

2ND PHASE OF UP POLLS

BNP fails to nominate candidates in 25 UPs

PANKAG KARMAKAR and PRABIR BARUA CHOWDHURY

The BNP could not nominate anyone within the deadline yesterday for contesting the chairman posts in at least 25 Union Parishads in the second phase of elections for a lack of interest among its grassroots.

Party men in some districts came up with poor responses to the polls since they fear harassment by activists of the ruling Awami League, said a party insider.

Six-hundred and fifty UPs will go to polls in the second phase on March 31.

Madaripur BNP district unit president Abu Bakar Siddique said the party could nominate candidates in only seven of 15 UPs under Sadar upazila for the second phase.

A majority of the possible candidates have left home for continuous threats from the ruling party candidates and their supporters, said Shirajul Islam Chowdhury, president of the Gopalganj district party unit.

BNP grassroots sent the names of candidates in 12 of 21 UPs in Gopalganj Sadar to the party's central office. Of them, only six candidates submitted nomination papers yesterday.

In Kotalipara upazila, the party got the names of candidates in six UPs out of 14, Shirajul said.

BNP Joint Secretary General Mohammad Shahjahan admitted that the party did not have candidates in some UPs for what he said was torture of AL men.

The opposition also does not have any chairman candidate in 70 of 738 UPs where elections will be held in the first phase on March 22.

Some 2,800 more UPs will go to polls in four other phases until June.

Meanwhile, the Election Commission decided to request the LGRD ministry to suspend Fulgazi upazila chairman of Feni for influencing UP polls.

It already suspended voting in six UPs of the upazila, scheduled for March 31.

Abdul Alim, chairman of Fulgazi

upazila parishad, last week pressured returning officers of the six UPs to receive nomination papers of only those candidates selected by himself.

As Alim, general secretary of the upazila unit AL, threatened the officer not to receive nomination papers of other candidates, Feni polls officers sent a letter to the EC describing the situation, EC officials said.

The EC found the accusation to be true upon an inquiry.

"We will send a letter to the ministry either tonight (last night) or tomorrow morning (today) requesting for action against the upazila chairman," EC's Secretary Sirazul Islam told The Daily Star last night.

Chairman Abdul Alim, however, rejected the allegation, saying that some BNP men were carrying out a propaganda campaign against him.

Yesterday was the last day for the withdrawal of nomination papers of the first phase and the filing of nomination papers for the second phase.

Apart from a few scattered incidents, candidates withdrew and submitted nomination papers peacefully.

In Jessore, a local BNP leader was kept locked inside a UP office allegedly by AL men for submitting nomination papers in Churamankathi under sadar upazila. Police later rescued him, reports a correspondent.

In Sherpur, AL-nominated chairman aspirants of nine UPs under Nakla upazila submitted nomination papers after marching in procession in violation of electoral rules.

As per the rules, all sorts of procession and showdown are prohibited during the filing of nomination papers.

The EC yesterday extended the deadline for a day for submitting nomination papers in three UPs under Pashuram upazila of Feni.

Meanwhile, a BNP delegation led by its standing committee member Moyeen Khan met Chief Election Commissioner Kazi Rakibuddin Ahmad yesterday afternoon.

After the meeting, Khan said the EC was in the absolute grip of the government.



Rab members bringing the parents of two children, who were believed to have been murdered at their flat in the capital's Banasree, back to the capital from Jamalpur for questioning over the incident. Top right, a notice mourning the death of Alvi Aman is hung on a gate of Holy Crescent International School, where the boy studied.

PHOTO: STAR

Parents, aunt brought in for quizzing

FROM PAGE 1

Mohammad Amanullah and Mahfuza Malek Jasmine and the children's maternal aunt Afroza Malek Nila.

Before that, the Rab men had interrogated them for about a couple of hours at the Iqbalpur house of Jasmin's parents, said Solaiman, uncle of the two siblings.

Earlier, a team of Rab-14 stayed at the house from 8:00pm to 11:00pm on Tuesday night, said Jasim Uddin, commander of the Rab unit's Jamalpur camp.

He said they got "some information" from the parents but refused to disclose those "for the sake of investigation".

Once back to Dhaka, the three would be taken to the Banasree flat, where the two kids were found "unconscious" before being declared dead on Monday, to see if they can recall something "vital" for the investigation, the Rab official added.

Asked if the family members were detained, Rab's Media Wing Director Commander Mufi Mahmud Khan avoided a direct reply and referred to a text message earlier sent to The Daily Star.

The message states the three were brought to Dhaka for "collecting information".

Lt Col Khandaker Golam Sarwar, Rab-3 commanding officer, said there was "no question of detaining the family members" as nothing suspicious about them was found yet.

Nusrat Aman Aroni, 14, and her six-year-old brother Alvi Aman were

found unconscious at their apartment on Monday afternoon. They were declared dead at Dhaka Medical College Hospital that evening.

It was initially believed that the children died from food poisoning before autopsy suggested that the victims might have been murdered. There were bruises on both the bodies.

A day later, Rab picked up five people -- a female tutor of Nusrat, two relatives and two security guards of the building -- for questioning.

They were yet to be released.

A Rab official, seeking anonymity, said the five would be made to sit with the parents face-to-face for questioning.

Sabina Yasmin, wife of one of the detained security guards, alleged she had tried several times to contact her husband Pintu Mandal.

"Whenever I called on his mobile phone, someone from the other end rejected it."

Sabina, who lives on the ground floor of the building, said the children's parents returned to the flat around 1:00am on Tuesday after the incident.

"They were visibly distressed. They were crying inconsolably."

"There were other relatives too but none seemed to suspect that the children could have been murdered. Everyone was talking about food poisoning," she added.

The family initially claimed that the children had died after eating food brought from a local Chinese restaur-

rant a day earlier.

After autopsies on the bodies, doctors on Tuesday said their primary findings suggested that the children might have been murdered.

Mehedi Masud, a teacher at Holly Crescent School where Alvi studied, said the boy was quiet in nature.

"He would usually sit silent in the classroom. But he would seldom miss school."

On Sunday when Alvi for the last time went to school, he showed the teacher a bandaged finger on the left hand but did not say how he received the injury, Masud told The Daily Star.

A case was yet to be filed over the matter, said Rafiqul Islam, officer-in-charge of Rampura Police Station.

If the family doesn't lodge any case, the police will file one, the OC said, adding that they too will interrogate those picked up by the Rab following the incident.

Meanwhile, a Dhaka court yesterday ordered police to send samples of the leftover food and water for chemical test and other samples collected from the scene for DNA profiling.

Metropolitan Magistrate Kazi Kamrul Islam passed the order after Sub-inspector Shoumen Kumar Barua of Rampura Police Station appeared before the court with the petition, said court sources.

The photo of Nusrat and Alvi published in this newspaper yesterday was collected from the Facebook page of their father Amanullah.

2 shot dead by 'extortionists'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two people were shot dead allegedly by extortionists in Bhagdi area of Narsingdi yesterday evening.

Families of the victims -- Khokon Khandaker, 32, and Arif Khandaker, 35, -- said they were killed for protesting extortion.

Khokon and Arif were friends. They hailed from Bhagdi.

Their families said Khokon's expatriate relative Rafique Miah bought a piece of land in Bhagdi Balur Math area about a year ago.

Several locals demanded money from Rafique after he started constructing his house on the land recently. Rafique had informed Khokon about this.

As the extortionists went to the construction site for money yesterday, Rafik called Khokon and asked him to come over, said Khokon's family members.

Khokon along with Arif went to the spot and an altercation ensued between the extortionists and Khokon.

At one point, the criminals shot them and fled.

Hearing gunshots, locals rushed to the spot and took the victims to Narsingdi General Hospital where doctors pronounced them dead.

4 KIDS MURDER

Another accused confesses involvement

Our Correspondent, Moulvibazar

Another accused in the Habiganj four-child murder case confessed to his involvement in the murders before a court in the district yesterday.

Senior Judicial Magistrate Kawsher Alam recorded the confessional statement of Shahed Ali, nephew of the key accused Abdul Ali, said police.

In his deposition, Shahed told the court that nine people took part in the killing and they used two auto rickshaws to pick up the children and then carry their bodies for burial, said Inspector (detectives) Muktedir Hossain, also the investigation officer in the case.

With him, four out of seven suspects gave confessional statements before courts.

Bodies of the children -- Monir Miah, 7, Zakaria Shuvo, 8, Mohammad Tajel Mia, 10, and Ismail Miah, 10 -- were recovered beneath sand on February 17, five days after they had gone missing from a playground in their village Sundratiki under Bahubal upazila.

On February 25, Bachchu Mia, an accused in the case, was killed in a "gunfight" with the Rapid Action Battalion in the district's Chunarughat upazila, eight days after law enforcers allegedly picked him up.

1,000 illegal

FROM PAGE 1

People involved in financial crimes might be behind the consignment, said Moinul.

Meanwhile, Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan yesterday said the foreign and Bangladeshi suspects of the recent ATM forgery are under watch by the law enforcement agencies.

"The activities of all foreigners in Bangladesh are under watch," he told newsmen at his secretariat office.

Four people, including a foreigner, were arrested in the capital last month on charges of stealing money from ATMs by setting up skimming devices at ATM booths.

The minister said several Bangladeshis, including a few expatriates, were involved in the forgery. Steps are underway to bring them to justice, he added.

No one to challenge Khaleda, Tarique

To be elected uncontested in BNP council

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia and her son, party's Senior Vice-Chairman Tarique Rahman, are going to be elected uncontested to their respective posts as nobody collected nomination forms as nobody collected nomination forms to contest the posts yesterday, the scheduled day for collecting nomination forms of those posts.

On behalf of Khaleda and Tarique, BNP joint secretary generals Rizvi Ahmed and Mohammad Shahjahan received the nomination forms from the party's Nayapalton headquarters.

Earlier, Rizvi submitted an authorisation letter with Khaleda's signature to returning officer Nazrul Islam Khan, a standing committee member of the party. In the letter, it was mentioned that Rizvi had been given the authority to collect the nomination form for the party chief.

Talking to reporters, Nazrul said after getting the authority, Rizvi collected the nomination form for the post of the party chief.

Later, in the same way, Shahjahan received the nomination form for Tarique, who has been living in London for the last eight years.

Party insiders said though the party

decided to hold polls in the two top posts together under an election commission, it was expected earlier that except Khaleda and Tarique, no one would collect the nomination forms to run for the posts and that is what happened.

The BNP has recently amended its constitution, including a provision for holding election to chairperson and senior vice-chairman posts. The party has also formed an election commission, headed by Jamir Uddin Sircar.

According to the schedule, aspirants for chairperson and senior vice-chairman posts have to submit their nomination papers on March 4 and those will be scrutinised on March 5. The deadline for withdrawal of nominations is 10:00am to 4:00pm on March 6.

Election to the posts is scheduled to be held during the BNP's sixth council on March 19. Besides, the party's national executive committee members will be elected on that day.

In the BNP's fifth council in 2009, Khaleda was elected chairperson unopposed of the party, while Tarique was made senior vice-chairman.

Khaleda has been serving as BNP chairperson since 1984.

Bus on wrong side kills schoolteacher

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A schoolteacher was killed when a bus driving on the wrong side hit his rickshaw near Kamalapur Railway Station in the capital yesterday morning.

The bus, which was hired by the jute ministry for its staff, was coming from the wrong side and hit the rickshaw carrying Joseph Barman, 28, around 7:15am. He was critically injured in the accident, said Shafiqul Islam Mollah, officer-in-charge of Shahjahanpur Police Station.

Joseph was taken to Dhaka Medical College Hospital where doctors declared him dead.

He was going to his school in Golapbagh from his Mugda house.

Joseph's colleagues who went to the hospital after hearing the news told this correspondent that he got

married six months ago. He hailed from Panchagarh.

Police seized the bus and arrested its driver Sohel.

Prabhu Das, vice-principal of Golapbagh Gologatha English Medium School, filed a case with Shahjahanpur police in connection with the incident. Joseph was a teacher of that school.

On February 22, Riazuddin Topu, a student of ASA University, died when a police-requisitioned vehicle driving on the wrong side collided with his motorbike in the capital's Kakoli area.

The father of a four-month-old boy, Topu, a resident of the capital's Tejgurbazar, was returning home after attending a company event at Radisson Blu Hotel.

The pillion passenger, a colleague of Topu, was also injured in the crash.

Tigers maul Pakistan

FROM PAGE 1

ball and got bowled, pin-drop silence gripped the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur.

On strode Mashrafe Bin Mortaza, and the fear of yet another near-miss turned into a delirium of joy as he hit the first ball he faced for four past mid-off and then peculiarly yet effectively pulled the next, a bouncer for another four down to the fine leg boundary.

It then came down to 18 from 12 balls and Mohammad Sami came out to bowl. It was an over Pakistan will try to forget and Bangladesh will relish as the pacer overstepped twice for two no-balls and the pair of Mahmudullah and Mashrafe stroked 15 runs that included a superbly timed shot from Mahmudullah to the point boundary off the second no-ball.

Mahmudullah then hit the first ball of the final over from Anwar Ali for the winning four over mid-wicket and the Tigers, who twice suffered painful defeats from the jaws of victory against Pakistan in Asia Cup matches, started to sing 'we have overcome'.

Mahmudullah scored an unbeaten 15-ball 22 and Mashrafe struck 12 off seven balls as the Tigers reached 131 for five in 19.1 overs. Soumya Sarkar returned to form with a run-a-ball 48, featuring five fours and a six, which laid the early platform for the Tigers.

US forces capture 'significant' IS operative in Iraq: media

AFP, Washington

US commandos have captured a "significant" Islamic State operative in Iraq and are expected to seize several more in the coming months, The New York Times reported yesterday.

The issue raises questions about what will happen to the detainee and others like him, given that President Barack Obama has ruled out sending any more terror suspects to

Guantanamo Bay and the United States does not want to create a holding centre for IS captives in Iraq.

US officials declined to identify the detainee to The Times, or say how much he had cooperated.

The detainee was captured by elite special operations troops who deployed to Iraq in recent weeks and whom the Pentagon calls a specialized expeditionary targeting force, or ETF.

The Pentagon has until now been tight-lipped about the team's operations, saying that discussing missions puts the elite fighters at risk.

The Times said the 200-member special operations team is made up of many Delta Force commandos.

Though it is small in number, it represents the first major US ground combat force since the official withdrawal of US troops at the end of 2011.