

BANGLADESH UPDATE



602
New cases in 24hrs



5,32,401
Total cases



8,041
Deaths



4,76,979
Recoveries



2,141,209
Deaths



99,875,898
Total cases

Ex-MP finds home in shelter for poor

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

A man who was an elected lawmaker not once but twice is now living like a pauper.

In a twist of fate, Md Enamul Haque Zoj has to seek shelter from the government for himself and his three-member family in Mymensingh's Gafargaon upazila.

An elected lawmaker from Mymensingh-10 (Gafargaon constituency) in 1986 and 1988, Zoj is one of 200 people who received a house as prime minister's gift at a programme in Gafargaon on January 23.

He used to own vast property in Gafargaon and Dhaka but he registered the land for his two wives 15 years ago and since then, none of them have taken care of him, said locals.

Speaking to this correspondent, Zoj said he studied at the Cadet College in Islamabad, completed his graduation in Lahore University and joined the Pakistan Army in 1968 as secretary of the Cumilla Armed Services Board. He resigned from the service in 1969.

Zoj's father late Abdus Salam did his post-graduation from Calcutta University in 1918 and later he studied law at Aligarh Muslim University. Salam served his teaching profession as headmaster at different schools including at Gafargaon Islamia Govt High School for 36 years, said Judge.

Zoj also said he fought for country's independence in 1971. When he and his co-fighter Mohammad Firoz were carrying a Light Machine Gun from Meghalaya in India to Dhaka, they were caught by the Pakistan Army in Gafargaon and taken to a camp and were tortured brutally for three days. They were able to flee one day due to heavy rain.

"After liberation, I tried to get the freedom fighter's certificate but could not manage it," he said.

He is now demanding his recognition as freedom fighter.

"I faced serious losses as I took part in four national elections including in 1986 and 1988 when I was elected lawmaker for two times from Mymensingh-10," said Zoj.

"When I was the lawmaker, I managed land for many poor and distressed people in Gafargaon

municipality. Now I have to depend on others' mercy because I never thought of making money illegally."

Iqbal Hossain Sumon, mayor of Gafargaon municipality, said he was informed four months ago about how much Zoj's family had to endure due to Covid-19 pandemic. He immediately managed Tk 50,000 for them.



Md Enamul Haque Zoj

Zoj also requested for a house as he lives in a rented room of the municipality's Shaltia area.

Sumon said, "I shared the matter with local lawmaker Fahmi Golandaz Babel and on an emergency basis, his name was enlisted for a house as part of the government's campaign to bring all landless and homeless families under a housing facility."

Zoj has 12-decimal of land in the municipality, which he had donated for a mosque some eight years ago. Since then, he has been living in a rented room with his third wife Ruma Haque and eight-year-old son Noor Elahi.

Ruma said there is no furniture in the room and they have to sleep on the floor.

"We get financial support of Tk 10,000 from Jatiya Party leader Rawshan Ershad MP every month and the generous people also support us on different occasions."

Thanking the prime minister for the house gifted to them, she said it will be uneasy for them to live with so many families and would be better if they were given a separate lodge.

Contacted, Upazila Nirbahi Officer Md Tajul Islam said they are doing what they can to help Zoj maintain his social status.

"On an emergency basis, the house was allotted for him but following the direction of the local lawmaker, we are looking for a suitable piece of land in the municipality to construct a building where Zoj can live with dignity," said the UNO, adding that furniture will also be provided to them.

About the freedom fighter's certificate, he said said they have considered including him in the freedom fighters' list so that the helpless family could enjoy the state honour in all respects.

Complaints pile up

FROM PAGE 1

He then told The Daily Star that the EC could not avoid responsibility in case the election atmosphere deteriorated.

As of yesterday morning, the commission received as many as 60 complaints, said sources at the returning officer's office.

BNP-backed candidates alleged that the EC, in most cases, was oblivious to investigating and taking actions.

EC officials said in all cases it informs, requests or orders officers-in-charge of respective police stations to take action, or sometimes requests respective candidates or persons against whom the complaints are filed to abide by the electoral rules.

According to the EC, 31 complaints out of a total of 60 have so far been disposed of as it received reports from police in regards to those complaints.

Of the 31 disposed complaints, police in their reports said they did not find proof of any wrongdoing over 20 complaints.

Among the remaining 11, cases and general diaries were filed in connection with five complaints, the accused in three complaints apologised, a councillor candidate's posters that violated rules were removed, and in case of two complaints police failed to investigate as the EC had engaged the wrong police stations.

Most complaints were lodged with regard to obstruction of electoral campaigns, according to EC documents.

The other complaints were over intimidation, death threats, assault, vandalising vehicles used for electoral campaigns, tearing down electoral posters, banners and leaflets and arrest and harassment by police, EC officials said.

For complaints about police harassment and arrests, the EC informed the Chattogram Metropolitan Police commissioner about the matters.

Of the complaints, 13 were lodged on behalf of BNP-backed mayoral candidate Shahadat Hossain and only four were disposed of by the EC.

EC found no evidence in three of these four complaints of Shahadat while a case was filed in connection with the other complaint.

Four complaints were lodged on behalf of AL-backed mayoral aspirant Rezaul Karim Chowdhury. One of them was disposed of by the EC.

The remaining 43 complaints were lodged by the councillor candidates for general and reserved seats.

Returning Officer Mohammad Hasanuzzaman said the EC was looking into the complaints with all seriousness and remained alert to avert any untoward incidents centring the polls.

Police said they have beefed up vigilance so that law and order does not deteriorate during the polls.

BNP mayoral candidate Dr Shahadat Hossain said the EC should dispose of the complaints lodged by the candidates for the sake of ensuring a free, fair and participatory election. But, he said the EC was not paying any heed to their complaints.

Advocate Akhter Kabir Chowdhury, president of Chattogram city unit of Sachetan Nagorik Committee (SANAK) and Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB), said the EC was failing to play its required neutral role and achieve confidence from all the parties.

He, however, said the EC alone could not be robust if there is a general lack of good governance in society, but it should continue its effort to be more effective.

MAHBUB'S STATEMENT

In a statement issued yesterday the election commissioner said there was enough reason for concern about clashes during the CCC election, which is a very crucial one.

Contacted, he told The Daily Star that two persons had already been killed centring the election and that there was some chaos.

"So, there is concern. Life is more valuable than any election," he said.

Talukder stated that holding of a free, fair, legal and acceptable election was not possible if the environment was not made fair. In that case, the concept of a level playing field, the prerequisite of an election, becomes absurd.

Mentioning that it is a big challenge for the EC to create balance between the two parties in the CCC election, the commissioner in his statement said it is a must to keep this election under the control of the EC. Otherwise, the election would be a failed one.

Holding fair elections is the acid test for everyone irrespective of party and opinion, stated the election commissioner.

"We will have to ensure that true public representatives are elected through ballots."



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina presiding over a cabinet meeting at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhavan after 10 long months. The last time she held a cabinet meeting in person was April 8 last year and she had refrained from it since then due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

PHOTO: PTD

PM holds first in-person meet in 10 months

FROM PAGE 1

ECNEC meetings through video conferences from the Gono Bhavan.

After yesterday's meeting, Cabinet Secretary Khandker Anwarul Islam told reporters that the meeting gave final approval to the draft of "The Bangladesh Tour Operators and Tour Guides (Registration and Control Act), 2021", which aims to bring the tour operators under regulation for conducting tour operations in a well-

planned way.

According to proposed law, he said a touring company would have to obtain a license.

"No company will be allowed to arrange tours without registration and the interest of the tourists will be protected once the act is passed," the cabinet secretary added, reports BSS.

Foreign companies can also operate tours under the Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in the proposed the

law, said Anwarul.

The law recommended a maximum of six months in prison and Tk 2 lakh in fines for violating it.

The meeting also approved in principle "The Boilers Act-2021" after modifying the existing law from 1923, mainly to ensure industrial safety.

Owners of a boiler will be liable for a maximum of two years in jail or Taka 2 lakh in fines or for both for using unregistered boilers, the cabinet

secretary said.

The meeting approved Bangla and English versions of the Shipbuilding Industry Development Policy-2021.

Anwarul said that the meeting approved a proposal to reform the committee formed on February 9, 2015, to formulate The Public Corporation (Management Coordination) Act aimed at operating all the government corporations under a board.

All set for Covid jab roll-out

FROM PAGE 1

same day, Nasima said, adding that the PM would join the inauguration virtually.

The mass vaccination across the country is scheduled to start on February 8. Bangladesh purchased three crore doses of Covishield, the coronavirus vaccine developed by University of Oxford and drug maker AstraZeneca, and manufactured by SII.

The procurement was done through a tripartite agreement signed between the government, Serum and its local partner Beximco Pharmaceuticals on November 5 last year.

The first batch of 50 lakh doses reached the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport around 11:15am by a special Air India flight, said Nazmul Hassan Papon, managing director of Beximco Pharmaceuticals Ltd.

"Samples from every batch will be sent to the government's drug testing lab. It will take 48 hours to complete the testing. After getting the approval, we will send the vaccine to different districts," Papon said, adding that the doses were taken to Beximco warehouses in Tongi from the airport.

Health officials said with the arrival of the government-purchased 50 lakh doses, they now have 70 lakh shots in hand and are fully focused on starting the piloting and the mass inoculation.

Bangladesh received 20 lakh Covishield doses as a gift from the Indian government on January 21.

HOSPITAL PREPARATIONS

A day after the piloting's inauguration, some 400-500 people would be given vaccine shots at Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH), Kurmitola General Hospital, Mugda Medical College Hospital, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU) and Kuwait-Bangladesh Friendship Government Hospital.

The Daily Star yesterday visited DMCH, BSMMU and the Mugda hospital for an assessment of the preparations.

The authorities of BSMMU were setting up eight vaccination booths at its convention centre, opposite Hotel Intercontinental at the capital's Shabbagh.

Inside the convention centre, which is awaiting inauguration, carpenters were seen building booths on the ground floor.

Besides, there will be registration booths, pre- and post-vaccination waiting spaces, and a CCU unit of eight beds in case there are any emergencies, officials said.

BSMMU Director Brig Gen Dr Zulfiqur Ahmed Amin said he, along with the university's vice-chancellor and pro-vice chancellor, would receive the job on the first day.

"We have got a very good response. At least 350 doctors have expressed their willingness to be vaccinated and we've prepared a list of their names. But we have to pick 200 among our staffers," Zulfiqur said.

The BSMMU have more than 9,000 employees.

The director also said the vaccination would be voluntary and based on a few terms and condition regarding the recipients' physical condition.

He said there would be two mobile teams, comprising specialist doctors and nurses, at the vaccination centre.

"Now our focus is on January 28 or the next day following the inauguration of the piloting. Then we will be the part of the national vaccination campaign," he said.

A total of 1,200 people -- 150 in each of eight booths -- will be inoculated against the coronavirus at the BSMMU's vaccination centre every day from 8:00am to 3:00pm.

At the Mugda Medical College Hospital, there will be two vaccination teams in the pilot run. Besides, there will be three specialist doctors, including one cardiologist, one anaesthesiologist, and a medicine specialist, to supervise the campaign. The deputy director of the hospital will lead the campaign on site, said officials.

There will be pre- and post-vaccination waiting rooms for the vaccine recipients. Vaccination will be done from 9:00am to 3:00pm.

Dr Asim Kumar Nath, director of the hospital, told The Daily Star, "We have a total of 1,247 doctors, nurses and other staffers. We plan to vaccinate one hundred of them on the day after the inauguration."

DMCH authorities have selected the CBRN and Mass Casualty Management Centre at the underground of the emergency unit for the vaccination.

"We will vaccinate some 100 of our

staffers at four booths there. Besides, we are preparing three other points at different places of the hospital for vaccination in the future," Col Nazmul Haque, director of DMCH, told The Daily Star yesterday.

Meanwhile, the Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) yesterday trained 84 doctors and nurses of DMCH, BSMMU and Mugda Medical College Hospital for the Covid-19 vaccination programme.

The DSCC arranged the training session at the capital's Nagar Bhavan.

Similarly, the Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC) also trained 40 doctors and nurses of Kurmitola General Hospital and the Kuwait Bangladesh Friendship Hospital yesterday.

The DNCC organised the training session at Kurmitola General Hospital. Officials of both city corporations told The Daily Star that there would be more vaccination centres at other healthcare-providing facilities.

HOW TO REGISTER

In order to register for the mass inoculation starting next month, people will have to fill out information through a mobile and web-based app called "Surokha", developed by the Department of Information and Communication Technology, the Dhaka DC office, and the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

They have to download and use the app or visit the website (<https://www.surokha.gov.bd/>), where they will have to choose the relevant type from around 19 categories of professions. After that, they will have to provide their NID card number and date of birth, said officials.

They also need to give details of their medical history -- whether they have diabetes, cancer, hypertension, or other diseases.

Besides, they need to input their present address and mobile phone number to which an OTP (One-Time Password) would be sent.

After entering the OTP, a "vaccine card" will be generated and it will mention where and when a person will receive the first and second doses of the vaccine.

Following the administration of both doses, a certificate would be handed to the recipient, added the officials.

Kushia SP

FROM PAGE 1

the SP sought mercy of the HC and prayed to it to exonerate him from the contempt of court rule.

The SP also appeared before the HC bench of Justice Mamnoon Rahman and Justice Khizir Hayat yesterday morning in compliance with its January 20 order.

Senior lawyer Md Munsurul Hoque Chowdhury appeared for the SP and prayed to the bench to accept the unconditional apology of his client and pardon him.

The bench adjourned the hearing on the rule and set February 17 for passing an order on the issue.

The court added that it would observe SP Arafat's activities till further order and exonerated him from appearing before it in person for the time being.

The bench also ordered the SP to provide security to local Jubo Unnayan officer Shahjahan Ali who witnessed policemen misbehaving with the judicial magistrate during the municipality polls.

Shahjahan, who was the presiding officer at Bheramara Pilot Model High School, on January 21 told another HC bench, led by Justice M Enayetur Rahman, that he and his family members were scared of police.

During the polling on January 16, when Judicial Magistrate Mohsin Hasan was talking to Shahjahan about allegations of voting fraud at the school, SP Arafat and several other police officers interrupted the conversation and asked Mohsin to leave, according to complaints the latter had made.

According to media reports, Mohsin went to the polling centre at Bheramara Pilot Model High School after receiving complaints of voting fraud and was talking to Presiding Officer Shahjahan when SP Arafat, ASP Mostafizur Rahman and several other police personnel went there and loudly called the presiding officer aside.

Mohsin then told the police personnel that he was a judicial magistrate and requested them to let him speak to the presiding officer, the reports said.

SP Arafat then called the magistrate impolite and asked him to leave the premises, according to the reports.

Mohsin later filed complaint with the Election Commission, Registrar General's Office of the Supreme Court, the law and home ministries, and the Office of Inspector General of Police, accusing the SP of serious misconduct, reports our Kushia correspondent.

The SP's conduct during the polls was a blatant violation of the Local Government Election Rules, 2010, the complaint said.

On January 20, the HC bench of Justice Mamnoon Rahman and Justice Khizir Hayat issued a contempt of court rule against SP Arafat.

The bench also directed him to appear before the court in person yesterday and give his explanation about the incident.

It also observed that the SP had not only committed serious contempt of court but also tarnished the image of the judiciary as a whole.

"The action of the superintendent of police ... cannot be taken lightly," the HC said in a suo moto order. "The behaviour and the attitude ... of the police to an officer of the judiciary who is performing the judicial functions as per the provisions of law under the guidance of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh amount to serious contempt of court."

"Such a behaviour of the said superintendent of police, Kushia, is a severe attack on the administration of justice and ultimately the entire judiciary," it added.



Buses, some of which bring ministry officials to work, parked illegally on a road near the FDC level crossing in the capital's Karwan Bazar. This creates needless traffic jams on the road already narrowed by the pillars of the Moghbazar-Mouchak flyover. Inset, the view in the opposite direction shows pick-ups vans following the buses' example. The photos were taken yesterday.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON