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Bhasan Char Sandwip's, not Hatiya's

Says land ministry

STAFF CORRESPONDENT,
Chattogram

The Ministry of Land has finally resolved the longstanding dispute over the administrative jurisdiction of Bhasan Char, deciding that the island's six mouzas belong to Sandwip upazila of Chattogram and not Hatiya of Noakhali.

On January 15, the survey branch of the ministry issued a letter to the relevant authorities, directing them to take necessary actions following the new decision.

According to the official letter issued on January 13, signed by Ibrahim Miaz, assistant secretary to the land ministry, the decision was based on rigorous scientific data.

Earlier in 2017, the then government issued

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The Flower Festival, organised by the Chattogram district administration in Sitakunda, drew thousands of visitors over the weekend. DC Park in Faujdarhat was packed, with no space left to sit, as the area transformed into a festive city showcasing 140 species of flowers. The event runs daily from 10:00am to 8:00pm until February 8.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

Probe body formed in Uttara fire, no case filed yet

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Fire Service and Civil Defence has formed a five-member committee to investigate the fire at a six-storey building in the capital's Uttara that claimed six lives on Friday.

Alam Hossain, a senior officer at Uttara Fire Service Station, confirmed the development to The Daily Star yesterday, reiterating that the locked roof door played a critical role in the tragedy.

"The entrance to the roof was locked, which likely contributed to the asphyxiation of the victims. If it had been open, people on the upper floors could have reached safety, and the smoke could have escaped," Alam said.

"We're trying to find why the entrance was locked," he added.

The fire is suspected to have originated in the first-floor apartment belonging to the building owner, while all six victims, who died of asphyxiation, were residents of the fourth floor.

Police identified the building owner as Jewel Mollik, a businessman.

Kaji Rafik, officer-in-charge of Uttara West Police

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Candidates' names added to in-country postal ballots: EC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission yesterday announced that candidates' names will be added alongside their electoral symbols on in-country postal voting (ICPV) ballots for the 13th national election scheduled for February 12.

"Candidates' names will be added to postal ballots along with electoral symbols only for voters registered inside the country, not for expatriates," Election Commissioner Abdur Rahman Masud told the media.

For expatriate voter registration, the EC launched the Postal Vote BD app on November 18, initially targeting voters in 140 countries. Registration was completed in 121 countries before ending on January 5.

Three categories of voters registered through the app — expatriate Bangladeshis, government officials assigned election duties, and people in legal custody.

Saudi Arabia recorded the highest number of registrations with 2,39,186 voters, followed by Malaysia (84,293) and Qatar (76,139).

According to EC data, a total of 15,33,683 Bangladeshi voters living in 121 countries registered through the app. The EC has sent 7,28,043 postal ballots to expatriates.

The chief election commissioner said around 1.3 crore Bangladeshis live abroad and described the initiative as a step toward ending their disenfranchisement.

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Mob culture pushing country towards 'popular fascism'

Speakers tell discussion

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh may be shifting from the "state fascism" of the previous regime to "popular fascism", where social media mobs influence justice, and people remain silent out of fear, warned speakers at a discussion yesterday.

They said the interim government has not broken from old power structures and has largely maintained the "old settlement" of governance, leaving the country vulnerable to instability.

The discussion, titled "Next Elected Government and Citizen Expectations", was organised by the Bangladesh Research Analysis and Information Network (BRAIN) at Bishwo Shahitto Kendro in the capital.

At the event, economist Zia Hasan said authoritarianism is changing form.

He said the previous regime's "state fascism", enforced

If I have to constantly worry about facing an online mob or demands for my dismissal while teaching sociology or transitional justice, then academic freedom does not exist.

PROF SAMINA LUTHFA OF DU

The administration appears fearful and submissive to powerful forces, and that the promised "new settlement" has not emerged. Instead, the government is repeating the old system of partisanship and revenge.

PROF SAYEED FERDOUS OF JU

through policing and enforced disappearances, has collapsed, but the ground has now been set for "popular fascism" driven by fear, division and what he described as "extreme anti-India sentiment".

He said speaking against state repression once showed courage, but now speaking against mob pressure leads to attacks on credibility.

He urged the government to form a Truth and Reconciliation Commission, citing Rwanda's post-genocide process, and called for national healing instead of a politics of elimination.

Prof Samina Luthfa of Dhaka University's sociology department called political parties' record on women "disgraceful", noting that women received only 4 percent of nominations and at least 30 parties did not nominate a single woman.

"You have invisibilised the women of the July uprising," she said, adding that women who led protests have been excluded from decision-making.

She said Bangladesh is not ready to meet global standards on gender equality.

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KERANIGANJ MURDERS

Prime accused gives confessional statement

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime accused Mim Begum has given a confessional statement in a case over the killings of a teenage girl and her mother in Keraniganj upazila of Dhaka.

Dhaka Senior Judicial Magistrate Tajul Islam Sohag recorded the statement of 22-year-old private tutor Mim on Friday after she agreed to confess, said an assistant sub-inspector at the court.

After recording statements, the magistrate sent Mim to jail.

On the same day, Mim's 15-year-old sister was sent to the Child Development Centre in Gazipur after being produced before the court.

The two sisters were arrested in connection with the murders of eighth-grader Zobaida Rahman Fatema, 14, and her mother, Rokeya Rahman, 32.

On December 27, Shahin Ahmed filed a general diary with Keraniganj Model Police Station, a day after his wife, Rokeya and daughter Fatema went missing.

On January 6, he filed a kidnapping case against unidentified suspects as they remained missing.

On Friday, Sections 302 (murder), 201 (causing disappearance of evidence) and 34 (common intention) were added to the case, said a court staffer.

Police recovered the bodies of Rokeya and Fatema from Mim's flat in Keraniganj's Muktirbag area on January 15, 21 days after they went missing.

Local residents said a foul smell had been spreading in the area for several days. On January

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'Action' if EC allows dual citizens to run Warns NCP

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The National Citizen Party spokesperson Asif Mahmud yesterday warned that NCP would take action if the Election Commission allows loan defaulters or dual citizens to contest the elections.

"The Constitution of Bangladesh clearly states that anyone who acquires foreign citizenship or shows allegiance to another country loses eligibility to contest parliamentary elections," he said at a press briefing at the NCP's central office in Banglamotor last night.

Despite this, he claimed that several candidates with dual nationality have approached the EC and acted with impunity.

"One candidate even brought 200 to 300 people to the commission," said Asif, also chief of NCP's election management committee. "If any loan defaulter or person with dual citizenship is made eligible to contest under any conditions or interpretations, we will oppose it," he said.

"We will continue our legal battle. Candidates who are loan defaulters or hold dual citizenship will not be allowed to contest the election," he added.

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Fishers pull in their catch from the Atrai River near Ahsanganj Bazar in Naogaon's Atrai upazila, using long nets tied to boats anchored with bamboo as the water recedes. Locals allege unscrupulous traders and fishers are depleting stocks by catching fish before they mature and extracting large quantities during the lean season. The photo was taken from the Ahsanganj stretch of the river recently.

PHOTO: AZAHAR UDDIN

FEBRUARY 12 POLLS

EU deploys 56 long-term observers

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The European Union Election Observation Mission (EU EOM) yesterday deployed 56 long-term observers (LTOs) to all 64 administrative districts of Bangladesh.

"The long-term observers are a critical element of our mission. Their observations and insights will ground our impartial and fact-based evaluation of the electoral process," Deputy Chief Observer Inta Lase said at a city hotel yesterday.

An 11-member EU EOM team arrived here in late December, and 90 more short-term observers will join them ahead of the elections scheduled for February 12.

Diplomats from EU embassies in Dhaka, along with those from Norway, Canada and Switzerland, will also observe the polls. In total, 200 EU observers will monitor the national election.

Long-term observers will closely follow key aspects of the election at the regional level and support the analysis of the core team of experts based in Dhaka.

"Our observers will work in teams of two and in their areas of observation, they will meet voters, election officials, candidates and political parties, as well as

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