

Advocate Abu Bakar Siddiqui was pleasantly surprised when he saw a 25-or-so-strong policemen guarding his Babar road residence on Saturday night.

Upon enquiry he learnt they were there to ensure his security. Bakar must have felt very important. Well Bakar's 24-hours'-or-so fame came following his writ petition to the high court seeking injunction on the opposition combine's Dhaka-siege programme on June 11. Bakar perhaps didn't even realise that he made history when his appeal to high court was disposed of in a matter of a couple of hours. Justice Dastagir was lightning quick to give his verdict sitting at his home. The controversial

Dhaka Siege and the legal twist centering it

verdict invoked outrage from the supreme court bar association who saw political interference and an attempt to degrade the sanctity of the highest court by

issuing politically motivated verdict. According to eminent jurists the court verdict was unprecedented in that while the opposition's programme was called around a month ago, the petitioner filed the writ petition only several hours from the commencement of the siege programme. Bakar, the triumphant lawyer, who happens to head an Islamist Political Front called Muslim Millat Party, also earned fame after he had filed a case against Hasina on the issue of hartal in 1994.

Who is Going to Punish the Torturers?

Bulu, the director of Boishakhi TV, was subjected to inhuman torture by the police while in custody, and there is a clear sign that an influential minister has made it a point to make him suffer at the hands of the law enforcing agency. Human Rights and Peace for Bangladesh (HRPB), a non-government agency, came forward to protest the extra-judiciary action. HRPB filed a writ petition questioning the treatment meted out to Bulu while in custody. Following the petition the High Court on June 11 issued a rule upon the government to show cause as to why it should not be directed to take punitive measures against persons who have tortured Bulu.

Bulu was arrested in two different cases, one filed by his estranged wife Hosne Ara Najnin, who accused him of torture and another by Abdus Salam Mojumdar, the project secretary of Central Command Council of Freedom Fighters, who brought charges of attempted murder and embezzlement. And the rest is well reported in the media, Bulu has been taken into remand and was tortured. Now that the High Court ruled against the perpetrators who unabashedly went on to abuse the law to let a person at the helm seek personal vengeance, will the government feel obliged to take actions in line with the rule?

EC bent on creating yet another mess

The Election Commission (EC) has again made a controversial decision regarding voter roll. As if it (EC) has not already created enough trouble concerning the roll. At first the Chief Election Commissioner obstinately decided to make a fresh voter list while all the major and minor political parties and significantly the law itself required a revised voter roll. CEC Justice MA Aziz however ignored all in favour of the ruling BNP who happened to be the only party to want a fresh list. He even had the audacity to ignore a High Court order -- he said the EC is not bound to follow what he said a High Court directive regarding voter roll -- and went on with preparing a fresh voter list. Finally when the Supreme Court held the HC's order, Justice Aziz said he would go by the highest court's order. His stubbornness however cost the government exchequer about Tk 100 crore. Now, 20 days after the SC verdict, the EC has now decided to revise the existing voter list without sending their men door to door. Though the law in this regard clearly dictates that the list should be revised by making door-to-door visits, the EC has decided that people who became eligible as voters since 2000, when the last electoral roll was prepared, will have to go to the offices of election officials at the district, upazila and thana headquarters. Experts have termed this unprecedented way of revising the voter list as unrealistic. People are not simply used to getting enlisted as voters as traditionally names of eligible voters are collected and recorded by enumerators employed by the EC. One expected the EC would be much more cautious after SC declared its fresh voter list venture illegal, but if their latest decision is anything to go by the distance between CEC's action and sanity seems too wide to bridge.