



7th phase UP polls today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Voters are fearful of the possibility of violence as 138 union parishads go to polls today in the seventh phase of UP elections.

According to media reports, at least 98 people have so far been killed and several hundred injured in violence centring the polls.

Many voters in eight unions of Noakhali's Companiganj upazila said they were worried about violence as local Awami League leaders were divided into two groups, each backing competing candidates.

Noakhali Superintendent of Police Shahidul Islam said they cannot rule out the possibility of violence. "We will take stern action if anyone tries to create any kind of disturbance inside or outside polling stations," he said.

Speaking to The Daily Star, EC Secretary Humayun Kabir Khandaker yesterday said authorities have beefed up security in election areas and that an adequate number of law enforcers have been deployed.

Around 24.51 lakh voters of 138 unions in 20 districts are expected to cast their votes today, Election Commission data shows.

Elections to chairman posts of 11 UPs will not be needed as the candidates already won unopposed. Forty-seven UP members and 13 candidates for women's reserved seats were also elected unopposed.

At least 576 candidates are running for chairman posts, 1,236 for reserved member seats for women and 4,062 for member posts.

The contest is expected to be between the ruling AL, its party rebels and Jatiya Party candidates. The BNP is not taking part.



Sitting on the central reservation, Apple Mahmud selling old car horns in Old Dhaka's Dholaikhal area yesterday. He first collects and repairs these and then sells them for Tk 200-400. The 25-year-old man has been involved in this work for six years.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN



Tumultuous history

GAZIUL HAQUE

Until 1948, the State Language Movement was a movement of the intelligentsia and the students; it did not find its place among the masses.

This was because of the common people's unjustified infatuation towards the rulers of the newborn state, the lack of understanding of the exploiters' evil designs and the absence of a strong political organisation to build up the movement.

Despite the inherent weakness, the 1948 state language movement contributed to the emergence of progressive forces in the political arena.

The exploitation that was masked in 1948 became apparent in 1952. The people of [East] Bengal became critical both against the exploiters and their exploitation.

In a public meeting held at Dhaka's Paltan Maidan on January 27, 1952, Khawaja Nazimuddin (then Prime Minister of Pakistan) announced in the same vein as Jinnah did that Urdu alone would be the state language of Pakistan.

The announcement did not go unchallenged. On January 30, a student meeting was held at Dhaka University Campus and a huge procession was brought out after the meeting.



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Biz ID made mandatory for all online sellers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government yesterday rolled out the Digital Business Identification (DBID) as part of its efforts to restore discipline in the digital commerce sector and check irregularities.

More than 1,600 e-commerce companies and nearly 5 lakh Facebook-based companies are involved in Bangladesh's digital commerce sector.

DBID is a legal base for e-commerce entrepreneurs under which they can claim various government facilities, said Commerce Minister Tipu Munshi while inaugurating DBID's app during an inter-ministerial meeting yesterday.

Some 11 companies got the DBID certificates. Gradually, all e-commerce companies and online businesses will have to obtain the certificate to operate.

It was introduced as part of the government plan to curb frauds in the burgeoning e-commerce sector, whose reputation took a beating last year after reports emerged of sites taking advance payments from consumers without delivering goods.

At least 16 major e-commerce companies have embezzled thousands of crores from customers.

The government is trying to refund the money that has been stuck up in the payment gateway as soon as possible, Munshi said, adding that Tk 15 crore has been refunded to fraudulent e-commerce platform Qcoom's customers.

Gradually, all e-commerce companies and online businesses will have to obtain the certificate to operate.

However, making refunds to customers of companies that are facing court cases may take more time, he added.

To avert the largescale fraud witnessed in recent times, the government set up a payment gateway in the central bank on July 1 last year so that the e-commerce companies got their payments upon confirmation of receipt of goods by the end users.

Now, the DBID was

introduced.

About Tk 2,500 crore is transacted through e-commerce platforms every day, according to State Minister for ICT Zunaed Ahmed Palak.

The government is developing three more platforms -- Central Complaints Management System, Central Logistic Tracking System, and an Interoperability Digital Transfer System -- to control irregularities, he said.

The three platforms will become operational within the next six months, Palak said, adding that five lakh people will be employed in this growing sector by 2025.

Small and female entrepreneurs would benefit from the new business identification as they are entering the sector in a big way, said Salman F Rahman, the prime minister's adviser on private industry and investment.

Entrepreneurs will have to obtain DBID certificates from the office of the Registrar of Joint Stock Companies & Firms, said Shomi Kaiser, president of the e-Commerce Association of Bangladesh, at the launch event.

PANDEMIC FALLOUT

Noab asks for tax reduction

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Newspaper owners yesterday urged the government to bring down the taxes in the next national budget as the sector looks to stage a comeback after being battered by the pandemic.

"The pandemic has hit the newspaper sector badly. Our circulation dropped and earnings from advertisement plunged," said AK Azad, president of the Newspaper Owners' Association of Bangladesh (Noab), in a pre-budget meeting with the National Board of Revenue.

Even before the pandemic, the sector's advertisement market shrinking at 20 percent on an average every year.

But thanks to the pandemic, it has dropped at least 55 percent, said Azad, also the publisher of Bangla daily Samakal.

"It is difficult for the newspaper industry to survive the historic crisis without government support," he added.

Subsequently, the association called for cuts in the rates of corporate tax, tax-at-source on advertisements, exemption on value-added tax on newsprint import, relief from having to pay the income tax of employees and a tax cut on house rent.

The industry now pays 4 percent source tax on advertisement income and 5 percent advance income tax on raw materials.

However, most of the newspapers cannot even register 9 percent profit in a year, according to Azad.

Subsequently, Noab proposed reducing the source tax to 2 percent and doing away with the advance income tax.

The main raw material of the industry is newsprint and its price soared to \$890 a tonne from \$ 570 in one-and-a-half years, he said. The industry is named as a VAT-free service provider in the VAT and supplementary duty act. However, a 15 percent VAT has to be paid on newsprint import, Azad said.

He went on to call for VAT exemption on newsprint import. The import duty on newsprint was imposed to protect the local industry, said NBR member (VAT Policy) Zakia Sultana.

In response, Mahfuz Anam, editor and publisher of The Daily Star, said if the quality of the local newsprint was good, the newspapers would use it.

The government announced incentive packages for many industries but the newspaper industry was not one of them, said Anam, also an executive member of Noab.

The newspaper industry is not like the other businesses as it works as a social service provider and for the betterment of the masses. "So, the government should provide tax support to the sector," he said.

According to the income tax ordinance, 50 percent of house rent is tax-free, but the newspaper wage board offers house rent of up to 70 percent of the basic salary.

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গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার

স্থানীয় সরকার বিভাগ

জাতীয় স্থানীয় সরকার ইনস্টিটিউট (এনআইএলজি)

প্রকাশনা শাখা

২৯, আগারগাঁও, শেরে বাংলা নগর, ঢাকা

স্মারক নং-৪৬.১৮.০০০০.০০৩.০২.০০৪-৯৪৮

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বিষয়ঃ এনআইএলজি'র জার্নালে প্রকাশের জন্য প্রবন্ধ আহ্বান।

জাতীয় স্থানীয় সরকার ইনস্টিটিউট (এনআইএলজি) তে "দি জার্নাল অব লোকাল গভর্নমেন্ট" নামে একটি জার্নাল প্রতি ছয় মাস অন্তর অন্তর নিয়মিত প্রকাশিত হয়। জার্নালের ভলিউম ৪৫.২ (জানুয়ারি-জুন, ২০২২) প্রকাশের জন্য লেখা আহ্বান করা যাচ্ছে। রচিত প্রবন্ধ স্থানীয় সরকার, বাংলাদেশ ও অন্যান্য দেশের স্থানীয় সরকার বিষয়ক প্রশিক্ষণ ব্যবস্থা, স্থানীয় সরকার পরিকল্পনা, প্রশাসনিক বিকেন্দ্রীকরণ এবং উন্নয়ন কর্মে জনগণের অংশগ্রহণ, স্থানীয় সরকার ম্যানুয়াল, স্থানীয় সরকার সংস্থার বিভিন্ন সমস্যা/হিস্ট্রি, গ্রামীণ উন্নয়ন, সাধারণ ও উন্নয়ন প্রশাসন ইত্যাদি বিষয়ে গবেষণামূলক মৌলিক কাজ হতে হবে। প্রবন্ধ বাংলা বা ইংরেজি যে কোন ভাষাতে লেখা যাবে। প্রকাশিত প্রবন্ধের লেখক এনআইএলজি কর্তৃক প্রদেয় সম্মানী প্রাপ্য হবেন। এ সংক্রান্ত তথ্য এনআইএলজি'র ওয়েবসাইট www.nilg.gov.bd এ দেখা যাবে। প্রবন্ধ/লেখা আগামী ১০ মার্চ, ২০২২খ্রিঃ তারিখের মধ্যে নিম্নস্বাক্ষরকারীর ই-মেইলে প্রেরণ করতে হবে। অগ্রাহ্য ব্যক্তি/প্রতিষ্ঠানকে আগামী ১৬ ফেব্রুয়ারি, ২০২২খ্রিঃ এর মধ্যে অগ্রাহ্য ব্যক্ত করতে হবে।

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মোঃ রাশেদুল হাসান

পরিচালক (যোগাযোগ)

(গবেষণা ও পরিকল্পনা)

ফোনঃ ০২-৫৫০০৬৯৮৪

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Adopt resolution on '71 genocide

Genocide Watch asks UNGA

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Genocide Watch, a US-based organisation, has formally recognised the crimes committed by the Pakistani military forces against the people of Bangladesh in 1971 as genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes.

It called upon the UN General Assembly to adopt a resolution recognising the 1971 Genocide in Bangladesh, and the UN member states, especially the US, UK and Pakistan, to recognise it too.

Genocide Watch also urged the UN members to take necessary measures to charge surviving leaders of this genocide in national courts with universal jurisdiction. It also requested proper reparations for these crimes from Pakistan to Bangladesh.

Genocide Watch is the founder and coordinator of the Alliance Against Genocide, an international coalition of over 65

organisations from around the world focusing completely on preventing genocide.

In a statement signed by Genocide Watch Founder and President Gregory H Stanton last Thursday, it said between March 25, 1971, and December 16, 1971, the Pakistani military forces persecuted, tortured, and murdered representatives of Bangalee culture and identity, including poets, musicians, professors, journalists, physicians, scientists, writers and film makers.

Attacks by Pakistani military forces and their allies forced approximately 10 million people to flee to neighbouring India. Pakistan designed the policies and conducted "clearance operations" to change the demographic composition of East Pakistan. From 300,000 to 3 million people faced extermination by mass murder, the statement said.

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