

Every vote matters

Hasina says on way back to capital

LUNB, Rajbari

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday urged all to cast vote for Awami League in order to continue the development activities of her government and ensure a hunger and poverty-free Bangladesh.

"Every vote is valuable and your one will help us form the government for the continuation of the country's development," she said at a rally at Bhanga circle in Faridpur, on her way to Dhaka from Tungipara. The rally was organised as part of the party's second day of election campaign.

"If Awami League fails to return to power, the construction work of the Padma Bridge will be suspended," she said.

The AL president also sought vote for Kazi Zafarullah, the party nominee in Faridpur-4.

"I'm seeking your vote... as you can understand how valuable your vote is for the continuation of development and establishment of Bangladesh as a dignified country in the world arena," the prime minister added.

Bangladesh became independent through casting vote for "boat" and gradually a hunger and poverty-free country has been built, she said.

Referring to many development works carried out by her government, the AL president said, "We've become self-reliant in food, while the literacy rate in the country has increased... there has been a rise in power generation, too."

Addressing another rally at Mahendra Stand in Daulatdia of Rajbari, she said, "It's important for

Awami League candidates to win in all the seats. Keep it in mind while casting your vote."

"During the BNP-Jamaat rule, there was a rise in terrorism and militancy as people saw the incidents of 10-truck arms haul, August 21 grenade attack and serial bomb blast across the country. People across the country got terrified. Bangladesh also became the champion in corruption for five times."

"After forming the government, we've taken steps so that the people can lead a happy life," Hasina said.

She said the second Padma Bridge would be constructed on completion of the first one. "A feasibility study is underway for the second Padma Bridge. Awami League knows it very well how to take the country forward."

Addressing a public rally at Komorpur Abdul Aziz Institution in Faridpur Sadar, Hasina said, "We don't want to go back to the dark era, we've started moving forward to the path of light and the journey will continue if you cast your vote for 'boat'."

The AL chief also sought vote for Khandaker Mosharrif Hossain contesting from Faridpur-3.

Hasina said, "BNP-Jamaat men had looted the assets of the country and ate up the money of orphans. They had come to power to kill people and commit corruption. They can't do anything other than burning people and carrying out destruction."

The spirit of Liberation War had diminished with the assassination of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman on August 15, 1975, she said while addressing another rally at Paturia Ferry Ghat in Manikganj.

SEE PAGE 17 COL 4



Pabna-1 Jatiya Oikyafront candidate Prof Abu Sayeed sits in his damaged car at Santhia Bazar in the district's Santhia upazila. The vehicle was part of Sayeed's motorcade which came under attack allegedly by Awami League activists around 11:30am yesterday.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Khaleeda expresses no confidence

FROM PAGE 1

Then, Justice Hassan asked the lawyer to place their written statement before him by Monday.

Bodruddoza Badal, another lawyer for Khaleeda, told this correspondent that the BNP chief was doubtful about getting justice from the bench.

"We will place separate applications on behalf of BNP Chairperson Khaleeda Zia before the chief justice and the High Court bench of Justice JBM Hassan on Monday, expressing no confidence in the bench. We will request the chief justice to assign another bench of a judge, who is senior to Justice Syed Refaat Ahmed," he added.

Later, talking to reporters at his office, Attorney General Mahubey Alam said Khaleeda's lawyers did not express no confidence in the bench of Justice JBM Hassan.

The BNP chief's counsel sought time from the HC bench just to kill time as they knew her writ petitions would be rejected, he added.

During the court proceedings, Khaleeda's lawyer Ali raised question about the attorney general's appearance before the HC as the Election Commission lawyer.

He told the court that Mahubey Alam could not appear for the EC, as he is the attorney general. As an individual lawyer, he could appear for the commission.

The attorney general then placed a document before the court, saying that he stood for the EC as an individual lawyer.

On December 11, the HC bench of Justice Syed Refaat Ahmed and Justice Md Iqbal Kabir Lytton passed dissenting orders on Khaleeda's writ petitions.

Justice Syed Refaat Ahmed, the

senior judge of the bench, stayed for three months the EC's rejection of her appeals against cancellation of her nomination papers for Bogura-6, 7 and Feni-1 by returning officers.

The judge ordered the EC and the returning officers to allow Khaleeda to complete all necessary formalities to contest the 11th parliamentary election.

He also issued a rule asking the EC and the government to explain in two weeks why Khaleeda should not be allowed to run and why the decisions of the returning officers and the EC about her nomination papers should not be declared illegal.

On the other hand, Justice Md Iqbal Kabir Lytton, the junior judge of the bench, summarily rejected the writ petitions on four grounds, including that the petitions of Khaleeda are not acceptable as she was convicted and sentenced to 17 years in prison in two

cases.

As per article 66(2) (d) of the constitution, a convict sentenced to more than two years' imprisonment cannot contest the election in five years after his or her release from jail, the judge said in the order.

The bench then sent the petitions along with their dissenting orders to the chief justice for a decision.

On Wednesday, the chief justice assigned the HC bench of Justice JBM Hassan to hear and dispose of the petitions.

Khaleeda landed in jail on February 8 after a special court in Dhaka sentenced her to five years' imprisonment in the Zia Orphanage Trust corruption case. The HC later extended her jail term to 10 years.

On October 29, she was convicted and sentenced to seven years' rigorous imprisonment by the same court in the Zia Charitable Trust graft case.



Yusuf, who has 200 varieties of paddy in his collection, stands in his field.

PHOTO: ANWAR ALI

He acts

FROM PAGE 20

The varieties have distinct texture, colour, smell, and taste.

Yusuf said "Dadkhani" rice was rich in zinc. In the past, Bangladesh used to serve it as a wholesome meal to the ailing.

"Raida" is slightly thin rice and the "mother of all paddies," according to Yusuf.

The "Black Pankhiraj" has white parts on both sides and looks like a bird. Two grains grow from one seed of "Boiram Shundori", also known as "Dui Shotin". "Randhuni Pagol" has an enchanting scent.

"Kajaldigha", "Laxmidigha", and "Kalarai" can survive floods, while "Bhadoi", "Kaloshoni", "Kumri", and "Shankhaboti" are resistant to droughts.

Yusuf and the farmers employed by him cultivated at least 150 varieties in 15 districts of Rajshahi division this year.

With yields from 82 varieties, Yusuf celebrated Nabanna Utsav (the festival of new crop) on December 9. On the occasion, around 200 guests including farmers were served with traditional recipes made of the rare varieties.

"I love the varieties. So, I feel the need to preserve them before they are lost," Yusuf said. He collected the seeds from different corners of the country.

The 74-year-old farmer has one bigha of land in Duboil village where he has been cultivating the paddies for the last 50 years.

Shahidul Islam, regional coordinator of Bangladesh Resource Centre for Indigenous Knowledge (Barcik) lauded Yusuf for his passion.

"Preserving the varieties is important as paddy cultivation is losing

momentum due to climate change. Yusuf did what the government ought to have done," he said.

Yusuf inherited his passion for paddies from his father Abdur Rahman Malakar who produced different varieties every year and entertained villagers with the yields during Nabanna.

In 1968, the year Yusuf got married, he noticed that farmers were leaning towards IRRI-8 variety instead of local varieties.

"I feared that one day the local varieties might just vanish." He started his search for the nearly extinct varieties in 2000. He travelled to Chattogram, Khulna, Barishal, Rangpur, and different districts in Rajshahi division in this endeavour.

"I went to every place where I could find a rare variety," he told this correspondent.

Yusuf's contributions were recognised in 2013 when he received the National Environment Award. This accolade motivated him to delve more into his passion.

He founded the "Barind Seed Bank" with assistance from Barcik officials in 2015. Bangladesh Rice Research Institute collected 110 varieties from the bank last year. Officials from different research institutes and farmers visit his bank regularly, said Yusuf.

The bank provides seeds to farmers for free and realises a portion of their harvest in return. Those grains are again distributed among another set of farmers. In this way, the bank helps keep the production flowing.

Yusuf has one worry. "I am growing old. What would happen to my collection after my death?"

Pigeons threaten

FROM PAGE 20

real mess."

And when tourists give up on Cádiz's sunny terraces and move inside, there's still no escape from the birds, Fernández says.

"Even inside the restaurant, they come in, they know where the food is and that we don't do anything to them, they are not scared", adds Fernández.

He says that the population of pigeons is now so high that customers pestered by the pigeons are being scared by their experiences. "They don't come back."

It's not a pretty picture either. The

square's winged residents "decorate" building facades and restaurant tables and chairs. They even make the ground difficult to walk on, says Fernández.

After a pigeon census by the city council decreed that the bird population of 9,000 was three times as many as Cádiz could sustain, authorities decided to take steps.

The plan is to catch and relocate 5,000 pigeons over a period of a year instead of culling them. They'll then be transported at least 170 miles away -- a distance hoped to discourage them from returning.

Take action, create polls atmosphere

FROM PAGE 1

multiple issues for a credible and participatory election on December 30.

Mentioning several incidents of attacks in the letter, the BNP asked the EC to take legal actions against "the criminals" to refrain them from unlawful activities.

"The Election Commission will be held responsible if it does not act accordingly," the letter, signed by BNP Standing Committee Member Nazrul Islam Khan, read.

The letter also sought police protection for BNP and Jatiya Oikyafront candidates.

In another letter, they requested the

EC to unblock BNP's website which had been blocked for last three days.

Meanwhile, at a press conference in the party's Nayapalton office, BNP Senior Joint Secretary General Ruhul Kabir Rizvi alleged that the government was plotting with the administration and law enforcers to reclaim power through a lopsided polls.

"According to media reports, the IGP [Inspector General of Police] has called all the DIGs [Deputy Inspector General] and SPs [Superintendent of Police] to Dhaka. They have made a list of 2.5 lakh BNP leaders and activists to arrest for clearing the field of the polls," he said.

"This is mainly to thwart the mass

public support in favour of the 'sheaf of paddy' despite all the harassments, arrests and cases," he added.

The BNP leader also said the government had realised its imminent downfall and was resorting to multifaceted conspiracies to hang on to power.

"Ever since Jatiya Oikyafront and its 20-party alliance decided to join the polls, it became a grave concern for the Awami League. They have come to know through intelligence agencies that they would be defeated in the polls," he added.

Rizvi further said that he had proof that a meeting was held on December 10 at the Police Headquarters with minority groups leaders for bringing

Ally vs ally is 'part of strategy'

Quader says it's to avoid 'trap of one-sided polls'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Candidates from Awami League allies competing against AL nominees in different constituencies is part of a strategy, AL General Secretary Obaidul Quader said yesterday.

"We have a strategy which I am not going to tell you.... Allies are contesting our nominees, have we allowed this without understanding anything?" he rhetorically asked reporters.

It's a strategy to avoid the trap of an uncontested election, Quader, also road transport and bridges minister, said after meeting with US Ambassador to Bangladesh Earl R Miller at the secretariat.

"What if the BNP and Jatiya Oikyafront quit the election race? Then? We will not allow any trap of a one-sided election again."

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1

Cold, killing design

FROM PAGE 1

the staircase.

"Yes," replied Serajul's younger brother Shamsul Haque Khan nervously.

"Is he inside?" was the next question.

Perplexed Shamsul replied, "He is on the ground floor... at Dr Ismail's home."

The men then went down to the ground floor. Within a few minutes, they took Serajul out of the flat and dragged him to the minibus blindfolded.

Serajul Haque Khan, an assistant professor of Institute of Education & Research of Dhaka University, never returned home like the scores of brightest and illustrious citizens, who were rounded up in similar fashion, tortured and killed just days before Bangladesh was liberated.

Sensing imminent defeat, the Bangalee collaborators, particularly the Al-Badr, executed the Pakistan army's blueprint to eliminate teachers, writers, doctors, lawyers, journalists and other professionals. This final act of atrocity was carried out to destroy the future of soon-to-be born country, to maim the nation permanently and rob it of its brightest minds.

Forty-seven years after the acts of cold-blooded savagery, a son of Serajul thinks the vacuum left by the killing of intellectuals is yet to be filled.

"I think the killers have been successful to some extent. They created a vacuum at all levels of our national life. We are still struggling to fill the vacuum even after so many years," said Enamul Huq, Serajul's son.

The eldest among eight siblings, he saw his father's abduction happen and shared it with The Daily Star at his Khilgaon home.

He said his father was a believer of Bangalee nationalism and was a progressive man.

"Being a teacher of the education administration, he used to speak against the discriminatory education

policy of the then Pakistan government. The ruler considered his actions as a threat to the national integrity of Pakistan," said Enamul, now a history professor at Jahangirnagar University.

"For these reasons, I think, my father became the target of the Pakistan army and their collaborators."

In fact these were the common reasons for the massacre of the intellectuals, he said.

Prof Munier Chowdhury, Muffazzal Hyder Chowdhury, Shahidulla Kaiser, Selina Parveen, Abdul Alim Chowdhury and many other illustrious citizens met the same fate like Serajul.

And their fault was that they encouraged and seeded the idea of nationalism through their work, writings and activities, and helped freedom fighters during the war.

The local agents of the Pakistan army provided the information about the intellectuals. The Pakistan army formed special forces -- Al-Badr and Al-Shams, which carried out the systematic killing, said Enamul, who was the pro-vice-chancellor of JU from 2003-2007.

Almost all members of the forces, especially Al-Badr, were educated and well-aware of progressive citizens and their activities, he said.

Al-Badr was formed with the leaders and activists of Islami Chhatra Sangha, the then student wing of Jamaat-e-Islami, the party that fought tooth and nail to thwart the birth of Bangladesh, according to historical documents.

Enamul still vividly remembers the morning of December 14, 1971.

"I saw from the balcony that they blindfolded my father with his handkerchief and dragged him to the minibus," said Enamul, then a final year student of Dhaka University.

On that morning, they came to know that six other DU teachers and a physician of DU medical centre were

abducted from the campus in similar fashion. They were: Giasuddin Ahmed, Anwar Pasha, Rashidul Hasan, Faizul Mahi, Abul Khair, Santosh Chandra Bhattacharyya and Mohammad Martuza.

Enamul's family could not look for Serajul that day because of the curfew that was enforced.

As soon as the curfew was over, following the surrender of the Pakistan army on December 16, Enamul, his friends and his father's colleagues hired a vehicle to look for him and other abducted intellectuals.

"We first went to the Mohammadpur Physical Training College and then to Rayerbazar killing field. I searched for my father among the dead bodies," he said.

"I left no stone unturned. For two weeks we searched almost all killing grounds in Dhaka city and its surrounding areas. I even rushed to a river in Fatullah hearing about dead bodies floating there, but I didn't find him," he said.

The family started losing hope until NSI official Sattar, who was the classmate of his father, went to their home with Mafizuddin in January, 1972. Mafizuddin was driving the minibus for Al-Badr that picked up the intellectuals from the university campus. Seeing photographs, Mafizuddin identified the people abducted and put inside the minibus he drove. He told Enamul what had happened afterwards.

"The abductors took them straight to Mirpur Lohar Pool (near Gabtoli) with the plan to shoot them dead and dump the bodies in the Turag river," Enamul quoted Mafizuddin as saying.

But they could not do so as Razakars and other collaborators also assembled many Bangalees there to kill, he said. Making a U-turn, they started travelling on Mazar Road and stopped before a graveyard in Mirpur, where the Martyred Intellectuals' Memorial was built after liberation.

them on field to garner support for the government.

"However, the government is plotting to launch attacks on the minority and blame BNP and Oikyafront in order to make the international community think that the minorities will not be safe if the alliance comes to power," the BNP leader alleged.

He also said the administration and law enforcers were doing everything to keep the BNP and Oikyafront men away from the polls while armed goons of the ruling party were making show-downs in broad daylight.

"Still, we will overcome all obstacles and fight till the polls day. The countrymen are the source of all power and

"The abductors walked them to the graveyard until they reached a paddy field and shot them dead," said Enamul quoting Mafizuddin.

Following Mafizuddin's lead, eight bodies were exhumed from the graveyard.

"I identified my father's body with his belt and the Italian gabardine trousers. I also found his identity card in his pocket," he said, adding that the families of the other intellectuals also identified their loved ones.

The brutality of the Pakistan army and their collaborators and the clinical way they carried out the killings of the intellectuals started unfolding after Victory Day 1971.

Newspapers, including Dainik Purbadesh, ran reports on it and published the photographs of many of the killers, including Al-Badr kingpins Chowdhury Mueen Uddin and Ashrafuzzaman Khan, with the caption "help capture the killers of intellectuals".

"I saw the photos in Purbadesh and identified the smart two youths, who came to our home to pick up my father on that morning [December 14]. They were Mueen and Ashraf," Enamul said.

Al-Badr men started rounding up and killing professionals from the second week of December. However, there was no specific government list of martyred intellectuals.

On December 22, 1971, Dainik Azad published a report quoting Indian radio channel Akashbani news where Ruhul Quddus, then secretary general of the Bangladesh government, had said at least 280 intellectuals and professionals were killed on December 14 and 15 in four areas -- Dhaka, Sylhet, Khulna and Brahmanbaria.

According to Banglapedia, around 991 academics, 13 journalists, 49 physicians, 42 lawyers and 16 others were savagely killed during the war.

[This story was first printed in this newspaper on December 14, 2014]