

Chattogram BNP leader dies in Kashimpur prison

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A Chattogram BNP leader, who was arrested in Dhaka on October 27, died in Kashimpur High Security Central Jail in Gazipur yesterday.

Golapur Rahman, 63, vice president of Mohora ward BNP in the port city, died at the prison hospital at 2:40pm, said Sheikh Md Russel, deputy jailer of the prison.

He fell ill after complaining of chest pains around 2:00pm. Golapur was taken to the prison hospital, where he died while undergoing treatment, he added.

He has been receiving treatment at the prison hospital since Thursday,

“I met my father the last time in Kashimpur prison on November 4 and he was fully Ok. He had no health complications. ...”

Golapur's son Mizanur Rahman

the deputy jailer said.

Golapur was brought to Kashimpur prison from Dhaka Central Jail in Keraniganj on November 2.

Prison authorities informed family members of his death over the phone around 7:30pm, Idris Ali, former office secretary of city unit BNP, told the Daily Star.

His body will be handed over to family members today following an autopsy and other legal procedures.

Golapur, along with other BNP leaders, went to Dhaka to attend BNP's October 28 rally.

He was arrested along with Mohora ward BNP president Mohammad Azam and six others in front of BNP's Nayapaltan party office.

Golapur's son Mizanur Rahman told The Daily Star, “An unknown person called our family and said my father passed away in the jail.”

“I met my father the last time in Kashimpur prison on November 4 and he was fully Ok. He had no health complications. ... We are on the way to bring back his body,” he added.



PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

In clear violation of the electoral code of conduct, politicians have started pasting posters to seek votes in the coming national election even though campaigning is not allowed until December 18. The photo was taken at the capital's Azimpur yesterday.

People turning away from one-sided polls

Says speaker at roundtable, only people's participation ensures inclusive polls

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

If the BNP does not participate in the upcoming election, the polls will turn into a costume party, said a speaker at a roundtable yesterday.

They said people were turning away from such kind of one-sided elections.

The Hunger Project organised the roundtable titled “Environment for a free, fair and competitive election: Expectation, reality and what to do” at the YWCA conference hall in the capital yesterday.

Speaking at the discussion, former election commissioner Brig Gen (retd) M Sakhawat Hussain said, “There is no doubt that the country is developing. But the end situation will be seen in next year... We have almost a \$100 billion in loans. We are going to see another unique election this time, which the ruling party does not wish to be inclusive.

“An election is going to be held which

will be like our childhood game of ‘dress as you like’. But I really don’t know what will be the situation after the election. We are in a crisis,” he added.

Sakhawat said there were two kinds of polls – a participatory and acceptable one or a flopped and failed one. “Some are giving a new definition to participatory election by saying that if most political parties join a poll, it will be participatory. But they forget about the people.”

The country director of The Hunger Project, Badiul Alam Majumder, said people should have a choice in an election.

“If the BNP does not join the polls, there would be no chance for the people to have a choice. Moreover, this election is not a simple election,” he said.

Brotee CEO Sharmeen Morshed said, “The government said there is no time for dialogue but we have seen that it is possible to have understandings between two parties even in a war.

“We don’t want any election without a national agreement. We don’t want such a polls schedule. Our whole electoral system has become as spoiled as the society. We need reforms first,” she added.

She emphasised the role of civil society in ending the uncertain situation.

Dhaka University Prof Robaet Ferdous said, “There is no alternative to discussion. If a dialogue fails, we will need another, but the political issues should be settled over the table.”

In a keynote paper, Central Coordinator of Shujan Dilip Kumar Sarker said it was the aspiration of the people to have a free, fair, impartial and competitive election.

“But the prediction is that the upcoming election will be one-sided and violent. We think if there is no agreement among the political parties, we will see violence in the coming days, which will push the country towards an uncertain future,” he said.

Rohingya leader hacked to death

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

A Rohingya community leader was hacked to death by unidentified criminals at a refugee camp in Ukhiya upazila of Cox's Bazar yesterday.

The incident took place at Rohingya Camp-19 around 11:30am.

The deceased Ata Ullah, 34, was a community leader (Sub-Majhi) of A/1 Block in Camp-19.

Shamim Hossain, officer in charge (OC) of Ukhiya Police Station, said Ata Ullah was taken from A/1 block to A/9 block and hacked indiscriminately.

Armed Police Battalion personnel rescued him and took him to an NGO-run hospital adjacent to the camp and later to Ukhiya Upazila Health Complex, where doctors declared him dead, the OC added.

Initially, the police presume that he was killed over establishing supremacy in the camp.

The body has been sent to Cox's Bazar Sadar Hospital morgue for autopsy.

Legal action is being taken in this connection, the OC added.

GM Quader, Raushan discuss

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After the meeting, Raushan met with her loyalists.

A JP leader loyal to Raushan said election-related issues were discussed in the meeting.

The issues of Quader's move to run from Rangpur-3, where Rahgir is the incumbent MP, and the buying of a nomination form by Quader's nephew for Rangpur-1, where opposition chief whip Mashiur Rahman Ranga is the sitting MP, were also discussed in the meeting, the JP leader told this correspondent wishing anonymity.

The meeting discussed making the party's election-related decisions in consultation with Raushan.

The Daily Star could not reach Quader over phone for comments as he did not answer the calls.

Earlier in the day, JP Secretary General Mujibul Haque Chunnur said Raushan called him on Friday and said she would collect three nomination forms -- one each for herself, her son and her family physician KR Islam. But she did not collect the forms, he added.

The JP continued interviewing the nomination seekers for the second consecutive day yesterday.

The party is likely to make the final list of its nominees public today, JP sources said.

4 more bridges planned over Buriganga

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Daily Star recently, Sharif Jamil, coordinator of Waterkeepers Bangladesh, a non-government organisation working to protect water bodies, said “unplanned projects” have been killing rivers across the country.

“Different implementing agencies constructed low-height and short bridges and they proved to be the main reason behind the death of rivers.”

He said the government had decided to break down low-height bridges over the rivers around the capital but the decision was not implemented.

“Now, the government is planning to build more bridges over the Buriganga.”

He further said, “The government must prioritise rivers over such projects, and the RHD must conduct proper social and environmental studies and consider all stakeholders' opinions before taking up projects centring rivers.”

Countering the concerns, Shishir Kanti said that as per their preliminary designs, two of the bridges will not have any pier inside the river while the other two will have

only two piers each.

“So, in terms of obstructing water flow, the bridges won’t do much of it.”

WHERE THE BRIDGES WILL BE

RHD has almost completed feasibility study for two of the four bridges, said Mohammad Najmol Haque, RHD's superintendent engineer (Narayanganj Circle).

He said the existing bridge at Postagola had been partially damaged since June 2020 when a salvage ship hit it and it is not enough to cope with the growing traffic pressure.

“So, a new four-lane bridge will be constructed on the right side [following Dhaka-Mawa route] of the existing bridge.”

He added that there would be an intersection with elevated sections in Hasnabad area for proper traffic management.

“Another bridge will be built at Fatullah's Konda area to facilitate the Pangaon Inlan Container Terminal.”

He added that once that bridge is constructed, vehicles from the Dhaka-Mawa expressway can go directly to Dhaka-Chattogram highway without entering the capital.

Another bridge would be constructed on the right side of

Babubazar bridge, following the Dhaka-Mawa direction, said Sabuj Uddin Khan, RHDs' additional chief engineer (Dhaka zone).

He said that as an elevated ramp from Dhaka-Mawa Expressway ends in Kadamtali area, they were planning to connect the new bridge with the elevated section.

RHD sources said a proposal for studying the bridge's feasibility was sent to the RHD's Chief Engineer Office for approval.

The department is planning to build the fourth bridge beside the Basila Bridge, formally known as Martyred Intellectuals Bridge.

It was built at a cost of Tk 84.09 crore and opened to traffic in December 2009. However, it does not have necessary vertical clearance.

In July 2021, State Minister for Planning Shamsul Alam said the “faulty” bridge will be broken down.

However, an RHD engineer said they were considering two options -- to construct a new four-lane bridge and tear down the exiting one, or to increase the height of the existing bridge, which would be very costly.

A study will soon start in this regard, he said.

EC still has no means to track campaign costs

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Officers from the Anti-Corruption Commission and the NBR must be involved in the process.

According to a Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) study on the 2018 parliamentary polls, among the 107 candidates surveyed, 104 spent over Tk 74.95 lakh on an average during the period between finalisation of the nomination and the election.

One of the candidates spent Tk 4.5 crore, found the study.

Another TIB report on the 2008 election shows that 88 candidates spent over Tk 44 lakh on an average during the campaign. The cap was at Tk 15 lakh at the time.

The highest amount spent by a candidate was Tk 2.81 crore and the lowest was Tk 4.34 lakh.

According to former election commissioner Rafiqul Islam, the EC had in the past tried to involve the NBR to monitor spending, but revenue officials said such work had nothing to do with what the NBR did.

This correspondent made several phone calls to NBR Chairman Abu Hena Md Rahmatul Muneem, but he did not answer.

EC spokesperson Jahangir Alam says the Election Enquiry Committee works to ensure that code of conduct is implemented.

When asked about the 2007-2012 EC's recommendations, he says he is not aware of it.

Election expert Alim says “The reality is, we usually don't see them [enquiry committee] work properly to carry out the responsibilities vested on them.”

Govt luring small parties with money to join polls

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politicians can join forces with the government in this manner.

BNP and its allies are enforcing a fresh 48-hour nationwide blockade starting this morning demanding election under a nonparty government.

Rizvi urged party leaders and activists to pour into the streets with “indomitable courage” to press home their demand.

“Our blockade will be peaceful. People along with BNP activists of every tier would take to the streets without fear to establish their democratic rights,” Rizvi said.

Rizvi termed the upcoming election a “laughing stock” as people have “lost their rights to pick their representatives”.

He alleged Awami League wants to stage a “selection” through rigging, like it did in 2014 and 2018 polls.

He also told the press briefing that law enforcers arrested more than 16,215 leaders and activists in 407 cases across the country from October 28 until yesterday afternoon.

At least 325 party leaders and activists were detained and 13 cases were filed against 1,435 named and many unidentified party activists in 24 hours preceding yesterday evening

alone, he said.

Rizvi also criticised the statement of Russian foreign ministry spokesperson Maria Zakharova regarding “US interference in Bangladesh's internal affairs”.

In a statement released to the media yesterday, Rizvi said Maria's statement hurt the sentiment of the democracy-aspiring people of Bangladesh.

“The Russian spokesperson's statement contradicts people's aspiration for a fair and participatory election,” the statement said.

Terming the Russian spokesperson's statement wrong, the BNP leaders said, “Awami League has snatched people's right to vote through farcical elections in 2014 and 2018 and wrote a tainted history in the national and international arena. It is not possible to hold a participatory and credible election under any government led by the current prime minister.

“The people of the country have moral support for peaceful and non-violent programmes. The allegation of a foreign diplomat helping BNP in organising rallies is completely unexpected and unprecedented. Such an unrealistic statement goes against the people's wish to restore democracy.”