

BANGLADESH UPDATE

178
New cases in 24hrs15,73,889
Total cases27,946
Deaths15,38,006
RecoveriesGLOBAL UPDATE
5,160,023
Deaths257,303,724
Total cases

UNION PARISHAD POLLS

527 ballots found after candidate lost by 300 votes

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

At least 527 ballot papers that have been sealed in favour of defeated female member candidate were found on the roof of a school yesterday, nine days after elections to Dubai Union Parishad in Delduar upazila.

The candidate had lost by 300 votes.

While playing schoolchildren saw the ballot papers scattered over the roof of Seheratoil Government Primary School, which was the centre of the defeated candidate, and informed teachers about the matter.

All the ballot papers had been cast for palm tree, the symbol of female member candidate Beauty Akter.

On information, Beauty went there and took the ballots.

On November 11, Dubai union went to the second phase of union parishad polls. With megaphone symbol, Rashida Begum won the reserved female member post of ward-1, -2 and -3 getting 1,800 votes.

Beauty said, "Resorting to ballot rigging, I was shown defeated in the polls by 300 votes. I'll take legal steps to this end."

Asked about the matter, AHM Kamru Islam, district election officer in Tangail, told The Daily Star that he was aware of the incident and police



would investigate it.

The defeated candidate can lodge a complaint with the Election Tribunal in this regard, he said.

Beauty told this correspondent that the seal of the Election Commission remains on the opposite side of the ballot papers. "My men have already gone to the election office and they were told to take the ballot papers to the election office for examinations. They also went to the local police station and police told them that the election office will see the matter."

Contacted, Abdul Baten, election officer in Delduar upazila, said he just heard of the matter, but no one came to him with any complaint in this regard.

Sazzad Hossain, officer-in-charge of Delduar Police Station, told this correspondent that police were not informed of the matter officially so far. "However, we are checking the matter."

Pile pressure on Myanmar

FROM PAGE 1

Bangladesh and Myanmar on Rohingya repatriation, a tripartite deal among Myanmar, UNDP and UNHCR for creating a conducive environment in Rakhine.

The resolution also spoke of preparing a work plan on implementing the agreements by the UN Secretary's Special Envoy on Myanmar. It also lauded Bangladesh's efforts of relocating some of the Rohingyas to Bhasan Char from Cox's Bazar and welcomed the MoU signed between the Bangladesh government and UN Refugee Agency – a recognition against much criticism by rights bodies in the previous years.

The resolution was co-sponsored by 107 countries, the highest since 2017.

"Earlier, Japan had generally abstained from voting, but this time it co-sponsored the resolution. This means a lot because Japan has strong ties with Myanmar," said Prof Imtiaz Ahmed of the International Relations Department of Dhaka University.

He expects India, which also has huge investments in Myanmar, to co-sponsor such a resolution on Rohingya.

The resolution of the UN General Assembly's Third Committee is not binding. However, it gives us a moral and political boost. We should now engage strongly with China, Russia, Japan and India so that this momentum can lead to consensus at the UN Security Council," Prof Imtiaz said.

A foreign ministry official said though the UN resolution is not binding, it creates norms and creates global public opinion that is invaluable. "We can also ask Myanmar strongly to

ensure Rohingya repatriation," the official said.

This resolution also reflects that the support of the powerful countries like China, Russia and Japan towards Myanmar is on the decline, the official added.

Bangladesh Enterprise Institute President M Humayun Kabir said the UN Security Council is the only world body that can obligate Myanmar to address the root causes of the Rohingya crisis, not anything else.

"If we can amplify our diplomatic efforts and convince the global powers, we can see consensus in the UN Security Council," he told this correspondent.

"For that to happen, we need to read the reality very objectively and act creatively in diplomacy," the former ambassador said.

Former Foreign Secretary Shahidul Haque said the adoption of the resolution by consensus is a good achievement, but the major instruments of holding Myanmar accountable are the International Court of Justice (ICJ) and International Criminal Court (ICC) and UN Security council.

Verdicts in favour of the Rohingyas at the ICJ or ICC can lead to the UN Security Council actions, he said.

"We can see some kind of slowness in the investigation at the ICC and ICJ. I think we should not lose sight of that if we really want to see solutions. We need to continue and augment our diplomatic efforts to this end," said Haque, also senior fellow at the South Asian Institute of Policy and Governance of North South University.

You can fly in expert doctors

FROM PAGE 1

Khaleda, 76, was readmitted to Evercare Hospital on November 13, six days after returning home from the hospital.

Physicians said the BNP chief was suffering from rheumatoid arthritis, diabetes, ophthalmological, and dental complications.

She also developed critical cardiac and kidney problems while her blood sugar level was uncontrolled, they added.

LAW MINISTER Speaking at a virtual meeting of Brahmanbaria's Akhaura upazila Awami League leaders ahead of the November 28 union parishad polls, the law minister yesterday said, "The honourable prime minister has set an example by providing all possible facilities to the BNP chairperson within the bounds of the law."

"It cannot be forgotten that she [Khaleda] has been convicted by the court. All necessary facilities allowed by the law to a convict have been given to her."

Anisul earlier had said law did not permit the government to send Khaleda abroad for treatment as she was convicted and sentenced to 17 years in prison in two corruption cases by the lower court and the High Court.

HUNGER STRIKE Khulna BNP alleged that police obstructed their mass hunger strike in front of the party office on KD Ghosh Road in the city.

BNP Organising Secretary Nazrul Islam Monju, also the Khulna city BNP president, said they could not sit in front of the party office due to obstruction by police.

Police attacked the programme, snatched our banners and chased us. Two BNP activists were arrested. We could not observe the programme due to violence by police. We condemn this violence," he added.

Hasan Al Mamun, officer-in-charge of Khulna Sadar Police Station, said

no one would be allowed to take part in any programme occupying roads and obstructing traffic. "The BNP was asked to hold the programme inside its office."

In Patuakhali, the BNP's hunger strike came under attack allegedly by Chhatra League men in front of the temporary office of the party in Banani area of the town around 10:00am.

Kazi Mahbub Hossain, convenor of Patuakhali Sadar upazila BNP, alleged that Chhatra League leaders and activists, led by Arif Tanveer, carried out the attack on the peaceful programme.

Denying his involvement in the attack, district BCL leader Arif said none from the student front were involved in the incident. He claimed that the incident was outcome of the BNP's internal feud.

Patuakhali Police Station OC Md Moniruzzaman said he was not aware of the attack.

In Barguna, police charged truncheons on BNP men during the mass hunger strike in front of the party office on Sadar Road in the town.

District BNP President Nazrul Islam Mollah claimed that at least 12 party leaders and activists were injured in the incident.

Police Inspector (investigation) Shahidul Islam said the BNP men were observing the hunger strike blocking the road in front of its office.

As police asked them to leave the road, they attacked the law enforcers, he added.

Police used batons on the BNP men to disperse them and bring the situation under control. Six people were detained from the area, Shahidul said.

On behalf of the family, Khaleda's younger brother Shamim Iskander submitted an application to the home ministry on November 11 urging the government to allow her to go abroad for better treatment.

Our correspondents in Khulna and Patuakhali contributed to this report.



A college student tears down a sticker stating diesel-run from the windshield of a bus in the capital's Farmgate yesterday. Students have been demonstrating for lower bus fares over the last few days. Commuting costs increased significantly after the government raised the price of diesel. It has been reported that transport companies in many instances are falsely claiming that their vehicles use diesel just to be able to charge additional fares.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Foreign trip spree amid pandemic

FROM PAGE 1

frequent foreign tours of government officials as many such trips at public expense reportedly yield nothing. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina also spoke against such frequent trips abroad.

The pandemic changed the situation to a great deal, saving the country around Tk 2,500 crore since March last year.

Railways officials are resuming the practice of foreign trips as coronavirus restrictions are being lifted across the world.

RAIL MINISTER'S VISIT

The spouses of the railways minister and secretary will be accompanying them at their own expenses in the trip to the UK, Germany, Spain and France between November 23 and December 5, according to a rail ministry circular issued on October 31.

The order did not mention the purpose of their visit in those countries, but the railways minister said the team will see developed railway systems there. Besides, they will hold talks with different government agencies and businesses that showed interest in investing in BR.

Ministry Secretary Salim Reza, Additional Secretary Bhupon Chandra Biswas, Deputy Secretary Nazmul Haque, BR additional director generals Quamrul Ahsan and Manjur Ul Alam Choudhury, the minister's Personal Secretary Mohammad Atiqur Rahman and Assistant Personal Secretary Rashed Prodhan are accompanying the minister.

After he became the minister in January 2019, Sujan visited India, China, Indonesia and the USA.

India and China are financing several BR projects. Besides, several

Indian and Chinese companies are involved in many BR projects. Chinese contractors are involved in Padma Bridge Rail Link and Chattogram-Cox's Bazar Rail Link projects.

US-based Progress Rail is the supplier of 40 new Broad Gauge locomotives and Indonesian PT Industri Kereta Api supplied 200 metre-gauge coaches.

But none of these four European countries, the delegation is visiting, have investment in any of the 37 current BR projects.

Companies based in any of these countries are not suppliers of equipment being procured under seven projects, official sources said.

As per the October 31 order, expenses of the rail minister's visit will be borne from the budget head concerned of the cabinet division.

BR will bear the expenses for the two additional director generals and the railway ministry will bear the expenses of others.

Sujan said European countries have advanced railway networks. Different governments and companies of those countries expressed interest in investing in BR, he told The Daily Star on Saturday.

"We will talk to them about the areas in which we can take their assistance. We will also visit different factories of the companies," Sujan said.

He did not give a direct answer when asked whether the said purposes can be deemed emergency.

"We want to develop our railways. It's a continuous process. One and a half years have gone by due to Covid-19. They [foreign agencies and companies] have expressed their interest in investing here. If we don't

go now, when will we go there?"

The ministry called a press conference today over the minister's visit to Europe.

Officials said the rail minister will also visit Russia next month.

MORE VISITS

The railways ministry on Thursday issued three orders over foreign trips.

Three BR officials and an administrative officer of the railways ministry will visit India between December 1 and 7 for the Construction of Akhaura-Agartala Dual Gauge Railway Link project.

Taxmaco Rail and Engineering Ltd of India will pay the expenses of the visit to DG PSC Sleeper Manufacturing Factory in India.

Between January 24 and 30 next year, another 10-member delegation will visit the US for a "study tour" of a project titled Rolling Stock Operations Improvement Project of BR.

Along with the five ministry officials, two officials from the Planning Commission, two from the finance ministry and one from the planning ministry will visit the US.

Progress Rail Locomotives Inc, US, supplier of 40 new BG locomotives, will bear the expenses.

Twelve other BR officials will visit the US under the same project from February 7 to April 6 to participate in a training programme. The same company will bear the expenses of this tour.

BR Director General Dhirendra Nath Mazumder could not be reached for comments over the phone yesterday.

Since March 2020, when the first cases of coronavirus were detected in Bangladesh, rail officials made two foreign trips, according to records.

On the verge of losing it all

FROM PAGE 1

or national flag, the person's act shall be considered an offence," the section 21 of the law reads.

According to it, if any person commits an offence under the sub-section, he shall be punished with imprisonment for a term not exceeding 10 years, or with fine not exceeding Tk one crore, or both.

According to party sources, the AL is going to inform the LGRD ministry officially today about the party's decision.

The party may recommend the ministry remove Zahangir from the mayoral post due to his moral turpitude, according to sources.

Zahangir, who was elected on the AL ticket in June 2018, yesterday said he will submit an application requesting the AL to review his expulsion, reported the Gazipur correspondent.

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"It is a new experience for us. The law does not have any explanation regarding the removal of a mayor elected with the party symbol when they have been expelled from that party," Halal Uddin Ahmed, local government senior secretary, told The Daily Star yesterday.

"Within the law [The Local Government (City Corporation) Act, 2009], for now there is no scope for removing a mayor if a party expels him."

"The law says if someone is facing criminal charges or violates any government orders, they will be suspended from their position. And the mayor will be removed from the position if allegations were proved

beyond doubt."

Halal said they would look into the law more attentively and if needed will consult senior lawyers today.

REMOVAL

The AL Central Working Committee (ALCWC), the highest decision-making body of the party, made the decision to remove Zahangir, with AL President and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in the chair.

After the meeting, AL General Secretary Obaidul Quader said legal action might be taken against the Gazipur mayor. "We will officially communicate the party's decision on Zahangir Alam to the LGRD minister."

At the meeting, several central committee members, including party stalwarts, demanded the removal of Zahangir as mayor and legal action again him.

Hasina said she would look into the matter, meeting sources said.

Earlier, addressing the October 22 meeting of the Awami League Nomination Board for Local Body Elections, Hasina expressed anger at Zahangir's controversial remarks.

The ruling party on October 3 issued a show-cause notice to Zahangir asking him to explain within 15 days why action should not be taken against him.

In his reply, Zahangir offered an apology and said he was sorry for his comments. But the AL top leadership was not satisfied.

Zahangir, however, termed the allegations "a conspiracy against him" and blamed his political opponents for "spreading propaganda against him".

WHAT EXPERTS SAYS

Professor Tofail Ahmed, local government expert, said there is no obvious direction in the law about taking steps against a mayor elected with the party symbol.