

Gonotantri Party likely to lose EC registration

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Gonotantri Party is likely to lose its registration with the Election Commission as the party has split in two and the factions presented separate sets of central committee names, which the commission deemed inappropriate.

On December 12, the EC informed the leaders of both groups in a letter that a decision had been taken to cancel the party's registration. The leaders were also asked to appear for a hearing on the matter 15 days after the letter was sent.

According to the Representation of the People Order, 1972, the EC shall, prior to cancellation of registration, give the political party concerned an opportunity to be heard.

Also to be noted, under the Political Party Registration Rules, 2008, a registered political party is required to submit the names of the central committee and copies of the proceedings of the meetings concerned.

Shahadat Hossain, president of one faction of the party, expressed interest in attending the hearing in a letter to Chief Election Commissioner Kazi Habibul Awal yesterday.

He also requested the EC to revert its decision to cancel the candidature of all party aspirants.

On August 27, the commission sought necessary documents from the party containing names of the central committee and copies of the proceedings of the concerned meetings.

Subsequently, the president and general secretary of the party submitted separate committee names to the commission.

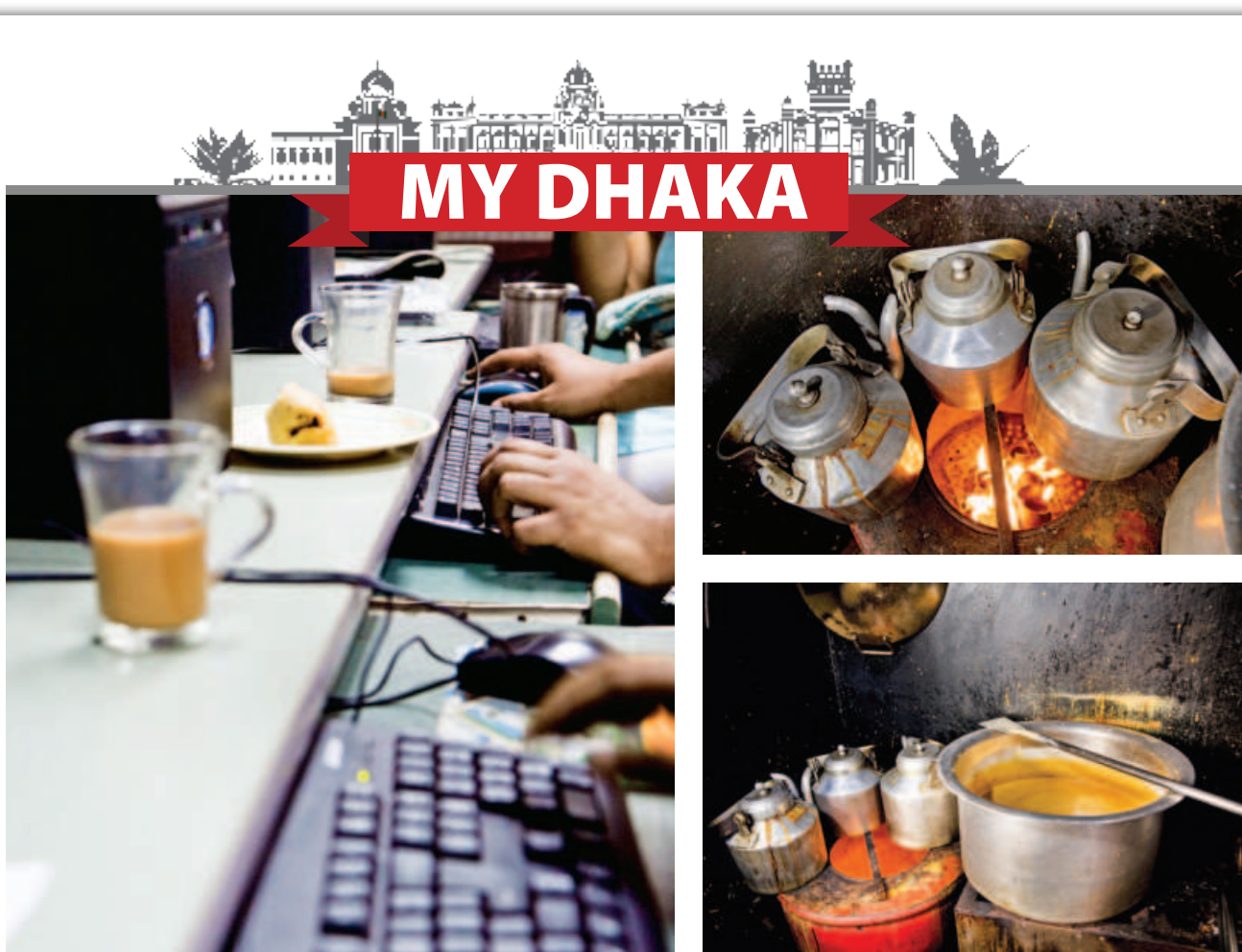
On December 9, the EC held a hearing on the issue, finding the presented documents "inappropriate".

On December 12, the EC decided to cancel the candidature of all aspirants of the ruling alliance member Gonotantri Party as the party had no commission approved central committee.

The commission issued a letter to all the returning officers in this regard.

The party, established in 1990, got EC registration in 2008. Now it has split into two groups, and they fielded 12 candidates in total for the 12th national polls set to be held on January 7.

With the cancellation of all candidatures of the 14-party-alliance member, the total number of parties joining the national polls has now dropped to 28.



Storm in a teacup OUR LOVE FOR TEA

RBR

My love for anything related to tea knows no bounds, be it fancy teapots, tea strainers, the gradation of tea leaves, the dreamy rolling tea gardens, or random roadside tea stalls – I am obsessed with the beauty and romance in it all.

There is a certain sophistication in holding a cup of tea with your pinky finger stretched and nibbling on scones, jams, and tea sandwiches at tea parties. There is a definite charm in pouring the milk tea on the saucer and slurping it up with a satisfied smack at a Dhaka tong.

The tea stall by the roadside, be it inside the city or on a random bazaar beside a highway, is a romantic place to be. Politics, sports, showbiz gossip, trending topics on social media – everything under the Dhaka sky is discussed there. But often the moving ambience of these "tongs" – as they

are called in Bangla – or tea shacks is missed amid the heated conversation.

A mud stove or raggedy, soot-laden steel stove is set up on a worn-out table. The shops lined with packets of cakes, biscuits, and bread baked in low-cost bakeries are hung by a nylon thread. There is invariably a hand of bananas or a stalk fully positioned at the front corner of the tiny shed.

A quick snack of a banana, a slice of bread, and a cup of sweet milk tea is a favourite of the teeming masses in Dhaka. Scores of cups of this tea are sold throughout the day. People want it in the chilly mornings, as a midday mood lifter, they want to relax with this cup after a day's work, it is also craved at midnight to stay awake for the ones pulling an all-nighter.

While on the topic of tea, I suggest you plan a Dhakai tea party this winter sans the English tea menu. Instead, you should consider having deshi finger foods. We would rather have

our soft coconut naris made with *nolen gur* or runny molasses for snacks and *gur'er cha* or jaggery tea, which is a winter joy in Dhaka.

With an irresistible caramel aroma and decadent toffee flavour with creamy notes, jaggery tea is a Bengali winter favourite. A hint of cardamom black tea leaves is boiled in milk until it releases a strong flavour. Many tea makers put cream or malai and then add the tea from the top of the cup. The gimmick adds to the flavour.

Just a footnote on tea brewing: do not use tea bags as they are made from tea dust; the real flavour and strength are in the loose tea. The earthy aroma of the tea brewing is heavenly. If you add a stick of cinnamon and a few pods of cardamom, then the brew is divine. And if you can use cow's milk instead of powdered or condensed milk. It brings out an authentic taste in the tea that is only found in the village tea stalls or on the outskirts of Dhaka but always by the roadside.



সকল বিক্রেতার ঐক্যিতা নেতৃত্ব

Three times a survivor

FROM PAGE 1

physical scars of the atrocities, enduring amputations and injuries. The widespread and systematic killing of the population meant that numerous survivors like Shikha Biswas witnessed the slaughtering of their dear ones – family members, relatives, friends, and acquaintances.

They still live to tell us the stories of the atrocities they suffered and witnessed during those nine months.

Like other parts of Bangladesh, some areas in Khulna-Satkhira region saw mass killings, which targeted the same group of fleeing civilians repeatedly. Noted genocide researchers in Bangladesh describe such back-to-back atrocities as "series genocide".

Debitala, Basurabad and Hetalbonia. According to them, the first incident of the "series genocide" took place on May 19 in Phultala, Debitala, and Basurabad villages and Badamtala Bazar under the Batiaghata union of Batiaghata upazila.

According to the book "Badamtala Ganahatya", authored by Gauranga Nandi, in May of 1971, Gano Parishad Member "Kuber Babu" of Rampal took shelter at a house at Batiaghata's Debitala. Within a few days, on information, the Pakistani military launched an operation to catch him.

On the morning of May 19, the Pakistani military reached Phultala village on a gunboat from Khulna. Split into several groups, they went from house to house in several villages, including Phultala, Basurabad, and Debitala, and killed scores by indiscriminately opening fire on innocent civilians.

Later, with the support of local collaborators, they nabbed several hundred people from these villages, took them to Badamtala Bazar, lined them up and killed them.

Niranjan Mandal, 70, an inhabitant of Basurabad village, was captured by the Pakistani military at Debitala village. Now retired from his government job, Niranjan was a college student in Khulna back then. The witness, who himself escaped death by luck, described his ordeal to The Daily Star.

"I was caught with five other people from Debitala. They made us stand in line beside a ditch. As they were about to open fire, I jumped into the ditch and hid under water hyacinths. Somehow, I escaped death as they could not find me. My elder brother was killed there."

After the Badamtala genocide, inhabitants of those villages fled to Chuknagar. At the beginning of the Liberation War, Chuknagar was a safe

shelter for India-bound refugees as Pakistani troops were still not in the area.

In early May, the rush of displaced people began to increase in Chuknagar and adjoining areas.

By May 18-19, according to local witnesses and historians, several lakh internally displaced people gathered there from Bagerhat, Rampal, Kandalganj, Sharankhola, Mongla, Dakop, Batiaghata, Chawl, and even Faridpur and Barishal.

According to the book "Chuknagar Ganohotya", edited by Prof Muntassir Mamoon, as the huge number of displaced people gathered there, on May 19, the then chairman of Atlia union informed the Pakistani military camp in Satkhira of the developments.

On the morning of May 20, the military sent its forces to Chuknagar. Around 11:00am, Pakistani soldiers arrived at Jhaotala Maltia intersection on the Chuknagar-Satkhira road in two vehicles. Later, divided into three groups, they marched on foot towards the nearby villages.

Firing indiscriminately, one group moved towards Malopara-Raypara, one group towards the Bazar area and one marched towards the river to intercept the fleeing people.

Witnesses said the gunfire triggered panic among the tens of thousands of people. They tried to hide on top of trees, some in boats and others in fields, behind bushes. But many hadn't had the luck, they added.

The Pakistani military started shooting at the fleeing people from three directions. The carnage continued for five hours till 4:00pm, killing at least 10,000 trapped people, according to witnesses and historians.

Shikha Biswas said she and her family members reached Chuknagar from Bagerhat's Basurabad that

morning after a night-long journey on foot.

"We were hungry and thirsty. The gunfire forced us to hide wherever we could. My family members and I hid inside a shop. The sound of gunfire continued for a long time. The military left the area in the afternoon after the carnage."

Asked about what she saw after the massacre, she said, "It was beyond description. There were dead bodies everywhere. In the ditches, fields, marshlands, or orchards... Wherever my sight went, I could only see bodies lying on the ground."

After the Chuknagar massacre, people fled towards Jhaudanga, a place only a kilometre from the Indian border, said the witnesses.

According to the book "Khulna Ekattor: Amar Muktijuddho", authored by Dipa Bandyopadhyay, on May 21, Pakistani soldiers in two trucks were heading towards Satkhira from Jashore. They were stopped by a peace committee member of Patharghata village, which is adjacent to Jhaudanga Bazar area. After a short discussion with the collaborator, the soldiers took position on a culvert in the south of the bazar.

Seeing the Pakistani troops advancing towards the bazar, the people there started to flee. But many of them died as Pakistani soldiers opened fire.

The Pakistan military men also caught many people, including those who were wounded, lined them up on the culvert, and gunned them down.

"We were at the bazar when the two military trucks reached the bridge. They opened fire as soon as they got off the trucks. We ran towards a thick bamboo grove and hid there. They continued the carnage for about an hour," recalled Shikha.

Prakash Chandra Roy, who fled from Debitala of Batiaghata, was another witness to the acts of genocide in Chuknagar and Jhaudanga.

Describing the aftermath, he said,

"A woman, who was shot in the leg, pleaded for water. I brought some water in my palms from a nearby ditch. As I helped her drink it, she said, 'Son, what did you give me? It is not water, it is blood!'"

"As I stepped ahead, I saw a toddler suckling on its dead mother's breast. A few steps ahead, I saw another child looking at the dead body of a woman saying, 'Mom, why don't you wake up? Everyone's left.'"

Genocide researchers say "series genocides" took place in other parts of the country as well.

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On April 23, two large-scale genocides took place at Jatibhanga of Thakurgaon Sadar upazila and Dhapdhup Beel of Panchagarh's Boda upazila. More than 3,500 innocent people were killed during the two incidents.

Many who witnessed both genocides are still alive.

"The main reason behind committing series genocides is to demonstrate and accomplish atrocity. It is a well-planned way of committing genocide," genocide researcher Dr MA Hasan told The Daily Star.

He said a "series genocide" took place in Dhaka as well.

"Many of the inhabitants of Old Dhaka's Shankhari Bazar who came under attack on March 25, were also attacked at Jinjira of Keraniganj on April 2," he said, pointing at the

Balloon vendor dies in gas cylinder blast

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Manikganj

A gas cylinder explosion killed a balloon vendor and injured one person in Manikganj yesterday.

The deceased was identified as Anwar Bepari, 50, of Faridpur's Kotwali upazila and the injured person is Kabir Hossain, 23, of Paschim Shanbandha village in Manikganj Sadar.

Quoting witnesses, Inspector (Investigation) of Manikganj Police Station, Swapan Kumar Sarker, said the explosion took place in the morning when Anwar was filling balloons with gas in the premises of the Manikganj Deputy Commissioner's office, leaving him critically injured.

He was first taken to a local hospital, from where he was transferred to the National Institute of Traumatology and Orthopaedic Rehabilitation in Dhaka, said the inspector.

Anwar died there around 8:00am, he added. His body is now in the morgue of Manikganj 250-Bed Hospital, said the police official.

2 workers die from electrocution in Tongi

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gazipur

Two workers of a construction company died from electrocution in Tongi's BSCIC industrial area yesterday.

Aynal Hossain, 38, and Ashrafur Islam, 42, worked at a company named IDS construction, said Tongi East Police Station Officer-in-Charge Mustafizur Rahman.

Quoting witnesses and IDS supervisor Shamim Mia, the OC said the two workers got electrocuted while hoisting a national flag on a dew-soaked bamboo pole which came into contact with a live electrical wire. Both were critically injured.

Locals immediately took them to Shaheed Ahsan Ullah Master General Hospital, where the doctor declared them dead, the OC said.

Necessary legal works have been taken in this regard, the OC added.

Uttara Express set on fire in Joypurhat

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

Arsonists set fire to a Parbatipur-bound mail train on its way to Joypurhat station early yesterday.

The Uttara Express was set on fire when it was heading for Joypurhat from Jamalganj, said Shantahar Railway Police Officer-in-Charge Muktar Hossain.

Railway station and fire service personnel doused the fire, said the OC adding that a few seats of a bogie were damaged.

Station Master Rezaul Islam of Joypurhat Railway Station said the train resumed its journey without any further disruptions after the fire was extinguished, reports UNB.

The matter is being investigated, the station master said.

"A woman, who was shot in the leg, pleaded for water. I brought some water in my palms from a nearby ditch. As I helped her drink it, she said, 'Son, what did you give me? It is not water, it is blood!'"

One such genocide was carried out on thousands of refuge-seeking people on May 19-21 in Badamtala of Batiaghata upazila and Chuknagar in Dumuria upazila of Khulna, and Jhaudanga in Satkhira Sadar.

All three places are on a route that the people who wanted to flee to India used in the early days of the war.

The distance between Badamtala and Chuknagar Bazar is 16.5km. Jhaudanga is about 33km from Chuknagar.

The Daily Star has spoken to 10 witnesses of the "series genocide", who are now living in villages in Khulna's Batiaghata, Phultala,

AL firm at 26

FROM PAGE 1

Dhaka-18, Dhaka-1 and Dhaka-4. They will have to compete against AL nominees.

Yesterday, the JP stopped issuing letters confirming its leaders that they will run for parliament with the symbol of a plough.

According to sources, Quader said the letters should not be distributed because the AL and JP have yet to agree on the matter.

Contacted yesterday, Monajat Chowdhury, JP nominee for Dinajpur-4, said, "We are in the dark about our party's stance regarding the January 7 national election. We are not being able to decide what to do next as the top leaders are not giving a clear message about the election."

The JP is running out of time as today is the last day for withdrawing nomination papers.

That means after JP's "share of parliament seats" is decided, AL nominees will have to withdraw nomination papers by today.

There are JP candidates in 287 constituencies while the AL has nominees in 298.

At the beginning of talks on seat sharing, the JP demanded 70. As more meetings took place the JP lowered its demand.

In the current parliament, JP has 27 seats including four elected in the reserved seats for women.