

EC plans EVM promo campaign

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

The Election Commission has chalked out a massive campaign to promote the use of Electronic Voting Machines among the people.

Amid major opposition parties' distrust in the device, the EC earlier said it would use the EVMs in a maximum of 150 parliamentary seats in the upcoming national polls, which might be held in January 2024.

The EC has planned to involve eminent citizens, actors, social media influencers, the cricket board, and famous companies in the campaign.

It has also planned to create a mobile game to promote the positive sides of the EVMs.

A theme song, a rap song, advertisements, sporting events, and relevant shows have already been planned as parts of the campaign.

"The EC is planning a comprehensive campaign in favour of the EVMs. It will be broadcasted on public and private television and through social media. It will also be circulated in newspapers, mosques, temples, and educational institutions," said EC Secretary Humayun Kabir Khandaker.

"The EC has given the responsibility to the EVM project director. He will come up with an action plan shortly."

Although the EC has been in support of the EVM use, the opposition parties slammed the decision saying it only proved the EC was subservient to the ruling party.

The BNP and its allies have long been opposing EVMs, saying the devices would allow the ruling party to "steal votes".

Recently, 19 out of 39 registered political parties have directly opposed the use of EVMs, either joining or skipping the talks with the EC held on July 17-31.

Among them are the BNP and the Jatiya Party.

Only three — the ruling Awami League, Samyabadi Dal and Bikalpa Dhara Bangladesh — categorically said they wanted the machines in the national polls.

The EC also held a series of meetings regarding EVM use with 28 political parties in June, after which only four, including the AL, said they were in favour of using the EVMs.

Meanwhile, EVM Project Director Syed Raquibul Hasan gave a set of proposals regarding the campaign on EVMs at an Election Commission meeting on Monday.

The draft proposal includes two TVCs and three dramas, each with three episodes and a famous cast.

The positive sides of the EVMs should be promoted everywhere, including schools, colleges, universities, madrasas, masjids, tea stalls, barber shops, super shops, drug stores, bus counters, train stations, launch terminals and other significant places, the proposal added.



A firefighter walks through rubble at a railway yard of the freight railway station in Kharkiv, which was partially destroyed by a missile strike, amid the Russian invasion of Ukraine yesterday. Related story on page 12.

PHOTO: AFP

VIOLENCE IN RAMU

10 yrs on, justice still pending

ASHUTOSH SARKAR

Ten years on, victims of the communal attack on the Buddhist community in Ramu of Cox's Bazar are still waiting for justice.

In late September 2012, attackers unleashed violence on the minority community on the pretext that a Buddhist man, Uttam Barua, demeaned Islam on Facebook.

A subsequent investigation by The Daily Star found that the Facebook account of Uttam Barua may have been hacked to post a photoshopped picture to create the ground for the attack.

On September 20, the attackers set fire to Buddhist temples, vandalised and looted more than 50 houses in Ramu. They also attacked Mushurikhola crematorium at Khurushkul village in Cox's Bazar Sadar upazila and tried to attack the houses of Hindus in Kharulia village.

The following day, they attacked and ransacked five Buddhist temples in Ukhiya upazila and damaged two Hindu temples in Palongkhali union of the upazila. They also torched and vandalised Buddhist houses in Hoaikong union of Teknaf.

As many as 18 cases were filed following the coordinated attacks. All of the cases are still under trial, with all accused on bail.

Faridul Alam, the public prosecutor of Cox's Bazar District and Sessions Judge's

Court, said the cases remain pending as the witnesses don't appear before the courts to testify against the accused, many of whom are their neighbours.

Besides, the victims have little interest in pursuing the cases as the government built them new homes and pagodas, he told The Daily Star.

Investigators pressed charges in some cases while investigations into some other cases are yet to complete, he added.

Uttam Barua remains missing since the incident.

WRIT PETITIONS

In October 2012, Supreme Court lawyers Md Eunus Ali Akond and Jyotirmoy Barua filed two petitions with the High Court, seeking actions against the perpetrators and the local officials for their "negligence" in preventing the incidents. Following the petitions, two inquiries were conducted in line with HC orders.

The probe reports identified the attackers and found negligence of local officials in preventing the attack, but the HC is yet to make any decision on the matter.

Attorney General AM Amin Uddin has earlier told this correspondent that the petitioners would have to place the petitions before the HC for their quick hearing.

PROBE REPORTS

The probe reports were submitted to the HC bench led by now-retired Justice Mirza Hussain Haider. Before his elevation as a judge of the Appellate Division, the jurisdiction of the bench was reconstituted by the then chief justice.

One of the reports submitted to the HC on May 16, 2013, found the local administration and intelligence and law enforcement agencies failed to prevent the attacks.

The probe by a judicial body identified 298 people responsible for the mayhem.

Another probe led by the police found failures of the then superintendent of police of Cox's Bazar and officer-in-charge (OC) of Ramu Police Station.

A separate home ministry investigation found 205 people were involved in the communal violence, which was planned at least 10 days earlier.

Police have reportedly pressed charges against 385 people. They include some leaders and activists of Jamaat-e-Islami and BNP, including Tofail Ahmed, chairman of Naikhyangchhari upazila of Bandarban.

Advocate Eunus Ali Akond told The Daily Star that he would not take any initiative for hearing of his writ petition, as no HC bench wanted to hear the matter.

Jyotirmoy Barua, the other petitioner, could not be reached for comment.

665 more get Covid in a day

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

No Covid deaths were reported in the country in 24 hours preceding 8:00am yesterday.

The number of fatalities from the disease remains unchanged at 29,360 and the mortality rate is 1.45 percent, said a press release of the Directorate General of Health Services.

At least 665 new Covid-19 cases were recorded during the same 24-hour period after testing 4,728 samples countrywide. With this, the total number of cases rose to 20,23,810.

The current positivity rate is 14.07 percent, while the total positivity rate stands at 13.61 percent, read the press release.

Meanwhile, the DGHS will stop administering the first and second doses of the Covid vaccines after October 3, Prof Abul Bashar Mohammad Khurshid Alam, director general of the DGHS, said yesterday.

"We have vaccinated 97 percent of our population with a first dose and 90 percent with a second dose," he said at a press conference at his office.

The DGHS chief said around 41 percent of the population has received a booster jab.

MUNIA'S DEATH

PBI given more time to complete probe

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday asked the Police Bureau of Investigation to submit by October 16 the probe report in the rape and murder case of college student Mosarat Jahan Munia in capital's Gulshan.

Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate Begum Yasmin Ara passed the order after Investigation Officer Md Alauddin, also an inspector of PBI, failed to submit the report.

With this, the PBI has so far taken 19 dates to submit report.

The same court on September 13 asked the PBI to submit the report by yesterday.

Among the eight accused is Bashundhara Group Managing Director Sayem Sobhan Anvir.

Police recovered the body of the 21-year-old college student from a Gulshan flat on April 26 last year.

Her elder sister filed the case with Gulshan Police Station on September 6.

Two of the accused, Saifa Rahman Mim and model Faria Mahbub Piyasha, now on bail, were present at the court yesterday.

AL leader stabbed to death in Bogura

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogura

A local Awami League leader was stabbed to death in Bogura's Sherpur upazila yesterday evening.

Murtoza Kawsar Avi, 32, was a member of the Sherpur Municipality AL's proposed committee.

The resident of Khandakar Para was also a former ward-level Jubo League leader, said local AL leader Golam Hossain.

Quoting locals, Ataur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Sherpur Police Station, said, "Avi was at a car wash around 6:30pm when 5-6 assailants tried to attack him with sharp weapons. He ran but the attackers caught him at the rear of the car wash and stabbed him. Locals took him to the Bogura Ziaur Rahman Medical College Hospital where doctors pronounced him dead."

Police have identified 5-6 suspects, the officer said, adding that the motive behind the attack was still unclear.

2 photos and hope rekindled

FROM PAGE 1

"I had sold off our last goat to manage the Tk 2 lakh needed to send him to Malaysia. Where would I get the extra money?" asked Siddik.

Helpless, they had no choice but to leave Azizul's life to fate.

Nine years later, Siddik now knows his brother is alive and is serving time in a jail in Bang Kwang Central Prison.

"A man who was in jail with my brother came to us and showed us two photos. My brother was in one of the photos, wearing a cap and a green uniform. My brother told the man to contact our family and deliver the photo to us when he gets released," said Siddik.

"My mother was so happy to see the photo. She never lost hope that her son was alive."

Sources in human rights organisations in Thailand confirmed to Brac's migration unit that there are at least 17 Bangladeshi inmates serving time in Bang Kwang Central

Prison, and seven more inmates in Klong Prem Central Prison.

There are 18 more Bangladeshi detainees in Bangkok's Immigrant Detention Centre in Sathon.

Human rights experts said that when legal migration of Bangladeshis to Malaysia was suspended, migrant workers were trafficked in boats. Many ended up tortured, thrown overboard, buried in mass graves, or thrown in prison.

Shariful Hasan, the head of Brac's migration unit, said, "Many people went to Malaysia by sea between 2013 and 2015. We don't know how many are missing. Our embassies should look into the prisons to check how many Bangladeshi inmates are incarcerated there."

The man carrying the photos reached out to the family of Maksud Miah. He could tell them the number of the Bang Kwang prison ward in which Maksud was kept, and even his inmate number.

Maksud too had last spoken to his brother Nur Kabir in 2013, three months after he set off in a boat from Teknaf.

A labourer from Sonadia island of Maheshkhali, he had thought the dreamland of Malaysia was just a fishing boat ride away. His brother said goodbye to him in Cox's Bazar town, and an agent took him off to Teknaf from where he would board a boat.

"We catch fry for a living," said Nur Kabir, "and we sold off all our land and our home to come up with Tk 2 lakh and send Maksud to Malaysia."

"Three months later, an agent called us and handed the phone to my brother. Maksud was crying and said he was in Thailand. They were torturing him and he said he needed Tk 2 lakh more for a safe passage to Malaysia," said Nur Kabir.

"He asked me to send at least Tk 20,000, but I had nothing."

Kabir did not have the money, and

so he heard no news of his brother until three years ago, when a man came to his house with his brother's inmate number.

Also seen in the photos is Mozaher Miah, of Howanok union in Maheshkhali, who too had attempted to go to Malaysia around the same time using the same route.

Mozaher Ali's wife Juhra Khatun left no stone unturned to get her husband back ever since she saw the photo and learnt that he was alive.

She persuaded the chairman of Howanok union parishad to write to the Maheshkhali upazila nirbahi officer. She wrote to the deputy commissioner of Cox's Bazar. Her case was verified by the assistant commissioner and the special branch of police in Cox's Bazar.

But it was all to no avail, the family members said.

Now, they can only wait and see if their latest effort, the letter to the ministry, will bear any fruit.

in taking legal action against them through the official channel," Islam said.

Meanwhile, Shakil made a confessional statement at a court, admitting his involvement in managing Ansar Al Islam's fund inflows.

From the statement, the investigators have obtained details of around 12 Ansar Al Islam sympathisers, including a car trader in Bangladesh.

The car trader named Tuhin has allegedly provided Tk 10 lakh after receiving the sum from the UK, according to officials.

"We are now verifying the names we found from the arrestees and conducting drives to arrest them," Islam said.

President, GS sued

FROM PAGE 1

After a hearing, Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate Syed Mostafa Reza Nur recorded the complainant's statement, took cognisance of the case and directed the officer-in-charge of Lalbagh Police Station to submit a report by October 24 after an investigation.

In her complaint, Jannatul said that on September 22, she gave an interview to the media about Riva and Razia being involved in various illegal activities.

Following this, some of their supporters, along with Rokhsana, Meem and Jyoti, threatened to kick her out of the college dormitory.

Around 10:00pm on September 24, Swarna and three or four others, armed with "homemade weapons" entered Jannatul's dorm room and conducted "a search", upon Riva and Razia's orders.

As they did not find anything incriminating against her, they damaged her furniture, stole Tk 20,000 from her wardrobe and a laptop worth Tk 34,000. They also threatened to "kill" those who were there, the complainant said.

Later that day, Riva, Razia and six others surrounded Jannatul while she was returning to her room. They then attacked her with hockey sticks in front of Ayesha Hall. Razia and some others even tied a scarf around her throat to strangle her to death, the case statement said.

After Jannatul fell senseless from asphyxiation, the accused left the scene thinking she was dead. They, however, snatched the chain she wore and her mobile phone worth Tk 55,000, before leaving.

Some teachers then came to her rescue and took her to Dhaka Medical College Hospital for treatment.

After that, Jannatul went to Lalbagh Police Station to file a case against those who attacked her.

The police, however, did not register her case and asked her to go to a court instead.

The Eden College BCL has been making headlines over the past several

days after the attack on Jannatul in the presence of its president and GS.

A day after the attack, Riva and Razia, along with some other leaders, held a press conference on the college premises, regarding Riva being "unwanted" by the rival group over allegations of blackmailing students into doing unethical work, hall seat trade, extortion, and torture.

The meeting ended with a violent clash between the two groups.

The college BCL unit has been mired in controversy and intra-party feud since the announcement of the committee on May 13.

Riva said the allegations against her came from "those who were unable to get their expected posts in the committee". She said they have, since then, been trying to stir controversy against the top leaders.

Meanwhile, the central BCL on Monday suspended the organisational activities of the unit until further notice and expelled 17 leaders and activist who brought the allegations against Riva and Razia.

The Eden College authorities have formed a four-member probe committee to investigate the recent clashes.

Freight truck crashes killing 34 in DR Congo

AFP, Lubumbashi

Thirty-four people, including children, died when a freight truck driven by a drunk driver overturned on a hill in the Democratic Republic of Congo, an official said yesterday.

The truck, carrying 93 passengers, was driving up a hill when it slowed and turned over on Monday evening, killing 33 people instantly. One person later died in hospital.

There were 16 minors among the dead, said Celestine Lundanda Panga, a local official in Lubudi city in Lualaba province, where the accident took place.