

# 8,000 tonnes of fertiliser at risk of damage

Kept under open sky as warehouse loaded up with fertiliser twice its capacity

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

Around 8,000 tonnes of imported urea fertiliser run the risk of getting damaged as these are piled up under open sky beside the BCIC buffer warehouse at Mahendranagar sadar upazila.

The 9,000-tonne capacity warehouse is already crammed with 19,100 tonnes of fertiliser. Hence, the excess bags of fertiliser are being stored in the open, said Abdul Hanif, executive engineer at the warehouse operated by the BCIC (Bangladesh Chemical Industries Corporation).

Sources and dealers in the district, 51 in total, said that out of the 19,100 tonnes of fertiliser stored inside, 1,000 tonnes of fertiliser made in China were received by the warehouse authorities

in damaged condition over the last six months.

The fertiliser grains in the consignment of 20 thousand bags, 50 kg each, became condensed and hardened -- a sign of damage due to contamination with water or moisture, they alleged.

Now, in addition to the 1,000 tonnes of damaged consignment, another 8,000 tonnes of fertiliser may become unusable if measures are not taken to store those inside a proper storage ahead of the rainy season, said the dealers.

Bidubhushon Roy, deputy director of Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) in Lalmonirhat, said urea fertiliser hardens and loses effectiveness once it comes in contact with

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Tonnes of urea fertilizer left out in the open at the Mehendranagar warehouse in Lalmonirhat. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: STAR

## TANGAIL-4 BY-POLLS AL's Sohel Hazari elected

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

Awami League candidate Hasan Imam Khan Sohel Hazari won the parliamentary by-election to the Tangail-4 (Kalihati) constituency yesterday.

Sohel, contesting with boat symbol, bagged 1,93,547 votes.

Imrul Kayes of National People's Party (NPP) with mango symbol received 1,696 votes while the third contestant, Aatur Rahman Khan of Bangladesh Nationalist Front (BNF) with television symbol secured 1,320 votes.

A total of 1,411 votes were cancelled.

Imrul, however, boycotted the election before the closing time raising allegations of serious irregularities, including casting of false votes by supporters of the ruling party candidate.

"I witnessed irregularities at every centre I visited," said Imrul. "The ruling party candidate's men were casting false votes at the polling centres in front of the polls officials."

Voting at Ballabhbari Primary School centre under Gohaliabari union was cancelled by the returning officer as false votes were cast for boat symbol the previous night, Election Commission sources said.

The presiding officer of the centre, Madhab Chandra Das, was detained in connection with irregularities, said Assistant Returning Officer Tajul Islam.

According to the EC, the constituency has a total of 3,07,700 voters, including 1,52,833 males and 1,54,867 females.

Tangail-4 constituency became vacant following the resignation of then minister Abdul Latif Siddique in 2015 after he was expelled from his party, the ruling AL, and the cabinet for "anti-religious remarks" he

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## Trump hits back

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With Trump's White House facing multiple lawsuits and worldwide opprobrium over an order banning migrants from seven Muslim nations, Yates had whipped the rug from under her boss in a defiant and damaging parting shot.

In a memo to Department of Justice staff, Yates -- a career government lawyer promoted by Barack Obama -- expressed doubts about the legality and morality of Trump's decree, which has prompted mass protests.

"My responsibility is to ensure that the position of the Department of Justice is not only legally defensible, but is informed by our best view of what the law is," Yates wrote.

"I am not convinced that the defense of the executive order is consistent with these responsibilities nor am I convinced that the executive order is lawful," she added.

"For as long as I am the acting attorney general, the Department of Justice will not present arguments in defense of the executive order, unless and until I become convinced that it is appropriate to do so."

Yates's directive meant that the government, for a few hours, had no authorized courtroom representation in lawsuits challenging the ban, reports AFP.

It was a remarkable act of defiance against a tough-talking president who has showed little sign of brooking insubordination.

But in a statement issued hours after his appointment, Boente said he would defend the president's directive.

"Based upon the Office of Legal Counsel's analysis, which found the Executive Order both lawful on its face and properly drafted, I hereby rescind former Acting Attorney General Sally Q. Yates January 30, 2017, guidance and direct the men and women of the Department of Justice to

do our sworn duty and to defend the lawful orders of our President," Boente said in a statement.

White House spokesman Sean Spicer said he thought media reporting on the executive order had been "blown way out of proportion and exaggerated."

"These career bureaucrats have a problem with it? I think that they should either get with the program or they can go," he told reporters at his daily briefing.

Acting State Department spokesman Mark Toner, however, called the dissent channel an "important" vehicle to convey alternative views that Acting Secretary of State Thomas Shannon and the department as a whole "value and respect."

**LAWSUIT AGAINST TRAVEL BAN**  
The top prosecutor in the state of Washington filed a lawsuit on Monday challenging as illegal and unconstitutional Trump's travel ban on seven Muslim-majority countries and demanding an immediate halt to its implementation.

"No one is above the law -- not even the president," Attorney General Bob Ferguson told a news conference. "And in the courtroom, it is not the loudest voice that prevails. It's the Constitution."

Ferguson's lawsuit -- the first of its kind -- targets Trump, Homeland Security and high-ranking administration officials. It calls for key provisions of the president's executive order on immigration to be declared illegal and unconstitutional.

The complaint argues that the travel ban, which has been met with an uproar both in the United States and abroad, was separating and harming families "and undermining Washington's sovereign interest in remaining a welcoming place for immigrants and refugees."

Several major companies in Washington state, including Amazon and Expedia, filed declarations along-

side the lawsuit explaining the fallout of the executive order on their operations and employees.

"Never has our system of checks and balances been more important," said Washington governor Jay Inslee, who joined Ferguson at the press conference.

"Until Congress takes this administration to task for the obvious moral and legal injuries suffered by innocent, law-abiding people entering our country, it is up to states to protect and promote the rights of the people who reside in our borders."

The suit urges the court to schedule a hearing on the matter within two weeks.

**US DIPLOMATS PROTEST TRAVEL BAN**

US State Department officials on Monday circulated a draft memo criticizing Trump's executive order on immigration, prompting a retort from the White House that they should "get with the program or they can go."

The draft memo in the "dissent channel," through which dissenting views are sent to the secretary of state and other top department officials, argued the policy would be counterproductive and damage America's image abroad.

"The end result of this ban will not be a drop in terror attacks in the United States; rather it will be a drop in international good will towards Americans and a threat towards our economy," said the draft memo seen by Reuters.

The document argued the policy would sour relations with the affected countries, inflame anti-American sentiment, and hurt those who seek to visit the United States for humanitarian reasons such as medical care.

"Moreover, such a policy runs counter to core American values of nondiscrimination, fair play, and extending a warm welcome to foreign visitors and immigrants," it added.

## 20 shortlisted

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of police Nur Mohammad, former PMO secretary Molla Wahiduzzaman and Dhaka University's Prof Sadeka Halim, to the panel.

Some BNP sources said there was discussion within the party to give some names, including those of former secretary Asafuddowla, former Bangladesh Bank governor Salehuddin Ahmed, local government expert Tofail Ahmed, eminent jurist Shahdeen Malik and Dhaka University's Prof Tasneem Siddique.

Other sources in the party said it might propose the names of former cabinet secretary Sadat Hossain and former additional secretary to the EC Jesmin Tuly.

None of the sources, however, confirmed whether those names were sent to the search committee.

Before the committee's meeting, BNP Senior Joint Secretary General Ruhul Kabir Rizvi along with party chairperson's personal secretary ABM Abdus Sattar handed over a letter to the Cabinet Division around noon.

Later in the day, Awami League's Office Secretary Abdus Sobhan Golap handed over his party's recommendations to Abdul Wadud, additional secretary to the Cabinet Division.

No political party officially disclosed its names recommended to the panel.

Bangladesh Communist Party and Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD-Rob) sent letters to the cabinet yesterday, saying the parties would not submit any names.

Bikalpadhara Bangladesh, Gono Forum, Islami Andolon Bangladesh and Bangladesh Khelafat Mojilish also did not recommend any names.

However, the Gono Forum proposed selecting the five commissioners either from 17 civil society members or finalising the five names following consultation with them.

On Monday, the search committee met with 12 of those civil society members.

The other five members were scheduled to meet the panel today. They include Daily Samakal Editor Golam Sarwar, Barrister Rokonuddin Mahmud, former CEC Abu Hena, security expert Maj Gen (ret'd) Abdur Rashid, and The Daily Star Editor and Publisher Mahfuz Anam.

However, talking to this newspaper last night, the cabinet secretary said the name of Abdur Rashid had been dropped "at the last moment", as a case against him was pending with the High Court.

On January 25, President Abdul Hamid formed the six-member search panel, headed by Justice Syed Mahmud Hossain, after holding a series of talks on EC formation with 31 political parties registered with the EC.

The other members of the panel are Justice Obaidul Hassan, a HC judge, Muhammed Sadique, chairman of Bangladesh Public Service Commission (BPS), Masud Ahmed, comptroller and auditor general of Bangladesh, Prof Syed Manzoorul Islam, trustee board member of Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB), and Shireen Akhter, pro-vice chancellor of Chittagong University.

The tenure of the incumbent EC expires this month. The new commission will conduct the next general elections in 2019.

The Rakib-led current EC drew a lot of flak for holding the January 5 "one-sided" elections where 153 lawmakers were elected unopposed in 2014.

According to a gazette issued on this January 25, the search committee would recommend two names each for the posts of the EC chief and four election commissioners. The panel would present its recommendations to the president in 10 working days.

Later, the president, on the prime

minister's advice, will appoint the CEC and the other commissioners.

On January 28, the search committee, in its first meeting, requested the 31 political parties to recommend five names each to the additional secretary of the Cabinet Division by yesterday for the appointment of the CEC and other commissioners.

Meanwhile, the Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) has asked the authorities concerned to appoint skilled, neutral and judicious people to the new EC for holding free, fair and inclusive polls.

TIB members made the call at a meeting at its head office in the capital on Monday, said a TIB press release yesterday.

Expressing hopes that the search committee would include stakeholders in the EC formation, the TIB said the panel should make public the final list of the names to be submitted to the president for ensuring transparency.

It also observed that good governance and corruption prevention depends much on an effective EC, one of the institutions included in the National Integrity Strategy announced by the government.

The TIB also voiced concern at the meeting as there is no specific law regarding EC formation, although it has the constitutional obligation to appoint election commissioners.

About 35 people from different professions who are involved in anti-corruption social movement along with the TIB attended the meeting.

**NAMES PROPOSED BY SOME OTHER PARTIES**

The Daily Star learnt about the following names "recommended" by the following parties after talking to several of their leaders, who wished not to be named.

Bangladesh NAP: Former secretary Asafuddowla, former governor of Bangladesh Bank Salehuddin Ahmed, former secretary Alauddin Sarkar, local government expert Tofail Ahmed, and Prof Tasneem Siddique.

Khelafat Majilish: Former secretary Asafuddowla, Shahdeen Malik, Tofail Ahmed, Gulshan Azad Mosque Khatib Mahmudul Hasan and former additional secretary to the EC Jesmin Tuly.

Bangladesh Muslim League: Salehuddin Ahmed, Prof Tasnim Siddique and former district judge MA Faful.

Bangladesh Jatiya Party (Partha): Asafuddowla and Shahdeen Malik.

Gonatantrik Party: Former PSC chairman Ikram Ahmed, former cabinet secretary Sadat Hossain, former judge Kabita Khanam, Brig Gen (ret'd) Shahadat Chowdhury and Shipping Secretary Ashok Madhab Roy.

Jatiya Party (Monju): Election Commissioner Mohammad Abdul Mobarak, Sadeka Halim and former secretary Sheikh Wahiduzzaman.

Bangladesh Samyabadi Dal (BSD): Former secretary Abdul Karim, Kabita Khanam and former bureaucrat Rafiqul Islam.

Jamiat e Ulama e Islam Bangladesh: Shahdeen Malik and Syed Modasser Hossain as CEC; and former Supreme Court registrar Iktedar Ahmed, former Planning Division secretary Akhtar Hossain Khan, former secretary Moniruzzaman Khan, Brig Gen AJM Fazlur Rahman (ret'd), Tofail Ahmed and Tasneem Siddique as commissioners.

Bangladesh Samajtantrik Dal: Sadat Hossain, Tofail Ahmed, former election commissioner M Shakhawat Hussain, former ambassador Humayun Kabir and Prof Naseem Akhter Hussain.

Bangladesh Islami Front: Former secretary Abdul Karim, former judge Khademul Islam Chowdhury, Brig Gen (ret'd) Khurshid Alam, former judge Ismail Mia and Saikhul Hadith Kazi Moinuddin Ashrafi.

## 67,000 Rohingyas crossed border since Oct 8

Foreign minister tells Jatiya Sangsad

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Around 67,000 Rohingyas entered Bangladesh since October 8 last year due to sectarian unrest, the anti-Muslim policy of the Myanmar government and an adverse socio-economic condition in Rakhine, Foreign Minister AH Mahmood Ali told parliament yesterday.

During the same period, Bangladesh pushed back at least 5,316 Rohingyas into Myanmar, Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan informed the House.

In a scripted answer, the foreign minister said Bangladesh had been working relentlessly to solve the long-standing Rohingya refugee issue.

"We are continuing talks with the Myanmar government and the UNHCR to send the refugees back home."

Repatriation of Myanmar refugees did not take place since 2005 due to unwillingness of the Myanmar government, he added.

In another scripted answer, the home minister said Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) stepped up patrols on the border and monitoring the activities of unidentified people through contacting locals to stop the Rohingyas from entering Bangladesh. Replying to a supplementary

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## Citizenship to Rohingyas

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camp in Ukhia and Teknaf upazilas of Cox's Bazar on Sunday and Monday.

The team arrived in Dhaka on Saturday and is expected to depart today.

According to the delegation chief, the other issues include human rights, ethnicities, freedom of movement and rule of law.

He made the comments in response to a question from a journalist about whether the commission believes the problems would be over once the Rohingya Muslims are granted citizenship.

"I think there are huge opportunities for everybody in the State the moment basic human rights and the rule of law are reestablished there for everybody," Salame told journalists.

Despite many opportunities, Rakhine is the least developed state in Myanmar, both economically and technologically, he pointed out.

Meanwhile, US Ambassador in Dhaka Marcia Bernicat yesterday visited some registered and unregistered Rohingya refugee camps in Teknaf and Ukhia.

Earlier last month, ambassadors of Denmark, Norway and Sweden in Dhaka paid a three-day visit to Cox's Bazar to see the situation of Rohingya refugees.

UN human rights envoy Yanghee Lee, who recently visited Myanmar, is due to arrive in Dhaka at the end of this month to see the plight of Rohingya refugees.

According to an official estimate, around 400,000 Rohingyas are now living in Bangladesh. The UN estimates that some 66,000 Myanmar citizens entered Bangladesh since violence erupted in Rakhine on October 9 last year. The Myanmar government formed the

nine-member Advisory Commission on Rakhine State, known as Rakhine commission, headed by former UN secretary-general Kofi Annan to find a lasting solution to the complex and delicate issues in Rakhine.

It is comprised of three international and six Myanmar personalities of eminence. The commission will submit a report to the government with recommendations in the second half of this year.

Addressing the discussion yesterday, the Commission members said although its recommendations were not binding, the Myanmar government recognised the Rakhine crisis through forming the Commission.

They said their recommendations would definitely carry a special significance and there might be pressure at home and abroad to implement those for a sustainable solution to the crisis.

The commission members said they will consider humanitarian and development issues, access to basic services, ensuring basic rights, and the security of Rakhine people.

They will undertake assessments and make recommendations to the Myanmar government by focusing on prevention of conflict, ensuring humanitarian assistance, human rights and reconciliation, building institutions and promoting development in Rakhine.

International relations expert Prof Imtiaz Ahmed, who attended the discussion, said the meeting discussed the citizenship issue. "We have constantly been saying for the last 20 years that they [Rohingyas] should be granted citizenship."