

## RAILWAY JOBS

# Recruitment test postponed after question leak

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Bangladesh Railway postponed the recruitment test for ticket collectors scheduled to be held simultaneously in Rajshahi and Chittagong yesterday following an incident of question leak.

Around 64,000 job seekers, who gathered in Rajshahi and Chittagong from various corners of the country for attending the recruitment test, were asked to return home following the postponement.

Outraged, many of the job seekers agitated in front of Rajshahi Rail Building, protesting the authority's failure in holding the examinations.

"I am feeling harassed," said Saiful Islam, who went to Rajshahi from Patuakhali.

The railway authorities sought applications for 81 posts of the second-grade ticket collectors (who collect tickets at platforms for preventing travellers without tickets) in November last year.

Some 64,000 persons applied for the 81 posts. In January this year, the

authorities fixed the date for holding the recruitment test. The one-and-a-half-hour test was to be held from 3:30pm to 5:00pm simultaneously in Rajshahi and Chittagong.

Among the applicants, 44,200 persons went to sit for the test in Rajshahi while 19,800 others in Chittagong.

At 11:00am yesterday, the railway's west zonal office received a telephone call from the Railway Headquarters in Dhaka about an allegation of question leak, and most of the leaked questions were same as the original, said Shahidul Islam, chairman of the recruitment committee.

"We announced the postponement at 1:00pm when we could become confirmed about the leak," said Shahidul, also the Chief Personnel Officer of Rajshahi Zonal Railway.

The questions were prepared in Rajshahi and the question papers packed in sealed boxes were sent to the examination centres, he said.

The authorities have formed a three-member committee to investigate the question leak.



People use a footpath partly dug up in the capital's Farmgate for the work of metro rail project. The photo was taken on Thursday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

## Women from ethnic armed group killed in Myanmar's east

AFP, Yangon

Several women were among those killed in Myanmar's restive eastern region in renewed clashes between the army and an ethnic rebel group, with both sides providing conflicting accounts of the battle.

Fighting broke out on July 11 between soldiers and Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA) insurgents near Awelaw village in remote Shan state near the Chinese border, both sides confirmed.

The military announced yesterday that eight people, mostly women, were killed in the clashes.

## 3 more killed in 'gunfights'

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and Rab said were "shootouts" with the officers.

In Chittagong, Rab said, two suspects were killed in a "gunfight" with its officers in Khulshi area early yesterday.

One of them was Babul, 30, of Bhola's Lalmoan upazila while the other, aged about 25, could not be identified, Rab said.

The bodies were sent to Chittagong Medical College Hospital morgue for autopsy.

Contacted, Mimitanur Rahman, assistant director of Rab-7, said the incident took place when a Rab team attempted to search a microbus around 1:30am.

The men in the vehicle opened fire on

the officers, triggering a brief "gunfight". The elite force later recovered two bullet-ridden bodies from the vehicle, Mimitanur claimed.

Several others, who were on board the vehicle, managed to flee, he said, adding that two Rab men were slightly injured in the incident.

Rab officers recovered 85kg of marijuana, a firearm and five shells of bullets from the scene, the official said, adding that the microbus was handed over to Khulshi Police Station and a case was lodged.

In a strikingly similar description of event, police in Comilla said a "drug trader" was killed in a "gunfight" with officers on Dhaka-Chittagong high-

way in Daudkandi upazila around 1:30am.

Khorshed Alam alias Kana Khorshed, 48, of Ganganagar area in Debidwar upazila was wanted in 13 cases filed with police stations in Dhaka, Comilla and Narayanganj, police said.

Alamgir Hossain, officer-in-charge of Daudkandi Police Station, said acting on a tip-off, police stopped a car on the highway near Hasanpur Government College. The men on board the car opened fire on the officers, leading to the "gunfight".

Khorshed's body was found at the scene later while the others fled.

Police claimed to have recovered 80kg of marijuana and a firearm from the car.

## No election

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the accord and allow the indigenous people to enjoy a "special ruling system" as mentioned in the accord.

The first local government councils were introduced in Rangamati, Khagrachhari and Bandarban in 1989, 18 years after the country's independence. The only elections to the councils were held the same year.

Through the polls, each of the councils got a chairman and 30 members, who included Bangalees.

However, when the tenure of the bodies ended in 1992, they went to the hands of the representatives selected by then ruling party BNP.

Five years later, the CHT Peace Accord was signed between the then Awami League government and Parbatya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samiti (PCJSS). The three councils were reintroduced as district councils following the agreement.

In 1997, some major changes were brought to the councils. One of them was that their tenure was extended to five years from three.

In line with the peace accord, the regional council was formed the following year and was tasked with supervising the three district councils and ensuring coordination among them.

However, the regional and the district councils are yet to go to polls.

Since its inception, the regional council has been running under the leadership of PCJSS President Jyotirindra Bodhipriya Larma, popularly known as Santu Larma, who is its chairman.

But Santu Larma on a number of occasions criticised the government for its "reluctance" to make the regional and district councils properly functional.

Sajib Chakma, assistant information and publicity secretary of PCJSS, said they urged the governments several times to hold elections to the councils. "But our repeated pleas fell on deaf ears," he said.

Talking to The Daily Star, Goutam Dewan, who was elected chairman of Rangamati local government council in 1989, said the district councils were established to introduce a special ruling system in the hills.

"However, they have become dysfunctional as those were not formed by people's vote," said Goutam, now president of CHT Nagorik Committee, a civil society platform.

"The government is betraying with the people in the hills by not holding the elections," he said.

Naba Bikram Kishore Tripura, former secretary of the CHT affairs ministry, said, "Although there are some complexities in arranging the polls, sincerity from the government can solve the issue."

Chakma Circle Chief Barrister Raja Debasish Roy, however, said there was no legal bar to formulate rules for holding the elections.

"As elections to the district councils were not held in the last 26 years, the councils have no accountability to the indigenous people who are deprived of various government benefits," he said.

Contacted, local government expert Dr Tofail Ahmed said the regional and the district councils were formed on the ground that the CHT people had long been struggling to get regional autonomy.

The aim was that the councils would provide a certain group of

people with a "comfort zone" to resolve their pending issues and also the sense that they themselves were ruling the region", he said,

"But the councils are not functioning accordingly. As a result, stray incident of violence are not ending," he said.

Making the CHT district councils and regional council effective was very much essential for the wellbeing of the people living in the hills, he added.

While district councils in all the other 61 districts of the country fall under the jurisdiction of the local government division, the three district councils in Rangamati, Khagrachhari and Bandarban are under the CHT affairs ministry.

Dipankar Talukdar, a former state minister for CHT affairs, said during his tenure he sent several letters to the then chief election commissioner, requesting him to take initiative for the polls.

"But he did not pay any heed," he said, adding the EC had "no visible interest in the elections".

Denying the allegation, EC Secretary Helal Uddin Ahmed said the commission did not receive any such letter from the ministry in the last 20 years.

"How can we arrange election if the ministry does not request us," he said.

Sultana Kamal, co-chair of the CHT commission, said holding elections to the district councils was prerequisite for the full implementation of the peace accord.

She said demographics of the hills have changed over the years while the overall political atmosphere has also become "more anti-indigenous people".

"As elections did not take place for many years, its long-lasting negative impact on the region's political atmosphere can be apparent now," she added.

Sultana said elections to the councils should be held soon while liberty of the institutions is also essential for their proper functioning. Moreover, locals have to cooperate with the elected representatives, she added.

Meanwhile, locals alleged that "district councils were turning into branches of ruling party's office".

Prof Thanjama Lusai, former chairman of Bandarban district council, said the district councils have become "money-making centres for ruling party men".

Chai Thow Aong Marma, former chairman of Khagrachhari district council, said for ensuring development work, each district council receives around Tk 40 crore every year through the CHT affairs ministry.

The Daily Star contacted State Minister for CHT Affairs Bir Bahadur U Shwe Sing several times over the phone but he refused to make any comment on the issue.

This newspaper also tried to reach the current chairmen of the district councils for comments but failed.

According to the 2011 population census, Rangamati had a population of around 6.2 lakh while Khagrachhari 6.13 lakh and Bandarban 4.04 lakh. The people were both from the ingenious and Bangalee communities. Latest data on the population was not available.

[Our Rangamati correspondent Anvil Chakma and Khagrachhari correspondent Saikat Dewan contributed to this report]

## Anomalies aplenty

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Take for example the campaigns in Rajshahi city. A large dummy boat, the election symbol of Awami League mayor candidate AHM Khairuzzaman Liton, was put up on the median strip of a road in the city's C&B intersection area. Its size is much bigger than the permissible limit of 3X3X3 metres.

The city streets are flooded with the AL candidate's campaign materials. At least 150 placards of Liton have been put up on the median strip and hanged from the electricity poles along the road heading towards the Rajshahi regional office of the EC in the city's Chandipur area.

About a dozen placards have been put up there seeking vote for BNP mayoral nominee Mosaddek Hossain Bulbul. The sizes of the placards of both the candidates are almost same. Most of the dummy election symbols and placards are bigger than the sizes mentioned in the electoral code.

Several mayoral candidates have filed complaints with the returning officer about the use of illegal campaign materials.

During his visit to Rajshahi on July 17-18, Election Commissioner Brig Gen (ret'd) Shahadat Hossain Chowdhury said most of the campaign materials were illegal and he requested the candidates to remove those.

The returning officer on July 18 sent notices to all five mayor and some councillor hopefuls asking them to remove their illegal campaign materials from the city corporation area within the next 24 hours. But nobody seemed to comply with the notices.

Speaking at a discussion in the city yesterday, Bulbul alleged that Liton's men occupied most of the areas by putting up their campaign materials.

Denying the allegation, Liton said the BNP candidate was unable to put up his placards and banners in the city due to a lack of workers.

"There is enough space along the streets to put up crores of banners and placards. But Bulbul doesn't have enough workers to do the job," he told The Daily Star.

In his affidavit submitted to the EC, Liton said he would use 400,000 posters and 400 digitally printed placards for campaigning. However, about 400,000 digitally printed placards have been prepared to run the mayor hopeful's campaign, his election workers and some printing press staffers said.

Faisal Hossain, manager of Saimum Art, a digital printing press near Rajshahi New Market, said they have digitally printed around 50,000 placards and 10,000 banners for Liton.

Jahid Hasan, manager of another digital printing press Projapoti, said



A three-wheeler with a large dummy boat (election symbol of the Awami League) mounted on it roams the street as part of campaigns for the party's mayoral candidate in the Barisal City Corporation elections. Election officials said this was a clear violation of the electoral code of conduct and they stopped its use after becoming aware of the means of campaigning. The photo was taken last week.

PHOTO: STAR

they have so far digitally printed at least one lakh campaign materials for Liton and 50,000 for Bulbul. Visiting the press on Wednesday, this correspondent found the printing had been underway.

Liton yesterday said, "I printed posters and banners as per my declaration in the affidavit. It is city residents who are printing the additional posters and banners. I asked my men to make sure that this doesn't happen. What else can I do to stop them doing this?"

BNP candidate Bulbul said when they lodge complaints with the EC about violation of electoral code, the officials ask them to mention specific allegations.

"When we contact the Election Commission about specific allegations, they don't take any action," he alleged.

### SYLHET NO EXCEPTION

BNP mayoral candidate Ariful Haque Choudhury has submitted three complaints to the returning officer against AL nominee Badar Uddin Ahmed Kamran and Jamaat-backed independent candidate Ahsanul Mahboob Zubair about violation of the electoral code of conduct.

Kamran has filed two complaints against Ariful and Zubair. The independent candidate has also filed two

complaints against the AL and BNP nominees, said EC officials.

According to the electoral code of conduct, a candidate can set up an electoral camp in an area not bigger than around 390 square feet.

Ariful and Zubair have set up their main electoral camps at Mita Community Centre in the city's Kazitula and Nure Ala Community centre on Electric Supply Road, both sized over 1,000 square feet.

Ali Ahmed, general secretary of Sylhet district BNP, said they rented 600 square feet area of the community centre.

Zubayer also said they rented a small room of the community centre.

Meanwhile, AL supporters have put up a dummy "boat" with decorative lights in the city's Shahi Eidgah area in violation of the electoral code.

Kamran on Tuesday joined a rally at Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical College Hospital area. Several microphones were used at the programme, organised by the hospital chapter of Bangladesh Nurses Association.

Proloy Kumar Saha, assistant returning officer in Sylhet, said nine complaints were filed till date about the violation of the electoral code and all of those were resolved "in some way or the other".

Seven candidates, including three independent ones, are running in the Sylhet mayoral polls.

### 16 COMPLAINTS IN BARISAL

In Barisal, nine complaints from BNP candidate Mujibur Rahaman Sawroar and seven from AL candidate Sernibat Sadik Abdullah were submitted to the returning officer till Thursday.

The complaints have been referred to executive magistrates and the police for investigation, said sources at the returning officer's office.

The BNP alleged that the AL candidate used the Circuit House for campaigning, set up billboards at different places and used loudspeakers after 8:00pm.

On the other hand, the AL complained that the BNP brought out processions in the city flouting the electoral code of conduct.

"We have received 16 complaints about violation of the electoral code till today [yesterday]. We have referred the complaints to the executive magistrates concerned and the police for investigations. Necessary actions will be taken after receiving the probe reports," said Md Helal Uddin Khan, senior election officer and also the assistant returning officer in Sylhet.

Seven candidates are contesting the Barisal mayoral polls.