

BANGABAZAR FIRE

Traders stare at a bleak future

4,000 owners, 15,000 workers yet to be compensated

DIPAN NANDY and SAJJAD HOSSAIN

Around 4,000 owners and 15,000 shop workers, that were affected by the devastating fire at the capital's Bangabazar about a couple of months ago, are still waiting for their financial compensation.

Traders said the incident led to a damage of Tk 1,000 crore. However, according to Dhaka South City Corporation's probe committee, the fire damaged 3,845 shops at Bangabazar Shopping Complex and adjacent markets, while the total loss was Tk 303 crore.

To combat the crisis, Bangabazar Shop Owners' Association had created a fund on April 4. However, no progress has been seen when it comes to distributing the funds as no decision has been made in this regard yet, even with Eid-ul-Azha being just around the corner.

Most of the shop owners were unable to give any bonuses last Eid. Considering the current situation, their employees have to face the same fate this time too, fear traders.

"We cannot continue running our business without financial assistance as we have already incurred significant

losses. On top of that, we have to repay loans. We need the compensation as soon as possible," said Rakib Hossain, owner of MashaAllah Enterprise.

Mohsin, the owner of Allahr Dan Garments, has been suffering living in a menace since the incident. "I came here 15 years ago with an empty pocket and eyes full of dreams. After working day and night for five years, I had finally started my own business to support my wife and children, only to watch it burn down to ashes during the accident. The compensation is our only hope," he said.

Zahirul Islam, general secretary of the association, said while they have collected funds from various sources, they are yet to distribute any money among the affected traders or issue checkbooks.

Following the fire, an aid provided by the prime minister has already reached the affected workers. However, the traders are yet to receive their aid and thus, are struggling to cope up with paying salaries, allowances and bonuses, informed Zahirul Islam, the general secretary of the association.

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PHOTO: TITU DAS

Following the city polls, the cleaning staff of the Barishal City Corporation are busy removing laminated posters that were put up by various candidates and their supporters as a part of their electoral campaigns. The photo was taken on the city's Sadar Road yesterday.

'Miscreants stole 25 railway signal motors'

Allege authorities in Cumilla

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cumilla

The railway authorities have alleged that 25 signal motors used for changing track were stolen from May to June in Cumilla.

As a result, the automatic signal system worth Tk 4 crore is not functioning, said Liakat Ali Khan, senior sub-assistant engineer of Cumilla Railway Station.

According to the authorities at five railway stations, there were 67 automatic signal systems between Laksham and Akhaura railway junction; of them the motors at 25 signal points were stolen.

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PRAYER TIMING
JUNE 18

Fazr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
AZAN 4-05	12-45	5-00	6-50	8-15
JAMAAT 4-40	1-15	5-15	6-55	8-45

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

The candidates keep getting richer

Shujan presents report of affidavits submitted to EC; Liton tops the list

ANWAR ALL, Rajshahi

Awami League's mayoral candidate AHM Khairuzzaman Liton emerged as the highest-earning contestant among the three mayoral contenders for the Rajshahi City Corporation polls, with his annual income increasing by over Tk 6 crore in five years.

However, an analysis of the candidates' affidavits submitted to the Election Commission revealed that the two other highest-earning contestants — Md Rajab Ali and Md Shahadat Ali Shahu — surpassed Liton in accumulating wealth from 2018-2023.

Dilip Kumar Sarkar, central coordinator of Sushashoner Jonno Nagorik (Shujan), presented the analysis report during a press conference held at a city hotel yesterday.

Liton, the incumbent mayor, declared an annual income of Tk 6.081 crore and amassed wealth worth Tk 7,90,44,089 (since 2018). In 2018, his annual income was Tk 78,32,208.

On the other hand, Shahadat Ali Shahu, an incumbent councillor candidate, with an annual income of Tk 1,18,28,699, accumulated the highest wealth worth Tk

8,64,26,412 within this time.

Meanwhile, Md Rajab Ali, another incumbent councillor candidate, had the second-highest annual income of Tk 4,00,67,745 among the candidates and amassed a wealth worth Tk 8,53,04,298.

The analysis noted that in the 2018 election, none of the candidates, including Liton, Shahu, and Rajab, had an annual income exceeding Tk 1 crore.

Among the other mayoral candidates, Murshid Alam from Islami Andolon Bangladesh earned Tk 12 lakh annually, which is almost 66 times less than Liton's income. Saiful Islam Swapan from Jatiya Party earned Tk 4.30 lakh, and Latif Anwar from Jaker Party earned Tk 1.52 lakh annually.

The analysis also listed several councillor candidates with six-digit incomes, including Akteruzzaman, Jane Alam Khan, and Shariful Islam Babu.

For the women's reserved seats, the highest-earning councillor candidates are Shamsunnahar, Bilkis Banu, Ferdousi, Sirin Ara Khatun, and Mamtaz Mahal.

The list of wealthy councillor candidates extended further, with names like Abu Bakkar

Kinu, Abbas Ali Sardar, and Nazma Khatun.

Out of the total 162 candidates running for mayor and 40 councillor positions, the analysis found that 124 had an annual income of less than Tk 5 lakh. While this represents a slight decrease compared to the 2018 election, where the ratio was 82.02 percent, it still indicates a significant presence of low-income candidates in the upcoming election.

The analysis also noted an increasing trend of candidates with financial resources participating in the elections, which raises concerns about the influence of money in the democratic process.

However, the report highlighted that the process of declaring wealth is flawed, and the candidates' actual wealth is likely to be much higher than what is shown in their affidavits.

Additionally, the analysis revealed an increase in the percentage of candidates burdened with debts.

Liton, the mayoral candidate, had liabilities amounting to Tk 20.80 lakh, and several councillor candidates, including those for women's reserved seats, had liabilities exceeding Tk 1 crore.

In terms of criminal records, the number of candidates with pending cases has decreased compared to the previous election. Currently,

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Green, clean and smart Sylhet

Anwaruzzaman unveils 21-point election manifesto

DWOHA CHOWDHURY



With a vision for a sustainable, environmentally friendly, and technologically advanced Sylhet city, the Awami League's mayoral candidate Anwaruzzaman Chowdhury yesterday unveiled his 21-point election manifesto.

The manifesto, titled "Green-Clean Smart Sylhet, Swapna Purone, Amrar Sylhet," was unveiled at a city hotel in the presence of journalists, as well as central and local leaders from the Awami League.

It puts forward a range of promises aimed at improving various aspects of life in Sylhet city. These include increased disaster awareness and preparedness to ensure the safety of residents, as well as the establishment of parks and playgrounds to promote recreation and a healthier lifestyle.

The manifesto also highlights the importance of human development and vows to address social crimes to create a more secure and harmonious community.

Recognising the significance of education and culture, Anwaruzzaman emphasised creating a city that is friendly and supportive towards these areas.

Besides, his manifesto aims to foster an environment that is conducive to the growth of businesses, ensuring economic prosperity and

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REVIVING BARREN LAND through grape farming

Farmer Hasem Ali's success story

S DILIP ROY, Lalmonirhat

Farmer Hasem Ali, 50, from Ajoatar village in Kurigram's Phulbari upazila, has transformed his once barren highland into a thriving grape orchard, becoming a beacon of hope for farmers facing similar challenges.

Inheriting two and a half bigha of land from his father, Ali faced numerous obstacles in his quest to make it productive. Lacking the necessary prerequisites for its location in a challenging terrain, the land proved unsuitable for conventional crops, leaving Ali disheartened as his efforts seemed in vain.

However, two years ago, Ali decided to take a leap of faith. He procured 250 grape seedlings, representing 40 different varieties from across the globe. Local bank officer Ruhul Amin came forward and provided him with the much-needed financial support to become a partner in his venture.

Initially skeptical about the foreign fruit's adaptability to the local soil, Ali's doubts were soon dispelled as nature began to work its magic. Today, a smile adorns Ali's face as his once desolate land bears fruits. The light yellowish, tender, and juicy grapes, with a distinctive flavour, have captivated the local market, where they are now in high demand.

"Out of the 250 grape trees planted in my garden, 20 have already yielded fruit," said Ali, sparking his optimism for a bountiful



harvest from the majority of the trees very soon.

Over the past two weeks, Ali has sold 50 kilos of grapes to a local fruit trader at a rate of Tk 300 per kilo. Additionally, there are another 40-45 kilos of grapes ready for sale this week, he said.

However, Ali's achievements extend beyond grape production. Alongside his grape orchard, he has also planted a diverse array of indigenous and foreign fruit trees in his garden. Inspired by instructional videos on YouTube, he ventured into grape cultivation and is now sharing his knowledge with fellow farmers, acting as a

mentor and teaching them his techniques.

Ali anticipates a significant increase in grape production, projecting a yield of approximately 3,000 kilos from his garden from next year.

Achieving such impressive results has not come without its costs. Ali said he had to spend around Tk 11 lakh to set up and maintain the grape orchard. He expressed his gratitude towards Ruhul Amin for his financial support.

Currently, he is selling an average of 100 grape seedlings daily, with prices ranging from Tk 300 to Tk 1,500 per seedling,

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Date: 15-06-2023

e-Tender Notice

e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP System portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>). Package information is available in tender notice under e-GP System Portal. This is an online tender where only e-Tender will be accepted and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. Detailed description of the tender are as follows:

Tender ID	Name of work	Last Selling Date and Time	Closing Date and Time
844666	Construction of office building of officer-in-charge, staff dormitory, nursery shed with seed storage and greenhouse with earthwork, boundary wall, approach road, small culvert etc at Patiya, Chattogram.	09 July-2023 16:00	10 July-2023 12:00

Further information and guidelines is available in the e-GP System portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd)

Rahul Guha
Executive Engineer
Chattogram PWD Division-1
Phone-02333356028
E-mail: ee_ctg1@pwd.gov.bd

GD-1022