



Most Gaza children suffer 'distress'



Our skewed legal system



Of friendship, love and dragons

CUMILLA CITY POLLS

Dramatic win for Rifat

A 'phone call' changed the result, claims Sakku



ARFANUL HAQUE RIFAT (BOAT)



MONIRUL HAQUE SAKKU (CLOCK)

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA and KHALID BIN NAZRUL

It was at the Shilpakala Academy auditorium, Cumilla, around 8:20pm.

The returning officer just completed announcing the results of 72 polling stations, showing Awami League's mayoral candidate Arfanul Haque Rifat bagged 33,793 votes while his main rival Monirul Haque Sakku got 32,322.

Sakku, a former BNP leader running for Cumilla city mayor without any party backing, right at the time entered the auditorium along with some of his followers.

The returning officer, however, continued announcing the results.

About half an hour later, when he said they received results of 101 centres and was about to declare the cumulative figure, a group of AL activists came to the venue.

They were chanting "boat" and clapping in front of Sakku, who was seated in a chair. Just in five minutes, another group of ruling party supporters arrived chanting slogans.

A few supporters of the AL candidate attempted to attack Sakku but his followers formed a human shield to save him.

The returning officer tried to maintain order by asking all to refrain from chanting slogans and keep calm. But it did not work.

Around 9:15pm, police baton-charged the crowd and also tried to drive out Sakku from the auditorium but he refused to leave.

The police action continued for 10 minutes. When the situation came under control, the returning officer said they have all the results in hand. He then declared Rifat winner by 343 votes.

The final tally from all 105 centres showed Rifat secured 50,310 votes while Sakku 49,967.

"The election result has been changed with just a phone call," Sakku, the immediate-past mayor, told the media after the results were announced.

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Supporters shielding Monirul Haque Sakku (in pink panjabi) from followers of the AL-backed mayoral candidate while police work to calm the situation during the result announcement of the Cumilla City Corporation polls at the Shilpakala Academy auditorium last night.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

EVM EXPERIENCE

Largely without hassles

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA and KHALID BIN NAZRUL

Voting in yesterday's Cumilla City Corporation polls took place largely without hassles, but there were some complaints about technical issues with electronic voting machines and long waiting times.

EVMs were used in all 105 polling centres -- a first for the city. EVMs were also used in the two previous city polls.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 6

Govt mulls fuel price hike

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government is considering raising the fuel prices to cut losses of Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation amid a price hike of crude oil and diesel in the global market.

Two ministers have already hinted at hiking the fuel prices, which will add to the woes of people already grappling with the spiralling prices of essentials.

In November last year, the government hiked the diesel price by Tk 15 a litre -- the highest raise since 2007. It last raised the petrol price in January 2013 by Tk 7 to Tk 96 a litre and the octane price by Tk 5 to Tk 99 a litre. The prices of both fuels, however, were slashed by Tk 10 a litre in April 2016.

Yesterday, Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal said the decision on the petroleum prices is yet to be made.

"You will be informed once it is done," he said while briefing reporters virtually on the outcome of a meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Government Purchase.

He said the government always tries to bear the burden when the price of any essential item goes up in the international market. "But when the cost goes up excessively, the government bears part of the load and consumers bear the rest."

The minister, however, didn't respond when reporters told him that the BPC made profits of about Tk 50,000 crore since 2015.

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Census workers noting down information of residents of Korail slum in the capital. After several delays due to various reasons including the Covid-19 pandemic, the week-long sixth population and housing census started yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

2,100km roads in need of repair

Says RHD survey; budget allocation not enough

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

Although the Roads and Highways Department continued to improve its roads across the country, around 2,100km -- 10.36 percent of all surveyed roads -- are still in "poor, bad or very bad" condition, says an RHD survey.

Experts and engineers said overloading, lack of budgetary allocation for timely maintenance, and poor construction materials are the major reasons behind the poor conditions.

Around Tk 6,295 crore would be required in the next fiscal year for repairing roads, bridges and culverts, according to the Maintenance and Rehabilitation Needs Report 2022-23.

However, the RHD is going to get Tk 3,500 crore -- only half the allocation needed -- in the next fiscal year for maintenance.

According to the department, there are 22,428km of national and regional highways and district roads under its jurisdiction across the country.

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Halder approved loans without application

Find ACC investigators

MAHBUBUR RAHMAN KHAN

Typically, when a lender receives a loan application, the repayment capacity of the applicant is assessed before signing off on the loan. But for Reliance Finance, under the stewardship of Proshanta Kumar Halder aka PK Halder, that was an afterthought.

As the managing director of the non-bank financial institution, Halder would approve loans even before the application had arrived. And it would not be for paltry sums.

He started with a loan for Tk 15 crore for one JK Trade International owned by Irfan Ahmed Khan.

The loan was approved on April 3, 2011, whereas the loan application was submitted on December 12, 2011, said an investigator of the Anti-Corruption Commission looking into Halder's case.

"It is completely unrealistic and illegal," said an investigator of the Anti-Corruption Commission looking into Halder's case, adding that the loan was sanctioned without any collateral.

And JK Trade was given a grace period of six months illegally.

"That was his beginning. After that, he became more desperate and carried out loan manipulation one after another."

The ACC investigators did not find Irfan.

"Rather we found Halder's friend Abdul Alim Chowdhury as an owner of JK Trade."

Halder also managed a loan of Tk 5 crore to one NAM Corporation owned by Abdul Alim.

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বাংলাদেশ ব্যাংক

প্রবাসী/অনিবাসী ব্যক্তির নামে পরিচালিত ফরেন কারেন্সি হিসাবের স্থিতি অবাধে বিদেশে স্থানান্তর প্রসঙ্গে

বিদ্যমান বৈদেশিক মুদ্রা লেনদেন ব্যবস্থায় বিদেশে বসবাসরত প্রবাসী/অনিবাসী ব্যক্তি এদেশে অনুমোদিত ডিলার ব্যাংক শাখায় প্রাইভেট ফরেন কারেন্সি হিসাব কিংবা নন-রেসিডেন্ট ফরেন কারেন্সি ডিপোজিট হিসাব পরিচালনা করতে পারেন। বিদেশ থেকে প্রেরিত ফরেন কারেন্সি কিংবা বিদেশ থেকে বাংলাদেশে আগমনকালে সংগে নিয়ে আসা ফরেন কারেন্সি এ সকল হিসাবে জমা রাখা যায়। বিদেশ থেকে আগত যাত্রী যে কোনো পরিমাণ ফরেন কারেন্সি বাংলাদেশে আনতে পারেন। সঙ্গে নিয়ে আসা ফরেন কারেন্সির পরিমাণ অনধিক দশ হাজার মার্কিন ডলার বা সমতুল্য অন্য কারেন্সি হলে শুদ্ধ কর্তৃপক্ষের নিকট ঘোষণা প্রদানের প্রয়োজন নেই।

স্থানীয়ভাবে পরিচালিত এ সকল ফরেন কারেন্সি হিসাবের স্থিতি অবাধে টাকায় নগদায়ন করা যায়। বিদেশ থেকে আগত প্রবাসী/অনিবাসী ব্যক্তি বাংলাদেশ ত্যাগকালে তার হিসাবের স্থিতি হতে অনধিক পাঁচ হাজার ইউএস ডলার নোট আকারে এবং হিসাবের স্থিতি থাকা সাপেক্ষে প্রয়োজন অনুযায়ী অন্য ফরেন কারেন্সি সঙ্গে নিয়ে যেতে পারেন।

প্রবাসী/অনিবাসী ব্যক্তির নামে পরিচালিত এ সকল ফরেন কারেন্সি হিসাবের স্থিতি মুনাফা/সুদসহ অবাধে ব্যাংকিং চ্যানেলে বিদেশে প্রেরণ করা যায়। এক্ষেত্রে বাংলাদেশ ব্যাংকের কোনোরূপ অনুমোদনের প্রয়োজন নেই।

ব্যাংকিং ও আর্থিক সেবা পেতে হযরনির শিকার হলে কিংবা কোনো অভিযোগ থাকলে ১৬২৩৬ নম্বরে ফোন করুন।