

3 municipal polls held peacefully

AL backed candidate elected Alfadanga mayor

STAR COUNTRY DESK

Elections to Biral, Bakshiganj and Alfadanga municipalities in Dinajpur, Jamalpur and Faridpur were held for the first time yesterday, report our correspondents.

Residents of the newly formed Biral municipality cast their ballots without any chaos to elect a mayor and councillors for its nine wards.

As many as 8,998 voters are in the municipality. Of them, around 70 percent cast their ballots through nine polling centres, said Zakia Sultana, returning officer of Biral municipality election.

The counting was going on till filing of this report around 6:00pm yesterday.

Nine aspirants contested for the mayoral post.

In Bakshiganj, election to the municipality was held yesterday.

Presiding Officer Md Nasir Uddin of Hajipara Government Primary School polling centre, said they postponed voting at the centre due to vote rigging by the supporters of AL candidate Shahina Begum.

There was a good turnout of voters in all 12 polling centres of the municipality from 8:00am to 4:00pm, he said.

Six candidates for the mayoral post contested in the election.

Meanwhile, AL nominated mayoral candidate Md Sifur Rhaman won election to Alfadanga municipality defeating two AL rebel aspirants Md Mokibul Hassan and Samsuddin Ahamad, and BNP nominated candidate Md Aatur Rhaman and Syed Arshaf Ali as individual candidate.



A brick kiln has been set up on farmland near human habitation at Mojumder bazar in Hatkishnapur union under Sadarpur upazila of Faridpur, violating the government ban.

PHOTO: SUZIT KUMAR DAS

Brick kiln on farmland

One Salam Munshi sets up SAM Brick on five acres of cropland beside a canal

SUZIT KUMAR DAS, Faridpur

Defying a government ban on setting up of brick kilns near cropland, human habitation and forest, a brick kiln is being set up near farmland and human habitation at Mojumder bazar area in Hatkishnapur union under Sadarpur upazila of the district, threatening the environment.

According to Burning of Bricks (control) Amendment Act 2010, setting up of brick field within three kilometres of farmland, forest, township and human habitation area is illegal.

On a recent visit, this correspondent found that Md Salam Munshi of Mojumder bazar started setting up SAM Brick on

five acres of farmland beside a canal two months ago. There are around 80 houses within 100 metres to 300 metres of the kiln, and also a government primary school about 600 metres away. Vegetables are cultivated on lands adjacent to the kiln.

Department of Environment (DoE) Inspector in the district Md Abu Sahid said Agriculture Officer of Sadarpur upazila Farhadul Miraz certified the lands on which the brick kiln has been set up as monoculture land on April 24 in 2017.

Abu Sahid said he visited the area and sent a report to the head office of the DoE on July 25 describing the situation and saying that a brick kiln should

not be set up there, but the head office did not pay any heed to the report and sent a team from Dhaka to visit the area. Their report recommended issuance of positional certificate for building brick kiln and the district DoE issued it to SAM Brick on November 21, he added.

"We have been working here for the last two months. It will take 15 more days to finish the work but the fire to burn bricks will be lit on December 29," said Amir Sheikh, a worker of SAM Brick.

Hatkishnapur Union Parishad Member Sheikh Faruk said, "SAM Brick has been set up on farmland and beside human habitation, including a government

primary school. I do not understand how the DoE and Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE) gave permission to build the kiln in that area."

"SAM Brick is 600 metres from our school, so we may face problems due to that," said Elias Ahamed, headmaster of Shoildobi Government Primary School.

Md Ayub Mollah of the area said the kiln owner has only one acre of land in that area and he took lease of other lands from the locals for Tk 20,000 to Tk 30,000 for one year.

Md Salam Munshi, owner of SAM Brick, said he started building the brick kiln after getting

permission from the DoE, adding that he has applied to the deputy commissioner's (DC) office for permission to burn bricks.

Deputy Director of DoE in the district Md Lutfor Rhaman said DoE gives positional certificate and issues environmental certificate for brick kiln and the DC's office gives permission to burn bricks. If the DC's office does not give permission to burn bricks, the owner cannot run the brick kiln, he added.

Upazila Nirbahi Officer of Sadarpur Purobi Golder said DoE and DAE gave permission to build the kiln breaking the law, adding that he will take necessary steps after talking with the owner of the brick kiln.

13 held while entering Bangladesh from India

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole

Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) members arrested 13 people, including children, while they were illegally entering Bangladesh from India through Boroachra border under Benapole Port Police Station yesterday.

They are Jafar Sheikh, 40, Taslima Begum, 28, Tasamul Sheikh, 9, Munn Begum, 27, Lovely, 5, Islam Sheikh, 2, Ibrahim Sheikh, 11, Manik Sheikh, 9, Ratan Dutt, 18, Maria Begum, 25, Atiur Sheikh, 30, Baby Begum, 25, and Lamia, 6.

BGB 49 Battalion Camp Commander Naib Subedar Abdul Wahab said BGB members arrested six children, four women and three men. They hail from Khulna, Gopalganj and Narail.

They were handed over to Benapole Port Police Station and a case was filed in this connection.

Hundi money recovered

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole

Members of Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) recovered hundi money amounting to Tk 7 lakh from bordering Putkhali village under Benapole Port Police Station on Wednesday night.

The border guards, however, failed to arrest any people in this connection.

Acting on a tip-off, BGB members conducted a drive on the bank of Ichhamati river near the border when a group of smugglers were trying to smuggle the money.

Sensing the presence of the law enforcers, the gang fled the scene leaving behind the bag containing the amount.

Brutality on teenager by BCL man

Tortured Emdadul Haque is now under treatment at Aditmari Upazila Health Complex

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

A local Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) leader was expelled from the organisation for torturing a teenager over allegation of stealing a bicycle at Mahishkhocha Bazar in Aditmari upazila of the district on Wednesday.

The victim is Emdadul Haque, 13, son of late Shafiqul Islam of Baroghariya village is now under treatment in Aditmari Upazila Health Complex.

The expelled BCL man is Ashique Babu, 27, son of Mokhlesar Rahman of the village and joint secretary of Mahishkhocha union unit BCL.

"I was tied to a tree and tortured mercilessly by Babu and his two cohorts beside the bazar on Wednesday morning," Emdadul said. "They told me



Anjuna Bewa takes care of her tortured son Emdadul Haque at Aditmari Upazila Health Complex in Lalmonirhat.

PHOTO: STAR

that I stole a bicycle, but I do not know about it," he added.

Emdadul's mother lodged a case, accusing three people, with Aditmari Police Station on Wednesday night, said Officer-in-Charge (OC) of the police station Hareishwar Roy, adding

that they arrested a cohort of Babu yesterday.

The arrestee is Mithu Islam, 29, son of Rezaul Islam of the village.

"We have expelled Babu as he broke the chain of command of the organisation," said Kamal

Hossain Sarker, president of Aditmari upazila unit BCL. "A teenager was tortured mercilessly by the expelled BCL leader and his cohorts over a false allegation," he added.

Emdadul's mother Anjuna said he runs a makeshift tea-stall in the bazar and also studies in a local school. "After the death of my husband five years ago, Emdadul has been earning for us," she added.

Resident Medical Officer of Aditmari Upazila Health Complex Dr Golam Ambiya said Emdad was injured on his hands, legs, back and head. "We have been providing treatment to him in the hospital," he added.

The OC said police are trying to arrest Babu and the other accused. "We also taking care of the treatment of Emdadul in the hospital," he added.

Robbery in Joypurhat

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

Robbers looted valuables from the house of a Hindu family in Joypurhat Sadar upazila early yesterday.

Locals said 10 to 12 robbers broke into Akhil Chandra Mondal's house at Pakurdara village under Joypurhat Sadar upazila and looted valuables worth Tk 11 lakh, which included 20 bhoris of gold ornaments, Tk 26,000 in cash and two mobile phone sets.

Earlier, robbers looted valuables worth a total of Tk 16 lakh from three houses on Wednesday night.

Police have not been able to arrest the robbers nor recover any of the looted valuables.

Additional Superintendent of Police in Joypurhat Belayet Hossain said police are trying hard to arrest the robber gangs.

Death of 2 in road crash sparks protest

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Narsingdi

Agitated locals blocked the Dhaka-Sylhet highway after two people, including a 10-year-old boy, were killed in a head-on collision between a police wrecker and a human hauler near Narsingdi's Boraitola area yesterday.

At least 10 others, including pedestrians and workers of an apparel factory, were injured in the accident that occurred around 7:45am yesterday.

Quoting witnesses, police said the accident took place as the driver of the Narsingdi-bound police wrecker from Itakhola area lost his control over the steering and collided with an Itakhola-bound human hauler, stationed in front of the main gate of Aduri Apparels owned by Tharmex Group, leaving two people dead on the spot and injuring 10 others.

The deceased were Yasin Arafat, 28, an employee of Aduri Apparels, and Zihad, son of Ripon Miah of Bhelanagar area, who was going to participate at the Ijtema.

Meanwhile, protesting the deaths, agitated workers and locals ransacked a number of passenger buses and private cars on the highway and set a police wrecker afire, Officer-in-Charge of Shibpur Model Police Station Syeduzzaman said.

The agitated locals also attacked a Moulvibazar-bound vehicle of BTV, which left programme producer Mamun Mahmud and camera person Abdul Quader injured.

Abdullah's medicinal garden blessing for the poor

EAM ASADUZZAMAN with ANDREW EAGLE

Understanding the medicinal properties of plants is a world of wisdom, a bank of knowledge which has often been handed down through centuries. The subject has fascinated septuagenarian SM Abdullah from Kathaltoli village in Nilphamari's Domar upazila since his boyhood. For many years he wanted to establish a medicinal garden for villagers to rely on to treat symptoms and minor illnesses. In 1998 he did just that.

"Looking for herbal plants in the wild was always my hobby," says Abdullah, "but it was after I graduated as a mechanical engineer in the 1960s and went to work in Thailand and China that I became convinced that a garden really would be a good idea. In those countries both the governments and people are quite committed to such remedies."

Indian gooseberry, black myrobalan, felwort and devil's cotton: after 28 years abroad Abdullah set to work, scouring roadsides, bamboo clumps and scrubland, anywhere he thought he might find specimens. Native asparagus, prostrate spurge, ironweed and tulsi: the garden he established on sixty bighas of land has around fifty species.

"Village women often arrive bearing sick children," he says. "They seek help for common ailments like fever, pain and diarrhoea. I advise them as to which leaves, roots or fruit might be useful." Residents from around eight villages visit the garden. Remedies are provided for free.

"Alo vera is used to keep the brain cool and for making cosmetics," says Abdullah's assistant Ranju Mia, by way of example. "Madagascar periwinkle can help control diabetes and blood pressure. The arjun tree can assist in

preventing heart disease."

Varieties of fruit are also grown, with fruit sales used to subsidise the cost of tending the herbal plants.

"The garden is a blessing for the poor," says Domar upazila council's chairman, A. Razzak Basunia. "Our forefathers taught us these treatments; the government hospital is quite a distance away."

"Abdullah's is the largest medicinal garden in the upazila," says the local agriculture officer Jafar Iqbal. "We try to help with technical support."

With his herbal garden a success, Abdullah has a new dream. "I want to expand the garden and make it profitable, so that even people abroad will know how blessed we are with rare herbs and a long heritage of traditional remedies." He hopes for a bank loan to help fulfil his future plans.



Septuagenarian SM Abdullah at his herbal medicinal garden at Kathaltoli village in Nilphamari's Domar upazila.

PHOTO: STAR