

NEWS

Leadership void
stirs unrest in
tea gardensNo elections for eight years leave
workers without representation

MINTU DESHWARA, Moulvibazar

The Bangladesh Tea Workers Union has gone through eight years without an election, leaving workers without elected representation for the third consecutive tenure.

The situation is raising concerns over a leadership vacuum, internal feuds, and growing worker dissatisfaction.

Founded in 1948, the union represents over one lakh workers across tea gardens in the country's north-eastern districts.

The union last held its triennial polls on June 24, 2018. Under its constitution, although fresh elections were due in 2021 and again in 2024, it was not held in either year, leaving the same committee in office for nearly twice its mandated term.

The union has a three-tier structure -- panchayat (garden-level), valley, and central committees -- each elected directly by workers for three years. With the terms long expired, many of these committees have effectively become inactive.

Workers say the absence of elected representation has weakened their ability to raise grievances or negotiate with garden authorities.

Geeta Rani Kanu, a labour leader, said expired committees lacked the legitimacy to negotiate effectively with estate owners, leaving workers' demands unaddressed.

Selim Ahmed, a Rajghat Union Parishad member and tea workers' leader, alleged that unelected individuals were clinging to power.



"We have repeatedly demanded elections and even issued ultimatums, but there has been no action," he added.

Observers linked the clash between two groups of workers at Teliapara Tea Garden in Madhabpur upazila of Habiganj on February 23 this year to disputes stemming from the absence of an elected panchayat committee.

"In the absence of legitimate leadership, misunderstandings, internal feuds, and violence are increasing. Timely elections could have prevented such divisions," said Lalon Tanti, president of the Teliapara panchayat.

Current union leaders, however, rejected the allegation of stagnation and cited financial and administrative hurdles to holding the elections.

They said a letter was sent to the Department of Labour in 2022 seeking support for the polls, but the process stalled.

"We have taken steps, including communicating with the Department of Labour, but financial and administrative complications have delayed the process," said Nripen Paul, acting general secretary of the union's central committee.

He acknowledged that expired committees did not enjoy the same acceptance among workers as elected ones and that problems were emerging in many gardens as a result.

Pankaj Kanda, vice-president of the union, admitted the leadership itself was uneasy with the situation.

"It is not easy to remain in charge without an election for so long," he said. "We also feel uncomfortable continuing without a fresh mandate, but the situation is beyond our control."

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4



Workers process split peas at a factory in Khulna's Koia Bazar area, sorting, cleaning, drying, and packaging the lentils. They earn Tk 400 a day while the product is sold to wholesale markets countrywide at Tk 100-115 per kg. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

RANGPUR REGION

Continuous rain floods
paddy, maize fields

SDILIP ROY

Vast low-lying areas across Rangpur, including mature Boro paddy and maize fields across its five districts, have been inundated after the last five days of continuous rainfall.

At the same time, water levels in at least 26 rivers -- including the Brahmaputra, Teesta and Dharla -- are rising. While none have crossed the danger mark, officials have warned that continued rain and upstream water descending could trigger an early flood.

Since Saturday, persistent rain has severely disrupted harvesting, forcing farmers to hire labour at higher wages to salvage ripened paddy and ready-to-harvest maize from submerged fields.

In many areas, farmers are harvesting crops while standing in water, while others worry they will be unable to dry produce due to a lack of sunshine.

Mostafizur Rahman, in charge of the Rangpur Weather Office, said the region has been receiving an average of around 120 millimetres of rain daily since Saturday.

This marks a sharp rise in rainfall compared to last year's 7.5 millimetres during the same period (April 20-30), underscoring an unusually intense weather pattern with growing risks for agriculture and flooding in the northern region.

Rakibul Hasan, executive engineer of the Water Development Board in Kurigram, said that further rainfall, combined with upstream runoff, could trigger sudden flooding in riverbank areas. He warned that char lands and croplands that recently

emerged from riverbeds are already waterlogged.

Shaykhul Arifin, deputy director of the Department of Agricultural Extension in Lalmonirhat, said waterlogging is preventing harvesting in several low-lying areas, raising concerns over crop quality deterioration.

Nazar Ali, 65, of Lalmonirhat's Adimari upazila, said his eight bighas of ripe Boro paddy are submerged. "I am harvesting with hired labour at double the usual

Sadar, said char lands that were dry on Monday were submerged by Wednesday morning. "Much of the paddy is still unripe. If the water rises further, losses will be heavy," he said.

Agricultural labourer Shah Jamal, 48, of Rangpur's Gangachara upazila, said working in inundated fields has slowed harvesting and pushed up wages, while persistent rain has made fieldwork increasingly difficult.

The Department of Agricultural Extension claimed Boro paddy



cost. If I wait, the crop will be ruined," he said.

Abdus Samad, 70, of Kurigram's Ulipur upazila, said paddy on six bighas and maize on 10 bighas are under water. "Even if I harvest, I cannot dry them due to the rain. I don't know what to do," he said.

In Rangpur's Kaunia upazila, farmer Shamsul Alam said harvested maize and paddy are now piled up at home but cannot be threshed due to continuous rain, raising fears of spoilage.

Khadimul Islam, 50, of Kurigram

has been cultivated on 5,09,095 hectares and maize on 1,27,230 hectares across Rangpur's five districts -- Lalmonirhat, Kurigram, Rangpur, Gaibandha and Nilphamari. Maize harvesting is in full swing, while Boro harvesting has begun in low-lying areas.

Officials and farmers alike fear that if rainfall continues and sunshine does not return soon, both standing and harvested crops could suffer significant damage, with wider implications for the region's agricultural economy.

JULY CHARTER

11-party to rally in
7 divs from May 16

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The 11 party alliance led by Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami will rally in seven divisional cities, demanding implementation of the referendum verdict on reforms under the July charter.

Party Assistant Secretary General Hamidur Rahman Azad made the announcement yesterday at a briefing following the alliance's liaison committee meeting at Jamaat's central office in Moghbazar, Dhaka.

The first rally will be held in Rajshahi on May 16. Subsequent programmes are scheduled for Chattogram on June 13, Khulna on June 20, Mymensingh on June 27, Rangpur on July 11, Barisal on July 18, and Sylhet on July 25. A grand rally will be staged in Dhaka around October.

Azad also said the coalition plans to hold opinion-exchange meetings with different professional groups to build public support.

At the briefing, National Citizen Party Spokesperson Asif Mahmud Shojib Bhuyain said the 11 party will continue its street movement alongside the divisional rallies.

Ivy gets HC bail in
two murder cases

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday granted ad-interim bail to Selina Hayat Ivy, former mayor of Narayanganj City Corporation (NCC), in two separate murder cases filed in connection with the July uprising.

The court also issued two separate rules asking the government to explain why Ivy should not be granted permanent bail in the cases.

The bench of Justice KM Zahid Sarwar and Justice Sheikh Abu Taher issued the orders and rules following two separate petitions filed by Ivy seeking bail in the cases.

The cases were filed with Siddhirganj Police Station in Narayanganj on charges of killing Selim Mondal and Abdus Salam during the July uprising in 2024.

Selina Hayat Ivy was shown arrested in the cases immediately after the High Court granted her bail in five other cases on February 26 this year, Senior

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3



Digital IDs, relocation

FROM PAGE 3
sidewalk space must always remain open for pedestrians.

Meanwhile, DNCC Administrator Md Shafiqul Islam Khan inaugurated a parallel initiative at DNCC Nagar Bhaban by distributing digital ID cards to 202 hawkers operating in Mirpur-10, Mirpur-1, and Mirpur-2.

Of them, 102 are being relocated from Mirpur-10 to Mirpur-13 WASA Road, while the remaining 100 will move to an open space near Gabtoli kitchen market. Authorities confirmed that a total of 829 hawkers have been listed, and the rest will be brought under the system in phases.

DNCC officials said the relocation process was finalised after consultations with the hawkers and with support from law enforcers.

A monitoring committee, comprising DNCC and police representatives, will oversee implementation, while plans are under consideration to establish a dedicated "Hawkers' Market" in the future.

Both city corporations stressed that hawkers must operate only in designated areas and are prohibited from building permanent structures and warned that eviction drives will be conducted against unlicensed or non-compliant vendors after a limited transition period.

Officials also confirmed that no markets will be allowed on playgrounds, school grounds, or near places of worship, while law enforcers have been instructed to strictly prevent illegal extortion from hawkers.

74 shade trees felled in
Moulvibazar tea garden

MINTU DESHWARA

Miscreants have cut down 74 shade trees at Mirtinga Tea Garden in Kamalganj upazila of Moulvibazar, triggering concern among authorities, workers, and industry stakeholders over its potential impact on tea production.

Officials of the estate, operated under Deundi Tea Company Limited, said incidents of tree theft and destruction have increased in recent months, disrupting operations and raising fears about long-term sustainability.

According to garden authorities, three shade trees were stolen on April 2 and another on April 16, with losses estimated at around Tk 1.5 lakh. Despite reporting the incidents to police and taking initial measures, the situation worsened.

In the latest incident, around 11:00pm on April 22, miscreants cut down 71 newly planted acacia shade trees along both sides of the main road between sections 18 and 20 of the garden.

The perpetrators fled, leaving the felled trees behind. On-duty watchmen were questioned but failed to provide satisfactory explanations.

Authorities have filed a general diary with Kamalganj Police Station and urged law enforcement

agencies to act swiftly.

Garden officials warned that continued theft and destruction could threaten the estate's viability, noting its contribution to government revenue as part of Bangladesh's export-oriented tea sector.

Leaders of the Bangladesh Tea Workers Union and the garden's



panchayat condemned the incident and demanded a fair investigation and exemplary punishment.

Union leader Dhana Bauri and Panchayat President Montu Almik stressed the need for urgent action to identify those responsible.

Mirtinga Tea Garden Deputy Manager Rezaul Hayat Khan (Emon) said workers and the bagan panchayat (garden council) have

strongly protested the incident and are seeking justice. "The cutting down of shade trees must be stopped on an urgent basis to protect the tea industry," he said.

Nurul Muhaimin Milton, president of a tea workers' union unit in Moulvibazar, said shade trees regulate microclimatic conditions, protect tea bushes from excessive

sunlight, reduce soil moisture loss, and enrich soil through leaf litter.

He warned that their sudden removal exposes plants to heat stress, reducing leaf quality and yield in the short term and potentially causing long-term productivity losses. "Such acts disrupt biodiversity, increase soil erosion, and weaken the overall ecological stability of the garden," he added.

BRAC Institute
of Languages
celebrates
20 years

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BRAC University's BRAC Institute of Languages (BIL) celebrated its 20th anniversary yesterday with a showcase of books, poetry, drama, dance and music, said a press release.

Speaking as a special guest, BRAC University Vice-Chancellor Prof Syed Ferhat Anwar said the university fosters intercultural dialogue to strengthen its role as a leading institution of the Global South.

British Council Country Director Stephen Forbes, chief guest, underscored the power of languages in connecting people and cultures.

BIL founder and adviser Lady Syeda Sarwat Abed, Chairperson of the Board of Trustees Tamara Hasan Abed and BRAC Institute of Educational Development Executive Director Erum Mariam also attended.

BIL Director Prof Shayla Sultana wrapped up the celebration with reflections on its journey and future vision.



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e-GP Tender Notice

e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP System Portal (<https://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the procurement of the following packages. Tender Package description

Package No.	Package name	Tender ID	Last selling date and time	Closing and opening date and time
Soyabean Oil/RS/ctg/2025-26/4thQrt	Procurement of fortified Soyabean Oil for ration of Chattogram district police (4th Quarter), FY-2025-2026 (01 April/2026 to 30 June/2026)	1267949	10-May-2026 17:00	11-May-2026 12:30

This is an online tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required.

The fees for downloading the e-Tender documents from the National e-GP Portal have to be deposited through online at any branches of registered bank.

Further information and guidelines are available in National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

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