciplined force in line with section-152 of the constitution," said the bill which was placed in the House on November 16 last year.

On the ability to arrest, the bill said high officials of Railway Nirapatta Bahini and other senior officials, not below the rank of habildar, would be

able to arrest any people if the officials had reasonable causes to believe that the suspect could damage or steal railway assets or the person was preparing to enter railways area for committing any crime.

The security officials would also be able to arrest or search any person without any warrant if they had reasons to believe that the person might flee or may destroy records of his crime by the time required for getting an arrest warrant.

The arrested person would have to be placed before a police official or before the nearby court in the absence of the police official, the bill said.

Scope widens for dual citizenship

FROM PAGE 1
Alam while briefing reporters after the cabinet meeting.

Supreme Court judges, lawmakers, persons holding constitutional posts as well as civil servants and members of the disciplined forces would not get dual citizenship.

Any foreign national obtaining Bangladeshi citizenship cannot contest national or local polls, become the president, SC judge or a public servant or form any political party, according to the draft.

Under the law, the government would be able to give honorary citizenship to any foreign national for his/her contribution in the fields of science, literature, world peace, human development, and culture or for important contribution for Bangladesh.

The draft law has been framed by consolidating the existing "The Citizenship Act 1951" and "The Bangladesh Citizenship Temporary Provisions Order 1972" and rearranging their "backdated issues" and "incompleteness".

The introduction of the draft law says The Bangladesh Citizenship Temporary Provisions Order 1972 is a very brief law, and the provisions for giving and cancelling citizenship are not clear enough.

According to the draft, if any Bangladeshi marries a foreign national, the Bangladesh government can give him/her citizenship upon fulfillment of five conditions.

The conditions are: he/she would have to live in Bangladesh for five years;

is not a citizen of any country whose citizenship is prohibited by Bangladesh government; his/her parents and grandparents are not engaged in war against Bangladesh and not the enemy force of a foreign country; s/he does not live in Bangladesh illegally; and is not a citizen of any country that has no diplomatic relations with Bangladesh.

Between 2009 and 2015, the government gave citizenship to 37,544 foreign nationals. Of them, 37,535 got Bangladeshi citizenship through exchange of enclaves between Bangladesh and India while 526 Bangladeshi nationals gave up their citizenship in the process. In the same period, 9,016 non-resident Bangladeshis were given dual citizenship, sources said.

Promotion for commotion

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The Superior Selection Board, headed by the cabinet secretary, is expected to send a list of prospective officials to the prime minister soon for approval, said the sources.

The secretary to the Prime Minister's Office, finance secretary, public administration secretary and home secretary are members of the board.

Talking to The Daily Star recently, Cabinet Secretary M Shafiul Alam admitted to the fact that further promotion would make the civil administration top-heavy. He said the officials deprived of promotion would be elevated to higher positions as part of "a routine work".

Kamal Abdul Naser Chowdhury, senior secretary at the public administration ministry, said they were examining the grounds for giving promotion to the aggrieved officials.

The government move will deal a heavy blow to the ideal pyramid structure of bureaucracy, as the promotions will not be made against vacant posts. Already, officials two to four times the usual number are holding the posts of additional, joint and deputy secretaries, said the sources.

In April last year, the government gave wholesale promotions to 873 officials to the ranks of additional, joint and deputy secretaries.

Since then, many of the promoted officials have been working as in-situ (officials who hold the same office and discharge the same duty after elevation), an unusual practice in civil bureaucracy.

Further promotion will turn the bureaucracy more top-heavy and see a rise in the number of in-situ officials. It will also pose a big challenge for policymakers to accommodate these

promoted officials.

As the government move is nearly finalised, many prospective officials -- from deputy secretary to additional secretary -- are lobbying with top bureaucrats and political leaders to get promoted, pressing that though eligible, they didn't get promotion last year.

"I have been getting assurances since 2012 that I would be promoted to the rank of joint secretary, but I didn't get it in the end," said a deputy secretary of the 1985 BCS batch, seeking anonymity.

Some officials of the BCS batches of '83, '84 and '85 echoed his words. They hoped they would not be deprived this time.

Ideally, promotion is given against a vacant post. And once an official is promoted, he usually gets a new office and responsibilities along with a hiked salary and benefits. But this has not been followed for years.

Due to the absence of a law or specific yardstick, promotion is given on the basis of merit list, annual confidential report (ACR), experience and service records (whether an official is facing corruption or criminal cases).

There have been allegations that some officials are involved in hectic lobbying to get promoted. Some of them claim themselves as ruling party loyalists while some brand others as anti-government elements. Going against the norm, some meet top bureaucrats and pleads for promotion.

"Of the officials, those who have strong political lobby or blessings of their seniors get promotion easily," said a home ministry official, asking not to be named.

Many officials having better qualification are denied promotion, throw-

ing the entire process into question. Moreover, the controversial ACR system allows many less qualified officials to get good marks just by pleasing their superiors, said the official.

Assuming power in 2009, the Awami League-led government gave mass promotions in the civil administration. The trend continued in the following years.

Instead of merit and competence, nepotism, political consideration and lobbying with top officials of the ministry, the cabinet division and the PMO have been dominant factors in getting promotion, according to a number of serving and retired bureaucrats.

This has caused frustration among many deprived but qualified officials, hampering their performance as well as professionalism in bureaucracy, they alleged.

The cabinet secretary, however, refuted such claims. "Merit and competence are always considered in promoting an official," he said.

Some retired secretaries said such mass promotion is unjustified. They said the acceptable policy would be to give promotion against vacant posts and in the interest of the state, not in the interest of individuals.

"The government should be highly selective in giving promotions to posts above deputy secretary," former cabinet secretary Ali Imam Majumder told this correspondent.

It would be disgraceful if jurisdictions of the promoted officials are not expanded, he said.

Another former secretary, Ali Akbar, believes it is a bad precedence to give large-scale promotions without creating posts. It hampers efficiency of bureaucrats, he added.

WAR CRIMES

Verdict today on Taher, Nani

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The International Crimes Tribunal-1 is set to deliver the verdict today in a case filed against two alleged razzakars of Netrakona for committing crimes against humanity and genocide during the Liberation War.

The three-member tribunal, led by Justice Anwarul Haque, yesterday fixed the date and directed the jail authorities to produce the accused -- Obaidul Haque Taher, 66, and Aaur Rahman Nani, 62, -- before the court at 10:00am today.

The two alleged members of the razzakar force, an auxiliary force of the Pakistan army, face six charges, including murder and genocide. They had pleaded not guilty.

According to the charges, Taher and Nani were involved in the abductions and killings of at least 30 people and looting of 400-450 shops and setting fire to those on fire in 1971.

On January 10, the tribunal kept the case waiting for verdict after hearing the closing arguments.

In the closing arguments, the prosecution sought capital punishment for the accused saying that it had been able to prove five out of the six charges "beyond any shadow of doubt". The defence counsels prayed for acquittal of their clients claiming that the prosecution failed to prove any charges.

The tribunal on March 2 last year framed six charges against the two. Twenty-three prosecution witnesses testified against them.

The defence did not bring in any witness.

This will be the first verdict after the ICT-1 was reconstituted on September 15 last year.

CHARGES
According to the first charge, razzakar commander Taher and his accomplice Nani accompanied by other razzakars and the Pakistan army on August 17, 1971, attacked Baushi Bazar under Barhatta Police Station and looted valuables from 400-450 shops and 20-25 houses of the Hindus.

They also detained and tortured

seven to eight people, including local Awami League leader Fazlur Rahman. All but Fazlur were released. Taher, Nani and other razzakars took Fazlur to Trimohoni Bridge and shot him dead, the charge added.

The second charge says razzakars under the leadership of Taher on October 4, 1971, caught footballer Dabir Hossain at Sree Sree Narosingh Jeur Akhra and took him to Zilla Parishad Bungalow where he was tortured all day. He was later shot dead near Moktarpara Bridge in Netrakona town.

The duo accompanied by other razzakars and the Pakistan army attacked Laufa village under Barhatta Police Station around 2:30pm on October 19, 1971, and detained 10 people. Seven of them were later shot dead while one survived with bullet injuries and two were freed. The razzakars also raped women there, reads the third charge.

On a day in the latter half of May, the accused occupied one Moly Biswas' home at Moktarpara and set up a razzakar camp there. The house owner later left Bangladesh for India in fear, reads the fourth charge.

They also occupied the house of Sirish Chandra Sarker and set up an office of anti-liberation party Nezame-Islami for carrying out atrocious activities against the pro-liberation people. Sirish and his family members were forced to leave the country, it added.

The fifth charge says Taher, Nani along with other razzakars between November 15 and 16 detained seven people including Badiuzzaman Mukto, an organiser of Liberation War, at Birampur Bazar and shot all but one dead.

On a day in the first week of October, Taher and Nani along with Pakistan army and other razzakars detained 15 Hindus from Netrakona jail gate area and took them near Trimohoni Bridge and shot dead all of them "with an intent to destroy, in whole or part, the Hindu group", according to the sixth charge.

IMF revises down country's GDP growth

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has revised down Bangladesh's GDP growth to 6.3 percent for the current fiscal year.

"Various economic activity indicators suggest a slower-than-expected start to the current fiscal year," it said in a statement yesterday.

The global lender, however, added the 6-plus GDP growth was a notable performance in the current global context.

Earlier, it had forecast gross domestic product of 6.5 percent for 2015-16.

The IMF made its latest GDP forecast after its executive board concluded the 2015 Article IV consultation with Bangladesh on January 20.

In FY16, the real GDP growth is projected to be supported by higher public sector wages and public investment, said the statement.

"Provided calm prevails, prudent policies remain in place, and structural reforms are implemented as envisaged, the medium-term economic outlook should be positive and marked by continued stability and high growth."

Growth is projected to accelerate gradually to 7 percent over the medium term, as public investment is further ramped up and constraints on investment ease, with private investment also supporting a recovery in private sector credit, IMF mentioned.

The IMF board commended the Bangladesh authorities for the strong macroeconomic performance over the past few years, including under the recently completed ECF arrangement.

"Growth has been robust, external reserves have risen, inflation has abated, the public debt-to-GDP ratio has remained stable at a moderate level, and social indicators have improved."

Its executive directors stressed the need to improve budget formulation and execution, and to strengthen the selection of public investment projects by subjecting them to strict cost-benefit analysis, particularly projects financed by non-concessional external borrowing.

They also encouraged the authorities to improve public financial reporting and management at state-owned enterprises, and to move toward a market-based fuel price regime, said the statement.

The directors agreed that mobilising domestic revenue should be a foremost policy priority to create fiscal space for increasing public investment in critical infrastructure and strengthening social safety nets, while keeping the debt-to-GDP ratio broadly stable.

The board commended the authorities' efforts to promote financial inclusion.

Pakistan

FROM PAGE 1
if he was carrying the currency legally.

He was taken to Gulshan Police Station. And after his identity was confirmed, he was handed over to the second secretary of the high commission, the DMP official said.

Meanwhile, the high commission has alleged that a team of the Detective Branch of police threatened to kill one of its employees if he failed to provide them with a huge amount of money.

In a press release yesterday, it said, "Mr. Abrar Ahmed Khan has been working as the Assistant Private Secretary in the Press Section at the Pakistan High Commission, Dhaka since July 2011. This [Monday] morning, around 11:00am, four to five plainclothesmen forcefully picked him up from near his residence, close to Agora in Gulshan-2. Four of these men were wearing jackets marked 'DB'. Abrar was on foot at that time. These men picked up Abrar and bundled him in a silver coloured van. The security men then forcefully entered his apartment building and took his motorbike with them."

"Abrar was released this [Monday] evening at 6pm. On his return, he informed the High Commission that he was handcuffed and blindfolded and kept in a moving van for more than four hours before being brought to the Gulshan police station. The DB men constantly asked him to pay Taka 5 crore or else they would implicate him for possession of Indian fake currency. He was also threatened that he would be killed in 'crossfire' and 'dumped' in the river."

"When contacted, the Gulshan police station informed the High Commission that Abrar was being brought to the police station and as if, on cue, the media had already arrived there."

"The Pakistan High Commission strongly condemns this incident and rejects the false and fabricated charges levelled against its official. Unfortunately, the High Commission sees a disturbing pattern of harassment of its officers and officials, followed by a mud-slinging campaign and media trial."

About the threat to frame the Pakistani for possessing fake Indian currencies if he did not pay Tk five crore and get him killed in "crossfire", Maruf said the allegations were false and totally baseless.