

DINAJPUR, RANGPUR

Eerie silence, tight security at BNP offices

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Dinajpur*

While Awami League, Jatiyo Party and other political parties are campaigning round the clock, the offices of BNP, in district and upazila levels across Dinajpur and Rangpur, remain locked.

According to BNP leaders, the party offices of district headquarters, including Dinajpur and Rangpur, have remained closed since October 29.

During a visit to the BNP office in Dinajpur on Sunday, this correspondent found two police personnel guarding the office. After entering the premises, nobody was found.

This correspondent also tried to reach, physically and over the phone, the top leaders including Mofazzal Hossain Dulal, president of Dinajpur district BNP, from Saturday night, but to no avail.

Party sources said they are avoiding phone calls.

Shafiqul Islam, adviser of Dinajpur district BNP and general secretary of Bochaganj upazila BNP, said all party activities remained suspended since October 29.

Police have been guarding the district BNP office since October. The upazila level

office, however, does not have much police presence, he added.

Md Aktaruzzaman, former BNP lawmaker from Dinajpur-4 (Chirirbandar and Khansama), said the party office in Chirirbandar opens twice a day, but no leaders visit it, fearing harassment. Only party activists visit the upazila office.



During a visit to the BNP office in Dinajpur on Sunday, this correspondent found two police personnel guarding the office. After entering the premises, nobody was found.

A similar situation prevails in Rangpur. Several policemen were seen guarding the BNP party office at Grand Hotel Mor in Rangpur city on Sunday. No leaders or activist were found there.

This correspondent also tried to reach several local leaders of BNP there, but found their phones switched off.



Donning a hoodie, a toddler sets off to the capital's Purbo Tejturi Bazar kitchen market with her mother on the last morning of the year. Her eyes gaze upon colourful vegetables and other items while her mother gets busy bargaining with vendors yesterday. PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

'Neo JMB trying to reorganise'

Claims CTTC after arrest of top leader

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The IS-inspired militant group "Neo JMB" is now attempting to regroup after being cornered for many years following the Gulshan café attack.

The Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime (CTTC) unit made the claim yesterday following the arrest of six outfit members in the last three months, including the operational commander.

Recently, the CTTC unit managed to arrest the outfit's top leader Md Yousuf alias Yousuf Huzur, and his associate Jahirul Islam alias Jahir from the capital's Demra area last Friday, while they were trying to hold a clandestine meeting, said Md Asaduzzaman, chief of the CTTC unit.

"We have managed to destroy the outfit's network by arresting top leaders in special drives earlier. Even the outfit ameer Mahadi Hasan Jon, who was working to reorganise the outfit from Turkey, was also arrested by that country's law enforcers based on our information," he said.

"Jon is now on bail. But we have issued a red alert to Interpol and efforts are underway to bring him back to the country," said the CTTC chief.

Asaduzzaman said Yousuf, who was arrested earlier by the CTTC in 2017, had taken charge of the outfit following the arrest of Jon.

Yousuf got bail from jail in 2019 and then went to the Middle East along with the outfit's operational commander Abu Bakkar. There, they met and communicated with the outfit chief Jon, he said.

He said Yousuf was recruiting members through online platforms in the Middle East, and returned home in mid-2022.

Yousuf was involved in construction business and spent all the money for the outfit's activities.

Upon returning, he planned to launch an attack during Durga Puja, but could not due to effective security measures, claimed Asaduzzaman.

The cops are now trying to learn why the outfit members again gathered at Dhaka, he said.

He said the group might have had plans to carry out sabotage centring the 31st celebration as detonators were recovered from Yousuf.

Little-known faces generate little interest

Not much enthusiasm amid voters about national elections

DIPANKAR ROY, *Khulna*

Most of the candidates contesting the upcoming national polls from the six parliamentary seats in Khulna are little known to people, and as such, there is a genuine lack of enthusiasm among the people as election campaigns continue.

Abdullah Al Amin, a resident of Chhoto Boyra in Khulna city, is contesting from Khulna-2 (Khulna Sadar-Sonadanga) as the candidate of Bangladesh Nationalist Movement.

Talking to people from the area, this correspondent found that Abdullah is hardly known there.

A few locals said they know Abdullah as an Awami League activist.

Contacted, Abdullah admitted that he was involved with AL in the past, but now he is the member secretary of BNM's Sonadanga upazila unit in Khulna.

He, however, could neither give much information about his party, nor could confirm whether BNM has any office in Khulna city.

The situation is the same for all six constituencies of Khulna district, where 24 out of 36 candidates are contesting for the first time, and most have no prior connection to politics.

Asked why they suddenly became interested in parliamentary elections, most of the candidates could not answer properly.

In Khulna-1, four candidates

are contesting the polls: Awami League's Nani Gopal Mandal, Jatiya Party's Kazi Hasanur Rashid, Trinamool BNP's Gobinda Chandra Pramanik and independent candidate Proshanta Kumar Roy.

Other than Mandal, who was elected MP in 2008 polls from the seat, the other three are unknown in the political arena.

Gobinda Chandra Pramanik, a resident of Kalukhali in Rajbari and general secretary of Bangladesh

from Hindu community. I took Trinamool BNP's membership recently to contest the elections."

In Khulna-5, four candidates are contesting the polls, including JP's Md Shahid Alam, Workers' Party's Sheikh Salim Akhtar, AL's Narayan Chandra Chanda and independent candidate Sheikh Akram Hossain.

Chanda is a four-time lawmaker from the seat and former fisheries and livestock minister.

The remaining three do not have any previous record of contesting in parliamentary elections.

Sheikh Salim Akhtar said, "I am contesting from my party like aspirants of other political parties. In politics, there is no difference between big and small parties as well as their candidates."

Advocate Kudrat-E Khuda, Khulna unit president of SANAK (Sacheton Nagorik Committee), said as some parties including BNP join the polls, there are no strong candidates from other parties in Khulna's six seats.

"We are yet to see any festive mood in rural areas. Only the Awami League candidates and their activists are visible in the field," he said. "Without participatory and competitive elections, it is natural that people will not be interested," he added.

SM Kamal Hossain, AL candidate from Khulna-3 and AL central organising secretary, said people are enthusiastic about polls.

"Everywhere I go, I see a large number of people. If there was no enthusiasm, so many people would not have come," he added.



The situation is the same for all six constituencies of Khulna district, where 24 out of 36 candidates are contesting for the first time, and most have no prior connection to politics.

Jatiya Hindu Mohajote, is contesting from Khulna-1 (Batiaghata-Dacope) as Trinamool BNP's candidate.

He is known among some residents as a Hindu community leader, but has hardly any connection with the grassroots.

Pabitra Roy, a member of Batiaghata union parishad, said, "I have been serving as an elected representative and even I don't know him [Gobinda]. So, how can common people know him?"

Contacted, Gobinda said, "I am contesting from Khulna-1 as the area is populated by people

EC certificate doesn't make polls credible

Says CEC Awal

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The January 7 polls need to be free and fair to prove that a government can hold such a national election through the Election Commission, Chief Election Commissioner Kazi Habibul Awal said yesterday.

"There is some political controversy over the next election. A section has boycotted the polls... universal franchise is somewhat curtailed as one side has boycotted it," he said while inaugurating a training programme for executive magistrates in the capital.

Sixteen political parties, including the major opposition BNP and its allies, have boycotted the upcoming election, saying that a free and fair election is not possible under the current regime.

The CEC said there was violence in the 2014 parliamentary election, which was boycotted by "a party", while there was some "controversy" over the 2018 election.

Overall, the credibility of the election has been undermined. That is why this election will have to prove at any cost that a government can hold elections through the EC, he added.

An election does not become credible with a certificate from the EC or a cabinet member, he said.


"Different countries have shown interest in the election. They have repeatedly met the government and the Election Commission to express their expectations regarding a free and fair polls," the CEC said.

He hoped that through a concerted effort from election officials and law enforcers, the upcoming election would be free and fair, praised locally and internationally, and seen as credible by countrymen.



Two rickshaw-pullers in Sylhet's Circuit House area turn to newspaper headlines to catch up on nationwide events, specifically focusing on the upcoming election. Meanwhile, in a tea stall at Jafong, inset, three elderly friends engage in animated discussions about candidates in their locality. With the polls knocking at the door, scenes like these, involving people from diverse groups, have become common these days. PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR





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1.	929196	Purchase of Tyre in Bsmrstu Campus.	16-01-2024 Time: 16:00	17-01-2024 Time: 12:00	17-01-2024 Time: 12:00

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