

AL runner threatens voters

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cast vote for boat symbol, will leave Thakurgaon," she said, adding, "We don't want to see any poster of the symbol of sheaf paddy on street from tomorrow."

She also threw a question towards the crowd as saying, "Can any poster of the sheaf of paddy stay, if any soldier is still alive?"

Mahmuda had been staying in Thakurgaon for the last few days to boost up an electoral campaign of Anjuman Ara Begum, a member of the Mohila Awami League central committee, who is contesting for the mayoral post under boat symbol in the municipal polls scheduled to be held today (February 14).

In a separate rally Goalpara area in the town Thursday, Mahmuda said, "What you people, who have love with a sheaf of paddy, will do? You will leave Thakurgaon on February 13. We don't want to see you after the evening of February 13," she said.

On the same, she addressed a separate rally at Shantinagar area where she said, "If there are posters of the sheaf of paddy, I will express my indignation and hate to you and I will assume that no real Awami League man is here."

Multiple videos of her speeches that went viral through social media, sparked panic and fear among people.

"We have become worried following such speech from of senior leader of the ruling party. Now, we are in a dilemma whether we will go to the polling station or not on the voting day," said a resident of Shahapara area in the town seeking anonymity.

Another resident of Munshipara area said, "From our previous experience, we assume that our vote will be cast, even though we do not go to a polling station."

Meanwhile, Awami General Secretary in a press briefing yesterday said, "I have seen her (Mahmuda) speech in a newspaper. I am trying to unearth the truth. We are scrutinizing the video. If such non-political speech was

delivered, it is not acceptable. Organizational action would be taken, if proofs are found."

Amid such a situation, the district's deputy commissioner (DC) Dr. KM Kamruzzaman Selim talked to Mahmuda yesterday over the phone.

"She (Mahmuda) told me that she did not ask general voters to leave the area. Rather, she asked those, who were involved with arson attacks and violence in past, to leave the area for the sake of peaceful voting," the DC told The Daily Star last evening.

Talking to The Daily Star over the phone last evening, Mahmuda admitted that she asked those, who have 'love' with BNP, to leave the area.

However, the mayoral candidate Anjuman Ara Begum denied it and said Mahmuda Begum did not make such comments.

Talking to The Daily Star, Anjuman claimed that BNP men made the video clips by editing video and audio by misusing technologies to tarnish the image of AL men.

Contacted, BNP's Shariful Islam many ruling party leaders Mahmuda Begum had been threatening BNP men to leave Thakurgaon.

Even, police were conducting raids to harass BNP men, alleged Shariful.

"We have filed complaints with returning officer to this matter. But no action is yet to be taken," the BNP's candidate added.

However, the district's superintendent of police (SP) Jahangir Hossain said the law enforcers were trying to create a congenial atmosphere so that voting can be held peacefully.

About BNP's allegations, the police official said they were conducting raids to arrest those, who are accused in criminal cases.

Contacted, the District Election Officer Jilhaj Uddin, who is also returning officer, admitted that he had received some complaints from BNP's candidates and the copies of the complaints were forwarded to executive magistrates for legal actions.

Valentine's Day special

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to make sure his wife gets all the care, love, and treatment possible.

An engineer by profession, Ahmed has also personally been tending his beloved wife with unfailing love -- feeding, bathing and dressing her, and turning her over regularly to avoid bedsores -- often sacrificing his own sleep.

He turned a room in his house in Dhaka into a makeshift ICU unit with all the necessary equipment. Ahmed also took training to ensure he himself could do proper nursing round the clock.

"It has been a daily dose of inspiration for me for the last 14 years," Ahmed told The Daily Star, as he sits by his wife, lying in absolute stillness, still carrying the hope she will wake from her deep slumber.

The daily regimen includes feeding the recumbent patient intravenously, administering the prescribed medicines, and changing her position every two hours.

Since Farida breathes with the support of a tracheostomy, there is always the risk of saliva blocking the tracheostomy point, leading to suffocation. She needs someone by her round the clock to watch for this.

The driving force behind Ahmed's struggle was his uncompromising love for Farida.

"She talks to me with her tears. When I say something, she responds with her tears," Ahmed said.

"Love is pristine and people say so. But if you ask me, our love is now only confined to tears," said Ahmed with a crack in his voice.

A LONG, ARDUOUS ROAD

Ahmed and Farida tied the knot on April 18, 1986. The couple lived in Rangpur, Dinajpur, and Bogura before finally settling down in Pabna, where Farida was a primary school teacher.

In 2007, Farida was diagnosed with a tumour in her uterus. She came to Dhaka from Pabna on leave to consult a doctor and learned she needed to be operated on soon.

At the time, the couple's elder daughter had just passed her HSC exams and the younger one was preparing for her SSC exams.

"After that [diagnosis], we could not stay in Pabna," Ahmed said.

Recalling those desperate days, Ahmed said doctors were against an immediate operation as Farida had breathing difficulties and a cough.

"The doctor who would perform the operation sent my wife to a chest specialist, who after performing some tests, said she could be operated on once the cough disappeared significantly."

But a renowned surgeon the family turned to for advice said the cough was a small matter and there was no reason to fear from an immediate operation.

"We all respect doctors. So, after getting assurance from the surgeon, Farida decided to go under the



PHOTO: MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

For 14 years, Munshi Nurunnabi Ahmed has been making sure his wife Farida Yasmin gets all the care, love, and treatment possible. She slipped into a coma following a surgery on November 16, 2007.

support so that there were no power disruptions, and is equipped with oxygen, a suction machine, and a pulse monitor.

"It has been only two to three times we took her to the hospital with an ambulance for some emergency tests," said Ahmed.

As it is a difficult task to care for such a patient 24/7, Ahmed -- who is still working -- also employed two nurses to constantly tend to his wife.

While he discharged his responsibility, he also made sure their two daughters -- Nusrat Nabi Badhan and Nowrin Nabi Swarna -- stayed away.

"I made arrangements for their marriages outside the country. Since they will have their own families, they need peace of mind."

As Ahmed was speaking to this correspondent, Farida was lying on the special medical bed. In the room, is another bed where he sleeps at night.

"When she is faced towards the spare bed, she does not sleep. As I pray to the Almighty, I find tears rolling down her eyes. She can feel it but can't express it."

"I don't know what to term it. You can call it a silent love," he said.

"She is closer to me than ever before."

At the end of last year, Ahmed was in for another shock. He contracted Covid-19 and subsequently infected his wife as well. Both of them, however, recovered.

While medical science and technology have improved a lot, it is yet to reach that level to cure patients like Farida, he said.

But Ahmed remains as optimistic as ever.

"I hope that day will come and she will again see the beautiful world," he said.

"We pray to the Almighty to cure her, at least once, so that she can see we are trying to keep her well. Our daughters want their mother to call them by their names again."

Many fear irregularities, violence

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Islamic Andolon.

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday, EC Additional Secretary Ashok Kumar Debnath said they took all measures to hold the election peacefully.

"Four commissioners have held virtual meetings with the top district administration and police officials. The commissioners have asked them to maintain law and order and make sure that the election is held smoothly," he said.

"We are maintaining close communication with DCs and SPs over the polls situation," Ashok said.

A total of 217 candidates are running for mayor at 55 municipalities. The number of candidates for general councillor posts and those for the reserved seats for women are 2,070 and 618 respectively.

About 16.67 lakh people are enlisted as voters in today's polls.

Ruling AL mayor candidates have clinched sweeping victories in the first, second and third phases. AL contenders achieved success in 18 municipalities out of 24 in the first phase, 45 out of 60 municipalities in the second and won 46 out of 63 municipalities in the third phase.

Elections to 31 municipalities will be held in the fifth phase on February 28. EVMs will be used in all the centres then.

CLASH

At least five people were injured as supporters of AL and BNP mayor candidates clashed and exploded crude bombs in Rajshahi's Charghat yesterday.

Around 11:00am, some BNP men were hanging posters of party candidate Zakirul

Islam in Charghat Bazar area. Some AL men chased them away, said Officer-in-Charge of Charghat Police Station Zahangir Alam.

Minutes later, Zakirul's supporters regrouped and brought out a procession in the area where AL supporters had already taken position with many armed with locally-made weapons, said police and witnesses.

Both the groups exploded several crude bombs and threw brickbats at each other, reports our staff correspondent in Rajshahi.

Police fired teargas, dispersed the crowd and brought the situation under control, said the OC.

THE REMARKS

On Wednesday, Nur Uddin Chowdhury Nayan, general secretary of Lakshmiur district AL, asked voters to cast ballots in public for the party's mayoral candidate in today's Ramgati municipality polls.

Delwar Hossain, president of Chuadanga's Alamdanga municipality AL, asked party men to bar voters, who would not cast their ballots for the AL candidate, from going to polling centres.

The AL leader was seen giving the directive to his party men in a video clip that went viral on social media on Tuesday.

Besides, Mahila Awami League General Secretary Mahmuda Begum, while campaigning in support of party nominated mayor candidate Anjuman Ara Begum in Thakurgaon municipality, said people who love "sheaf of paddy" (electoral symbol of the BNP) do not need to go to polling centres on February 14.

Only the supporters of "boat", the electoral symbol of the AL, will go to the centres, she added.

Govt mulling

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With this, the total number of people registered rose to 1,492,345.

The mass inoculation campaign began on February 7.

Since then, the number of people showing up at the centres, especially those in Dhaka, to take the first dose of the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine has increased.

The government launched the vaccination campaign with 70 lakh doses in hand. It is expected to get the second installment of 50 lakh shots from Serum Institute of India (SII) later this month.

Around the same time, another 1.31 lakh doses under the COVAX programme are scheduled to arrive here.

The government has purchased three crore doses of the vaccine from SII.

"TRANSMISSION NOW LIMITED IN CLUSTER"

Experts, meanwhile, said that coronavirus transmission has slowed down to "cluster transmission" from "community transmission" as the positivity rate was below five percent for 24th consecutive day yesterday since January 20.

Against a total of 12,871 tests in the past 24 hours till 8:00am yesterday, the positivity rate was 2.26 percent while the overall positivity rate was 14.09 percent.

"We can say the community transmission of novel coronavirus has stopped nowadays. The transmission is limited in clusters," Mushtaq Hussain, consultant of the Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research (IEDCR) told The Daily Star yesterday.

In the same 24 hours, 13 people died from Covid-19, according to a press release issued by the DGHS.

With this, the total number of deaths reached 8,266 and the death rate was 1.53 percent.

With 291 new infections yesterday, the total number of confirmed cases rose to 540,266.

At least 374 Covid-19 patients have recovered during the same 24 hours.

With this, the total number of recoveries rose to 486,767, and the recovery rate at 90.10 percent.

Among the five deceased, seven were males.

One of them was aged between 21 and 30 years, one between 31 and 40, one between 41 and 50, four were between 51 and 60, and six were above 60 years, added the release.

Journalist Shaheen

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expectations. We hope Shaheen bhai's body will be brought back to Bangladesh under state arrangement," he said.

Shaheen left behind his wife, two sons and a host of relatives and well-wishers to mourn his death.

Born in Magura's Shalikhia upazila in 1954, the journalist had been living in Canada for several years.

He was vocal about the trial of war criminals of the Liberation War in 1971. His father Serajuddin Hossain, also an eminent journalist, was one of the intellectuals killed by Al-Badr, an auxiliary force of Pakistani army, at the fag end of the nine-month-long war.

Shaheen was involved in the activities of Ekattorer Ghatok Dalal Nirmul Committee since its inception in 1992 under the leadership of Shaheed Janani Jahanara Imam, seeking trial of war criminals.

He was the former president of Projonmo Ekattor, a platform of the children of Liberation War martyrs.

In 2012, the journalist gave testimony in the International Crimes Tribunal-2 in a war crimes case filed against executed war criminal and Jamaat-e-Islami leader Ali Ahsan Muhammad Mojaheed.

With directives from their commander Mojaheed, and the plan prepared by the Pakistan army, Al-Badr men launched their mission to annihilate intellectuals just before Victory Day in 1971, Shaheen had told the tribunal as a prosecution witness.

CONDOLENCES

President Abdul Hamid and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday expressed profound shock and sorrow at the death of Shaheen, reports BSS.

In his condolence message, the president also prayed for eternal peace of his departed soul and conveyed deep sympathy to the bereaved family.

The premier in her message said, "His contributions to implement the spirit of the Liberation War and to the mass movement demanding trial of war criminals will be remembered with due honour."

Ekattorer Ghatok Dalal Nirmul Committee and Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader also expressed shock at the death of the journalist.

Workers Party 'disappointed'

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secretary Fazley Hossain Badsha.

Workers Party leaders also alleged that the state's interference in the election system is now openly known and people have lost their confidence in the election system.

They raised questions over the introduction of the EVM system and said the EVM (electronic voting machine) system has turned into a nightmare and the system is being used for irregularities, said sources.

They also criticised the Election Commission for its failure to hold free and fair elections and said the future of the country's democracy will be threatened if the proper electoral system is not restored, they added.

The party also demanded an investigation into the Election Commission's financial irregularities and unethical practices.

In December last year as well as again last month, a group of 42 eminent citizens urged the President to constitute the Supreme Judicial Council to investigate

allegations of financial irregularities, corruption, and gross election-related misconduct against the present Election Commission.

At the meeting, Workers Party leaders also viewed that Awami League has shifted its position from the 23-point demands on which the alliance was formed during the BNP-led four-party alliance regime.

Some leaders alleged that the ruling AL is not sincere in strengthening ties among the partners of the 14-party alliance and not willing to sit with alliance partners, said meeting insiders.

They also alleged that the ruling party has now shifted its earlier stance and adopted a softer stance towards religious political parties, rather than its ideological political partners.

"Fundamentalist groups became active [in politics] due to Awami League's compromise to them," a party central leader told The Daily Star yesterday.

The party also stressed the need for launching a strong movement against corruption and criminalisation of politics.

DSA must be abolished

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fearful situation prevailing in Bangladesh.

"It's like the government, its ministers and their followers will engage in unlawful activities and whenever someone will write against those or even draw cartoons against corruption, the authorities will apprehend them using this draconian law," he said.

Alongside the Digital Security Act, the government is introducing other laws to keep people's mouth shut, he alleged.

The JU teacher said the government was doing this so that none could write a sentence on Facebook, share a line from a poem or a play. "If the government is so powerful, why is it afraid of a Facebook status? Why a line of a poem or a play shakes the government?"

Anu Muhammad said although human beings are not robots, the government "wants them to be robots" so that people speak in their way.

"People in the government say law takes its own course. But it's not like that. It is operated by the strength of state power. It is operated the way the government wants it to be operated."

The professor said it is the people's constitutional right to stage protests, but the government is violating the right.

At the programme, folk singer Rita Dewan, who landed in jail in a case filed under the DSA, performed baul songs.

"If I live in an independent country, why can't I sing like a bird?" she questioned.

Rita and her daughters were accused of "hurting the religious

Police, BNP men clash at press club

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charged baton on them.

Many BNP protesters, including some central leaders, took shelter inside Jatiya Press Club during the clash. They left the spot after the situation returned to normalcy around 1:00pm.

Mamunur Rashid, officer-in-charge of Shahbagh Police Station, said so far they have detained 18 people from in front of Press Club and nearby areas after the clash.

At Dhaka Medical College Hospital, a policeman and at least 12 BNP men took treatment,

বীমা উন্নয়ন ও নিয়ন্ত্রন কর্তৃপক্ষ কর্তৃক নিয়োগ প্রাপ্ত প্রশাসক হিসেবে ডেল্টা লাইফের দায়িত্ব নিলেন

জনাব সুলতান-উল-আবেদীন মোল্লা, এফসিএস

সংশ্লিষ্ট সকলের জ্ঞাতার্থে জানানো যাচ্ছে যে, বীমা উন্নয়ন ও নিয়ন্ত্রণ কর্তৃপক্ষের স্মারক নং- ৫৩.০৩.০০০০.০৩৬.০১.০৩৪.২১.১৪৫, তারিখঃ ১১/০২/২০২১ খ্রিঃ অনুযায়ী বীমা আইন ২০১০ এর ৯৫ ধারা অনুযায়ী ডেল্টা লাইফ ইনসিওরেন্স কোম্পানীর বর্তমান পরিচালনা পর্ষদকে সাসপেন্ড করে জনাব সুলতান-উল-আবেদীন মোল্লা, এফসিএস, প্রাক্তন সদস্য, বীমা উন্নয়ন ও নিয়ন্ত্রণ কর্তৃপক্ষকে কোম্পানীতে প্রশাসক হিসেবে নিয়োগ দিয়েছেন।

ডেল্টা লাইফ ইনসিওরেন্স কোম্পানী লিমিটেড এর পক্ষ থেকে সম্মানিত সকল বীমা গ্রাহক, শেয়ারহোল্ডারবৃন্দ ও শুভানুধ্যায়ীদের প্রাপ্য সুবিধাসমূহ ও স্বাভাবিক কার্যক্রম চলমান থাকবে এ মর্মে আশ্বস্ত ও নিশ্চিত করা যাচ্ছে।

ডেল্টা লাইফ ইনসিওরেন্স কোম্পানী লিমিটেড

Coca-Cola trials first paper bottle

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by charity group Break Free From Plastic last year, closely followed by other drink-producers Pepsi and Nestle.

Coca-Cola was ranked the world's number one plastic polluter

sentiment". A total of four cases were filed against her on similar grounds. She is now out on bail.

In May last year, police detained cartoonist Kishore and writer Mushtaq from their Dhaka homes in a case filed under the DSA.

They were accusing of "spreading rumours and misinformation on Facebook about the coronavirus situation, undermining the image of the Father of the Nation, and the national anthem".

Police recently pressed charges against photojournalist Shafiqul Islam Kajol, Kishore, Mushtaq and Rashtrochinta activist Didarul Islam Bhuiyan in different cases filed under the DSA last year.

At the rally yesterday, protesters demanded immediate and unconditional release of Kishore and Mushtaq from jail.

BNP's all-district units are also scheduled to stage demonstrations across the country today.

The Jatiya Muktiyoddha Council (Jamuka) at a meeting on Tuesday discussed the ways to revoke the gallantry title of Ziaur Rahman for "violating" the constitution and "abetting" the self-proclaimed killers of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in escaping the country.

The meeting also agreed to repeal the then state-given awards to Bangabandhu's four convicted killers.

to create a structure capable of withstanding the forces exerted by fizzy drinks - such as cola and beer - which are bottled under pressure.

Part of the challenge has been

9th DEATH ANNIVERSARY

Al Haji LL Col Hesamuddin Ahmed, psc (Retd). served as a Secretary to the Government of Bangladesh in various ministries. He was the Administrator of the Dhaka Municipality, Chairman of RAJUK and other important corporations. Being the Founder President of the National Shooting Federation Bangladesh, the Founder Member and Founding Vice Chairman RAOWA, his contributions will always be remembered. He was associated with UCEP Bangladesh, SAHIC and various sports and social welfare organizations. In recognition of his remarkable contributions in the field of Sports development and social welfare he was awarded the National Sports Award (2003), Atish Dipankar Gold Medal, Poet Sarojini Naidu Gold Medal, C R Das Gold Medal etc.

-Dearly Missed & Always Cherished by-
Wife, Son, Daughter, Daughter in Law, Son in Law & Granddaughters

5 migrants killed

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the Bangladeshi migrant workers were heading back to Duqm after overnight fishing in the sea.

They were in a vehicle when the accident happened, the official said, preferring not to be named.

He said the bodies were kept under the custody of local police while the injured were admitted to hospital.

The embassy was enquiring into the incident.

Time Heals Everything, But From Sunrise to Sunset, The Wound in Our Hearts Still Bleeds.