

Enough lies!

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hamlet fed up with the government's broken promises.

"You've been lying to us for years. No party is welcome in Podgora," reads a white banner strung across the main square of the 700-person village, which lies some 30 kilometres (18 miles) from the capital Sarajevo.

Sunday's general elections will fill Bosnia's highest political offices, from a three-person presidency down to district assemblies.

But few are expecting significant change in a nation that has been paralysed for decades, in part because of unresolved conflicts dating back to the ethnic conflicts that engulfed Bosnia in the 1990s.

The war killed 100,000 and split the country into two largely autonomous regions linked by a weak central government.

Like huge swathes of the population, the people of Podgora are disillusioned by a political class known chiefly for corruption and dysfunction.

"Enough lies!" Adi Silajdzic, 47, told AFP when asked why he supported the village's politician blockade.

"We're fed up that every time they come they tell us stories and make promises to ensure votes."

"And every time, on the day after the elections, it is as if nothing had happened, as if they did not even come to see us," said the unemployed father.

A few political campaigners did not heed the warning and put up posters inside Podgora, which is home to Bosnian Muslims.

But locals quickly ripped them down. To underscore their point, someone scrawled another message on the back of the banner with a spray can: "Did you read it? People have had enough."

Families pitched in to pay for the 50-euro (\$58) banner -- a hefty sum in a community where most are unemployed, living off of small vegetable farms and livestock.

Sitting around a wooden table in the shade of a plum tree, a group of local men said Podgora has been neglected by authorities ever since the war, which left lasting damage on Bosnia's economy and infrastructure.

The Woolyneck

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termed this species of stork "a former visitor of Bangladesh".

However, in 2015-16, our "former visitor" had made a sudden comeback in Rajshahi which was able to instill some hope in bird lovers of their return. This extraordinary event was recorded and reported in the Nature Quest published on March 11, 2016.

Since then, to the delight of bird-lovers across the country, the Asian-Woolyneck, along with other less rare storks, has been visiting the banks of the Padma every winter.

To add to this, at the onset of this year's monsoon, a pair of storks was observed nesting on a telephone tower in Prentali, a small town about 20 kilometers from Rajshahi, on the way to Chapainawabganj.

The two about-to-be-parents storks with their black-vermillion bodies, fluffy white necks and black-red bills were unmistakably Asian-Woolynecks.

Due to the high odds against any bird building its nursery on an exposed platform in Bangladesh, bird-lovers kept their fingers crossed for the Asian-Woolynecks and their plan to expand their family and species in the country. With ample food in the wet paddy-fields of Prentali, including frogs, grasshoppers, crickets, earthworms and moles, bird-lovers and nature enthusiasts knew the birds had whatever they needed.

However, what the people were most afraid of were nest robbery by telephone technicians, killing or trapping of the parent-birds by local hunters or recurrent visits by photographers.

The tower, however, proved to be a satisfactory nesting site when Asian-Woolynecked fledglings flew out of their nest in August. Birdwatchers are now relieved as they watch the stork family foraging in the nearby paddy-fields every day.

After more than a century, these storks chose not to stop at a revisit but brought and are also raising their children right here on our land. Thus, our "former visitor" became a breeding stork in Bangladesh. The question that now remains is that, as they are resident breeders in wetlands with trees, will we see more of these storks setting up their nests here?

The Asian-Woolyneck is a species that lives only in east and far east Asia and, unlike the White Stork, it does not migrate far to breed. As bird-lovers in Rajshahi rejoice in the presence of these iconic birds and help make their neighbourhoods more bird-friendly, we can hope that the number of breeding storks will increase.

In four years, the baby Woolynecks of Prentali will become adults looking for their own nesting sites somewhere on the riverbanks of the Padma, and it is up to us to help them feel right at home.

Can't take action

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Contacted, Dhaka South City Corporation Mayor Mohammad Sayeed Khokon said, "Right now, we cannot take any action. If we do, there will be mixed reactions from political leaders."

"Many of our party men paste posters which contain photos of Bangabandhu, our party chief, secretary and mine. These are thousands in number and out of our control. But we do not encourage them to do so."

Different party political leaders are putting them up and if we try to remove them now, they will react."

Asked about posters with his photos on them, he said that no one took his consent before pasting those.

"If you ask me about political posters, I'll say we're helpless. We have nothing to do in this case. Political leaders need willingness to remove posters," said Dhaka North City Corporation's (DNSCC) Chief Waste Management Officer Commodore M A Razzak.

He added that the late Annisul Huq had taken some steps to stop the practice but things became harder without him.

Mokhlesur Rahman, president of AL's Ramma and Hatirjheel unit, whose posters can also be seen in many areas, claimed to The Daily Star that he had nothing to do with putting them up.

"Some of the boys have put up those [posters]. They do it to make us happy," he said, citing examples where some party men put up pictures with their superiors in order to please them.

Interestingly, most of the posters of Mokhlesur only contain pictures of him and Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal.

He also added that although they do not give any money for the posters, they do pay to print some during special occasions, such as Eid, to send their greetings to their constituents.

A similar condition was seen in other places of the capital, including Mohakhali, Gabtoli, Mirpur, Malibagh, Moghbazar, Jatrabari, Motijheel, Segunbagicha, Gulistan, Paltan, Shantinagar and Khilgaon.

"They [candidate seekers] turn the city ugly....You cannot expect a good future from ugly minds," said Md Khairuzzaman, an official of a private bank.

Wishing anonymity, a caretaker at a house in Moghbazar, said he hung a

notice on their building's wall for not pasting posters, but to no avail.

"Look at the wall. How ugly it has been made," the caretaker said, adding, "I used to tear off the posters, but it didn't stop. Besides, the posters are now of the local influential people. So, I gave up doing it."

Under the relevant act, permission must be obtained from the Union Parishad and city corporation to poster non-designated places.

The act has given the city corporations a mandate to designate places for posters.

For Dhaka North, there are 20 such areas adjacent to -- Uttara BDR Bazar, Jasimuddin Road, Kalshi Road, Shialbari, Rainkhola, Notun Bazar, Banasree, Taltola Market, Nayatola Shishu Park, Tolarbagh, NITOR, two location near Farmgate's Ananda Cinema Hall, Mohammadpur Krish Market, Mohammadpur Town Hall, Asad Gate, Khejuri Bagan, Fertility Centre in Mohammadpur, Rayerbazar and Gulshan Shooting Club.

However, DSCC are yet to designate any areas.

Moktar Sarder, councillor of ward no-35, whose poster has also been seen at different places, said, "As far as I know, not only Moghbazar, no ward has such designated place for posters."

"Our acting mayor [of DNCC] recently told us to remove all posters soon before announcing the election schedule. I have already given directives to do so," added Moktar, also organising secretary of AL's Dhaka city north unit.

Taking a bold move, DNCC, in December 2017, cancelled the licences of six renowned coaching centres for violating its instruction by not removing their illegal banners, posters, fests, toons and signboards from the city's roads.

But the authority continues to overlook the posters of local political leaders, including those of their councillors.

2 killed

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Among the injured, Motalib died on way to hospital.

The injured were rushed to Sadar Hospital and among them, four were sent to Dhaka Medical College and Hospital, he added.

Additional police members were deployed in the village to avert any untoward situation.

through a neighbour who was currently in India, Rab said.

He, along with his accomplices, would deliver two consignments weekly for Tk 10,000 to Tk 15,000 each, Rab officials said.

The Rab official, however, did not name who handed the gold to Jahidul in Old Dhaka, for the sake of investigation.

He suspected that the gold was carried from abroad and received from the airport, dodging the security forces personnel there.

"Some jewelers might have been involved in the gold smuggling..." said Maj Ruhul Amin, a company commander of Rab-2 who led the drive.

Those arrested so far in different raids are mostly carriers but law enforcers are trying to arrest the mastermind, Rab officials said.

3 policemen

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and constables Md Akash Chowdhury and Wahiduzzaman.

The court also jailed police informer Mahfuzul Alam Rony for three years on the same charges.

Of the four, Manjurul is now behind bars. The others went into hiding after securing bail from the High Court.

Judge Mizanur Rahman Khan of the Special Judge for Dhaka Division delivered the verdict after examining all 24 prosecution witnesses.

The punishment of the fugitives would be effective from the day of their arrest or surrender, said the court.

According to the case statement, a gang of smugglers had abandoned the car in Banasree area on March 13, 2014, after being chased by a police team, led by Manjurul. The team seized 235 gold bars, but the Rampura police recorded seizure of only 70.

Three days later, car driver Samir Biswas along with alleged smuggler Jahid Hossain went to Rampura Police Station to get back the car.

As police arrested the duo, Samir claimed that there were 235 gold bars in the car.

On March 18, Rampura police filed a case in this regard.

A few days later, Detective Branch of Dhaka Metropolitan Police was tasked with probing the incident.

Detectives recovered 58 of the gold bars from the house of Manjurul's relative in Narayanganj, 63 from Wahid's house in Bogura's Sonatola, 14 from the house of Akash's father-in-law in Gazipur's Kaliakoir, and 14 from Rony's possession. The three cops and the police informer were arrested.

The case was later transferred to the Anti-Corruption Commission.

After probing the case, the graft

watchdog in 2015 pressed charges against the three cops and the informer for their involvement in the incident.

US mulls withdrawal from arms treaty over Russian 'violations'

AFP, Geneva

The United States yesterday hinted that it might withdraw from a landmark Cold War nuclear arms reduction treaty if Russia does not stop "violating" the accord.

Washington has complained for nearly two years that a ground-launched missile system deployed by Russia breaches the 1987 Intermediate Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF).

"This situation is untenable, and we have to take measures to deal with this continued violation of this very important treaty," US ambassador on disarmament Robert Wood told reporters in Geneva.

He said that pushing Russia to "come back into compliance" with the INF would be a top US priority at disarmament meetings at the United Nations in New York next week.

But he added: "I just don't know how much longer we can continue to live up to our obligations under this treaty with Russia violating this treaty so blatantly and openly."

Russia has repeatedly insisted its 9M729 missile system does not breach the treaty, but Wood said Moscow had long denied the weapon even existed.

"The Russians continue to obfuscate, deny, because this is what they do best," he said.

His comments came after the US ambassador to Nato, Kay Bailey Hutchison, said Tuesday that Washington was looking to "take out the missiles that are in development by Russia".

She later clarified that she was not suggesting the United States would launch pre-emptive strikes on Russia, but underlining the need for Western allies to find ways to counter any escalation.

Nato leaders have also raised concerns about the 9M729 system, and have urged Moscow to engage in dialogue to ensure the future of the INF treaty.

No legal

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challenge the HC order.

There is no legal bar for Shahidul to continue getting division facilities in jail following the SC order.

Attorney General Mahbubey Alam argued for the government while Sara Hossain, Sharif Bhuiyan, Jyotirmoy Barua and Tanim Hossain Shawon represented Shahidul.

Shahidul has been getting division facilities in jail since September 7 following the HC order passed on September 5.

The 63-year-old photographer was arrested and sent to jail in a case filed under the Information and Communication Technology Act accusing him of spreading propaganda and false information against the government.

He was picked up by plainclothes men from his home in the capital's Dhanmondi on August 5. Police filed the case against him the following day.

The High Court yesterday continued for second day the hearing of the bail petition of Shahidul.

The bench of Justice AKM Asaduzzaman and Justice SM Moizibur Rahman fixed 2:00pm on Sunday for resuming the proceedings.

During yesterday's hearing, Mahbubey Alam argued that there were serious allegations against Shahidul that needed to be investigated.

He said Shahidul gave an interview to Al Jazeera English provoking people against the state during demonstrations for safe roads.

Shahidul's lawyer Sara Hossain said he has been languishing in jail for a long time in the case filed on false and baseless allegations.

Shahidul submitted the bail petition to the HC on September 18, saying that the allegations against him did not fall under section 57.

This was his second plea moved before the HC seeking bail in the same case.

A trial court rejected bail to the photographer on September 11.

EC decides

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committee chief, chaired the meeting.

He said nine regional election officers had been recommended for promotion to the fourth grade and 29 officials to the fifth grade as deputy secretary.

Also, the job status of 37 officials has been recommended for upgrade to senior assistant secretary.

Mahbub told reporters that the EC

would try to fill the newly created posts before the 11th parliamentary election scheduled to be held at the end of December.

Events unreal

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In the case statement, Moniruzzaman claimed that leaders and activists of Hazaribagh thana unit BNP and some miscreants gathered on Salam Sardar Road, blocking traffic around 4:40pm on Sunday.

They were carrying sticks, brick chips and pieces of glass. As police tried to disperse them, the accused hurled brickbats and broken glass at police. Later, other policemen rushed to the spot and chased the troublemakers away, the FIR said.

Police also arrested seven activists of Jubo Dal, BNP's youth front, from the scene. Police learned the identities of the other accused by quizzing the arrestees, it added.

Moniruzzaman also claimed in the case statement that he and other on-duty policemen were injured in the attack, but did not mention any number or names of his "injured" colleagues.

Over the last few days, The Daily Star spoke with at least 20 people who have shops or live within 100 yards of the spot to verify the police claim.

Each of them said they were unaware of any procession, rally, road blockade or attack on police that day.

"We did not see any BNP procession in the last couple of months. It is impossible that I would not notice such an incident. I open my shop early in the morning and close it deep into the night," said Sadek, whose teastall is just a few feet from the alleged scene.

Ekram Ali Mia, officer-in-charge of Hazaribagh Police Station, insisted they filed