



GAIBANDHA BY-ELECTION

# Irregularities well-orchestrated

EC says in review of probe report, recommends action against 134 local officials

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

The Election Commission recommended punishment for 134 officials involved in Gaibandha-5 by-polls after its probe found their involvement in irregularities and negligence in performing duties.

They include the returning officer for the October 12 by-election; 125 local government and presiding officers, including teachers and bankers; an executive magistrate; and an additional deputy commissioner.

The commission, however, did not recommend any action against the Gaibandha deputy commissioner and superintendent of police as the probe did not find their involvement in the irregularities, according to Chief Election Commissioner Kazi Habibul Awal.

The EC in its probe found that irregularities took place at 125 polling centres out of the total 145. Besides, the committee could not comment on the situation at 16 centres as CCTV footage there was not available. No irregularities took place at four polling stations, it added.

The EC in its review said voting irregularities took place in almost all polling stations. "It was done in a coordinated and well-planned way and many were involved in the planning," it added.

In a move not seen in recent times, the EC stopped the Gaibandha-5 by-polls,

saying the situation went "out of control" due to widespread irregularities.

The CEC and other commissioners, while monitoring the CCTV footage at the EC office on October 12, found some people illegally present in the polling booths and influencing voters.

**ACTIONS AND REASONS**

At a press conference at his Dhaka office yesterday, CEC Awal said the EC secretariat will take departmental action against the EC's Rajshahi Regional Election Officer Saiful Islam, also the returning officer for the by-polls, for negligence of duties within a month, in line with the Election Officials (Special Provision) Act, 1991.

The EC also recommended relevant offices to take action against 125 presiding officers (PO).

The EC officials said the POs of these centres have grossly neglected their duties, and there was no atmosphere for fair voting inside the polling booths. They did not even take any initiative to restore the proper voting atmosphere.

The CEC at the press conference said they recommended that the authorities concerned take action against Gobaindganj Police Station sub-inspectors Tarun Kumar, Abdullah Al Mamun and Anisur Rahman, Sadullahpur Police Station SI Kanak Ranjan Barman and Panchagar's Atoari Police Station ASI Dulal Hossain

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**"It has become clear from this incident that irregularities in elections have become a usual matter. If that's true, it seems we don't need any election."**



Japan's players fell to their knees, searched the skies and embraced their nearest teammates as the referee blew the final whistle, which confirmed a stunning 2-1 win against Spain and not only ensured Japan would go the round of 16, but do so as the champions of Group E.

PHOTO: AFP



# Germans eliminated

Japan fairytale continues

AFP, Doha

Spain staggered through to the World Cup last 16 on Thursday despite a 2-1 defeat by Japan, who remarkably won Group E on a rollercoaster night which saw four-time champions Germany eliminated.

Japan secured another incredible triumph after beating

Germany in their opening game, with their progression from the "group of death" one of the greatest achievements in the country's footballing history.

For a few heart-stopping minutes Spain were poised to head out when Costa Rica were leading in the other game, but the 2010 champions squeezed through after Germany did them a favour by coming back

to beat Los Ticos.

Spain and Germany ended on four points each, but La Roja progressed on goal difference.

Alvaro Morata sent Spain ahead early on with a towering header, but Japan dramatically struck back at the start of the second half.

Ritsu Doan and Ao Tanaka's goals saw them mount a sensational comeback to beat Los Ticos.

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# DESERT FEST Argentina get their mojo back



ABDULLAH AL MEHDI

Clenched teeth, head lowered.

That is how Lionel Messi returned to the dressing room after his first-half penalty was saved by Wojciech Szczesny. If that is how things had ended, it could have been Messi's last World Cup game. But his team had other ideas.

The momentum that Argentina had carried to the World Cup after a 36-game unbeaten run screamed to a halt following a stunning loss to

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TODAY'S MATCHES	
South Korea v Portugal	9:00pm
Ghana v Uruguay	9:00pm
Serbia v Switzerland	1:00am
Cameroon v Brazil	1:00am

# BNP'S RAJSHAHI RALLY People suffer as strike in force

STAR REPORT

Defying obstacles, BNP leaders and activists continued pouring into Rajshahi city yesterday as an indefinite transport strike came into force in the division's eight districts in the morning ahead of the party's rally tomorrow.

Many BNP of them walked about 10 to 30 kilometres to reach the city.

Most of those who arrived at the city until Wednesday night stayed under the open sky at Hazrat Shah Makhdom Central Eidgah ground. Yesterday morning, local BNP men managed some tents and tarpaulin for them. The rally venue, Madrasa Maidan, is close to Eidgah.

Many opposition men were also staying at the houses of their relatives and fellow party members.

The indefinite transport strike caused sufferings to passengers in Rajshahi division's eight districts throughout the day yesterday.

Though the strike was scheduled to begin at 6:00am, most of the buses stopped plying since Wednesday evening.

Many people were seen going to Rajshahi Railway Station to take trains.

Visiting the Eidgah ground yesterday, this newspaper found that many BNP leaders and activists were resting inside tents while others cooking food.

At the Padma Garden community centre in Dargapara, BNP men were collecting lunch boxes standing in a long queue.

Saidur Rahman Bachchu, general secretary of Sirajganj District BNP, said some 5,000 party men from the district reached Rajshahi

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# Quicksand below development Says Debapriya

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Marginalised people have not benefited equally from the economic growth due to deepening inequality, weakening public institutions, and a culture of fear, Citizen's Platform for SDGs, Bangladesh, said yesterday.

"There is a quicksand underneath the development. There is discernible progress in terms of schools, hospitals and road infrastructure development. But the people left behind remain marginalised," Debapriya Bhattacharya, convener of the platform, told a press briefing in the capital's Brac Centre Inn.

The quicksand can be avoided by taking proper policies, he said.

"During this period of development, the government institutions have become weaker, leaving the marginalised people unguarded," he said at the briefing organised by the Citizen's Platform for SDGs to share the findings of a paper titled "Does Local Realities Reflect the National Development Narrative? Perspectives from Sub-national Consultations".

Around 500 people joined the

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**BUSINESS**

**EXPORT RECEIPTS CROSS \$5B FOR FIRST TIME**

Bangladesh's earnings from merchandise exports crossed the \$5-billion mark for the first time in November, a major boost for the country reeling from the foreign exchange crisis.

Last month, exporters brought in \$5.09 billion, the highest in a single month. It was up 26.01 per cent from November last year.

The previous monthly highest was recorded in June when the merchandise shipment surged to \$4.91 billion.

**STORY ON BI**

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## Islami Bank's clarification regarding some recent news published in media

Islami Bank Bangladesh Limited has been conducting banking activities with reputation for last 40 years. A significant number of large industries of the country have been established with the financing of this bank. Recently, the information published in different media regarding the investment of Islami Bank Bangladesh Limited given to various companies including S. Alam Group and Nabil Group, was not presented properly.

S. Alam Group is one of the largest business conglomerates in the country. The group has been operating its business activities for more than 33 years with reputation. This group has an immense contribution to the national economy of Bangladesh with a strong presence in food & allied products, steel, cement, power & energy, PP, agro-based industry, consumer goods production, manufacturing & distribution, transportation, real estate, textile & apparels manufacturing and media & telecom sector. Besides, the group has been working as one of the largest suppliers of wheat, sugar, lentils and edible oil in Bangladesh for many successive years with sky high market reputation as country leader with footprints in several sectors. The Annual turnover of the group is over BDT 260.00 Billion (USD 2.50 Billion) with total asset value of about USD 13.00 Billion. It has generated huge employments for over 20,000 people directly & indirectly.

The group has been maintaining a praiseworthy business relationship with Islami Bank since 1985 (37 years ago) with trading and transport businesses and later they extended their business in diversified sectors gradually. Since then they have been maintaining business relationship with IBBL through its Agrabad Branch. The investments accorded to this group had never been overdue or classified even for a single day. Islami Bank disbursed sanctioned investment favoring the business concerns of the group following the Bank's existing investment policy and regulatory guidelines considering their business establishment, requirement of working capital, business skills, solid experiences as an entrepreneur and their strong supply chain management. It is mentionable here that the Bank earned a huge chunk of profit from various business concerns of the group against the investment since the inception of the group, which played a vital role for IBBL to emerge as the highest tax payer in banking industry for last couple of years.

Recently, Islami Bank has increased its investment for daily essential food items in order to ensure adequate food supply throughout the country. In addition, due to recent price hike in the international market, increase of import requirement of essential commodities & volatile dollar rate and rapid expansion of their business, they have been accorded investment through proper assessment, evaluation & strong personal net worth of the Directors of the Group Concerns and ensuring adequate collaterals as per Bank's rules & regulations. The companies mentioned in the report i.e. Century Flour Mills, Aramit Limited, Unitex Composite Spinning, Unitex LPG, HIP, Sunmoon Enterprise and Adil Enterprise are other business entities which are not related to S. Alam Group.

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