

Final phase

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districts.

Unveiling the polls plan at a press conference at the EC Secretariat, Chief Election Commissioner ATM Shamsul Huda said the EC will leave no stone unturned to hold the polls in a free and fair manner.

"Magistrates and law enforcement agencies will be asked to take action against people, irrespective of their party affiliations, if they are found involved in creating trouble in the elections," Shamsul Huda said.

By holding the phase-2 of the polls to 3,813 out of total 4,505 union parishads, the EC will complete the over-due elections to the lowest tier of the local government.

In phase-1, elections to 568 union parishads were held between March 29 and April 3 in a largely peaceful manner.

The last elections to the union parishads, held between January and March of 2003, was marked by violence and vote rigging. Polls violence left over 80 people dead then.

Before announcing the schedule for phase-2 of the polls, the EC yesterday held a meeting with senior officials of different law enforcement agencies so that they can ensure peaceful atmosphere conducive to the polls.

According to the schedule, applying for candidature to returning officers will be done between May 5 and June 9. Scrutiny of those applications will be done between May 7 and June 11 and withdrawals of candidacies have to be completed between May 15 and June 19.

An EC document said deputy commissioners, superintendents of police and district polling officers, if necessary, in consultation with the upazila nirbahi officers, upazila election officers and officers-in-charge of police stations would fix the election day and date for other stages of the polls.

Ballot casting in all union parishads, fit for election, in an upazila will be held in one day, the EC said.

The document said there will be a 30-day gap between the date for filing applications seeking candidature and election day. The election officials were asked to keep two days for scrutinising applications.

Candidates most likely would be able to withdraw candidature 15 days ahead of election day.

After the deadline for withdrawal ends, candidates are likely to get 13 days for electioneering before election day.

RCC postpones

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policemen received treatment at the police hospital, said Mokarram Hossain, officer-in-charge of Rajpara Police Station.

Slum dwellers resisted the RCC team when it reached the spot around 1:00pm. The protesters then barricaded Rajshahi-Chapainawabganj highway for about two hours and vandalised four vehicles of police and RCC.

They also swooped on law enforcers with machetes, sticks, axes and brick chips prompting the latter to charge batons. Chases and counter chases took place at this time. The protesters finally left the spot when reinforcement from police and Rab appeared.

Sadekul Islam, RCC executive magistrate who led the eviction team, told newsmen, "We could have fought the protesters, but we didn't. The drive will resume Sunday after we make the slum dwellers understand that they cannot stay on government land."

Atifur Islam, a slum dweller, said the RCC had announced about the eviction on loudspeakers for three to four days. But the slum dwellers demand rehabilitation before eviction, he added.

SQ Chy antics

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The three-member tribunal headed by Justice Nizamul Huq sent him to jail custody before he concluded his statements.

The BNP leader was allowed to place his statements before the tribunal as he did not hire any lawyer to defend him.

The court observed in its order that Salauddin Quader Chowdhury was pretending as a sick man in the dock, although he was okay when he was being brought from jail.

It also allowed the investigators to interrogate him at a Dhanmondi "safe home" in connection with war crimes charges and directed the jail authorities to keep him detained until further order.

The tribunal passed the order in response to a petition filed by the prosecution on behalf of the investigators probing the war crimes in 1971.

The court, however, ordered the prosecution to submit the progress report on the investigation into the allegations against Salauddin by June 19.

The court said Salauddin will be interrogated from 10:00am to 5:00pm one day in a room of the "safe home".

The investigation officers will fix the date, it said, adding that a doctor of the prison hospital will be present at the next room and will examine his health before and after interrogation, if necessary.

He will be interrogated in Bangla so that he can understand the questions and answer in the same language properly.

The court directed the investigators not to put any pressure or issue any threat on Salauddin during interrogation.

It also expressed dissatisfaction with the jail authorities as Salauddin was not produced before the court in time.

The court had earlier directed the jail authorities to produce him in the dock at 10:30am, but he was brought to the court premises at about 11:15am yesterday.

During hearing of the petition, Salauddin told the court he was tortured by law enforcers during and after his arrest and there were several marks of torture on his body.

The war crimes accused said he was very sick but was not given proper treatment in four months since his arrest.

Salauddin, escorted by the police in the dock, tried to take off his cloths to show the torture marks.

He said a cat-and-mouse game is going on in the name of trial against him, as not a single piece of paper of the proceedings was given to him.

At one stage, he said he had faced a kangaroo court set up by the caretaker government led by Fakhruddin Ahmed.

Attorney General Mahbubey Alam, who was present in the courtroom, said Salauddin should not be allowed to do what he was doing.

Salauddin told the attorney general that he came

Publish full

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In response to a writ petition, a vacation bench of the HC also issued a rule upon the government to explain within four weeks why its inaction to make the report public should not be declared illegal.

The bench also asked the government to explain why it should not be directed to take legal action against the people or companies responsible for the share market crash.

The court also asked the government to explain why it should not be directed to recover the money from the share market and return it to the accounts of the affected investors.

The bench of Justice Syed Mohammad Ziaul Karim and Justice ANM Bashirullah passed the order and issued the rule following the writ by Human Rights and Peace for Bangladesh (HRPB).

On behalf of the HRPB, five lawyers -- Asaduzzaman Siddiqui, Sarwar Ahad, Aklas Uddin Bhuiyan, Mahabubur Rahman Khan and Mahabubul Islam -- filed the writ as public interest litigation challenging the govern-

ment's inaction to make the investigation report public.

The petitioners also prayed to the court to direct the government to seize passports and freeze the accounts of the individuals or companies responsible for market manipulation until a fully-fledged investigation is made.

Petitioner's counsel Advocate Manzill Murshid said the government is bound to publish the investigation report as per the Right to Information Act as thousands of people had invested in the share market.

Around 1.5 crore people have been affected due to the disaster, he said, adding that people will be misled if the report is not published and if action is not taken against the liable persons.

Advocate Dr Kazi Aktar Hamid argued for Bangladesh Thai Aluminium Ltd saying that his client has submitted an application to the government to review and examine the investigation report.

If the investigation report is published, the review process will be hampered, he said.

9 bullet-hit

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At one stage of the altercation, Sattar started firing indiscriminately at Gaffar's men, injuring them.

The injured are Anwar Hossain, 27, Shahinur, 35, Sohrab Hossain, 26, Osman Gani, 32, Abdur Rahman, 25, Abdullah Al Mamun, 28, Golam Mostafa, 28, Shariful, 27 and Fazila Khatun, 54. They were initially admitted to Shyamnagar Upazila Health Complex but later seven critically injured were transferred to Khulna Medical College Hospital.

On information, police rushed to the spot and arrested Sattar and seized three rounds of bullets, though they could not recover the gun, the OC said.

Fidel Castro

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own absence from the party's new Central Committee, elected yesterday.

Castro, 84, had served as first secretary in the Central Committee of the party -- which underpins the country's Communist government -- since the party's creation in 1965.

Fidel said he had handed over the functions of the party head to Raul when he ceded power to his brother because of his own declining health in 2006, though he retained the first secretary title.

Castro said he supported the stepping aside of some of the older luminaries in the party, adding that "the most important thing was that I did not appear on that list."

"I have received too many honours. I never thought I would live so long."

The 1,000 delegates gathered in Havana for the four-day party congress have meanwhile approved some 300 economic proposals.

Later, Cuban President Raul Castro appointed as head of the ruling Communist Party succeeding his elder brother by the new Central Committee.

Hanoi offers

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of the respective governments, says a food ministry press release issued yesterday.

Razzaque's visit opened the prospect of fresh cooperation in trade and agriculture between the two countries, the premier said adding that the signing of the agreement on rice trade was an example of such prospect.

Dung highlighted the fact that trade turnover between the two countries remained low at \$ 400 million last year, leaving lots of untapped potential, especially in investment.

He recommended a joint-government committee of Bangladesh and Vietnam to figure out specific and practical measures to further enhance trade links.

Razzaque said Bangladesh, with a population of over 150 million, wanted Vietnamese enterprises to invest in the country, particularly in agricultural processing.

Before signing the MoU, the Bangladesh delegation was warmly received by the industry and trade minister of Vietnam.

"This [MoU] will help ensure stabilisation of the rice market and lessen any adverse effects of climate change, disasters and crop failure in either country," said Vietnam's trade Minister Hoang, predicting that trade and economic relations between the two countries would reach new heights.

Bilateral trade between Bangladesh and Vietnam reached \$ 288 million last year, up 250 percent compared to 2009, according to the Vietnam's ministry of industry and trade.

Vietnam's exports to Bangladesh were rice, steel, fibre and fabric, machines and devices, plastic materials, and cell-phones.

Rice has emerged as the biggest item traded, reaching a volume of \$ 120 million in 2010, equivalent to 350,000 tonnes. Vietnam is also gearing up to produce parboiled rice for export to Bangladesh.

In 2009, Bangladesh imported between 2-3 million tonnes of rice to ensure food security due to a rapid increase in population and natural disasters.

Top ladies may talk

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political parties representing the current parliament," said Tofail Ahmed, a member of the committee.

The special committee on constitutional amendment yesterday at a meeting finalised the mode of the three-day long talks, and the names of constitutional experts to be invited.

The talks will be held at Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban.

"Invitation letters signed by the special committee's chief will start being sent from tomorrow," Suranjit, the spokesman of the committee, said yesterday.

On advice of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, the 15-member committee led by Deputy Leader of the House Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury moved to open the talks which will be the first of its kind in the country's history.

The constitution was amended 14 times since 1973. But successive governments never consulted with political parties and constitutional experts to do so.

This time, the parliamentary special committee moved to hold the national dialogue in response to demands from different quarters for a consensus on constitutional amendment.

According to the special committee's decision, the

talks will open on Sunday with consultations with former chief justices and some other eminent constitutional experts.

After the committee's meeting yesterday, Suranjit Sengupta at a media briefing in the parliament's Media Centre said they will invite former chief justices Kamaluddin Hossain, Mustafa Kamal, Habibur Rahman, Md Taffazzul Islam, and Mohammad Fazul Karim, and eminent jurists Dr Kamal Hossain, Barrister M Amir-Ul Islam, Advocate TH Khan, and Barrister Rokanuddin Mahmud among others.

On condition of anonymity, a member of the committee however told The Daily Star that Barrister Rafique-ul Huq, Advocate Mahmudul Islam, Dr M Zahir, Barrister Ajmalul Hossain QC, Attorney General Mehbubey Alam, and Advocate Abdul Baset Majumder will also be invited to Sunday's talk.

BNP Chairperson also Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Khaleida Zia will be invited to join the talks on Monday morning.

The same day in the afternoon the committee will sit with chiefs and leaders of other political parties representing the current parliament, excepting ruling Awami League.

AL President also Leader of the House Sheikh Hasina will be invited to join the talks on Tuesday morning.

The committee's spokesman said political leaders and constitutional experts will be requested to express their opinions in light of the Supreme Court's verdict on the constitution's fifth amendment, and on other issues as well.

"No draft proposal will be sent to them in advance as the committee has not prepared any. Everything is open for them, and they may express their opinions on any constitutional aspect," Suranjit said.

A member of the committee, who is not authorised to talk to the media, however said some crucial issues like the tenure of caretaker governments, and duration of states of emergency might dominate the talks.

Talking to The Daily Star earlier, some senior BNP leaders said they have serious reservations about the process of amending the constitution, and they are against sitting with the special committee.

When his attention was drawn to BNP's position, Suranjit said the special committee believes the main opposition will join the talks.

Dhaka, Colombo

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countries. Both the sides also agreed to diversify the tradeable goods and look for innovative ways to give a fresh impetus to trade relations, he added.

Turning to the current situation in Sri Lanka, the ministers said terrorism in his country impeded expansion of trade and "we have now embarked upon a new era to expand e bilateral trade and investment."

Peiris said after the defeat of terrorists and return of stability in Sri Lanka, a congenial atmosphere has been created to increase investment and trade with Bangladesh. "We are now in the process of accelerating economic activities."

Peiris and Dipu Moni addressed the joint press conference on the outcome of talks between the ting Sri Lanka President Mahinda Rajapaksa and Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, which were followed by the signing of five deals relating to cooperation in the fields of trade, agriculture, fisheries, vocational education and cultural exchange.

The Sri Lankan minister said they discussed political cooperation in exchange of

information about terrorist activities and terrorist financing so that the terrors could not raise their heads in the future.

The two foreign ministers said the official talks covered the entire range of bilateral issues, including political, commercial, economic, connectivity and religious matters.

Peiris said after developing their Hambantota deep seaport, they have requested the Bangladesh side to resume the feeder vessel service for Chittagong and Mongla ports via Colombo.

In response, Dipu Moni said Bangladesh and Sri Lanka are engaged in reviewing Shipping Services Agreement, and the proposed feeder service could be addressed through it.

Already there is direct air service between Dhaka and Colombo, and the two sides are considering air cargo transport to meet the present needs.

Dipu Moni said some 500 Sri Lankan students are now engaged in higher studies in Bangladesh, and "we agreed to allow more students for medical and engineering studies here." The Sri Lankan side agreed to train

Bangladeshi nurses, she added.

A joint statement issued yesterday said President Rajapaksa thanked Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and her government for their steadfast support in combating separatist terrorism in Sri Lanka, and for extending support to his country at international forums.

Bangladesh sought more investment from Sri Lanka in textiles, knitwear, leather, pharmaceuticals, agro-based industries and steel and engineering, education and health services.

As Bangladesh sought Sri Lanka's support to Bangladesh's candidature for non-permanent membership of the UN Security Council for 2016-17, the Sri Lankan side assured that the request would be given due consideration.

Rajapaksa requested Bangladesh government's cooperation in obtaining the Sacred Hair Relics of Lord Buddha for exposition in Sri Lanka, and the Bangladesh side assured of cooperation.

The Sri Lankan President will leave here for Colombo today ending his three-day state visit.

Khagrachhari reels

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resident of Manikchhari Bazar area, around 4:30pm in connection with the violence.

Meanwhile, a three-member committee formed to investigate Sunday's incident, was given three more days' time. It will now have to submit its report by Sunday.

The committee yesterday started talking to locals, witnesses and victims of Sunday's violence.

Members of the team, led by Additional Deputy Commissioner (General) Mohammad Salahuddin, talked to locals at Boro Pilak High School of Shankholapara of Ramgarh, where indigenous people and Bangalee settlers clashed leaving three dead, 20 injured and many houses burnt.

While visiting the two upazilas, The Daily Star was told that homes of 105 families, of 35 Bangalee settlers and the rest adivasis, were vandalised and torched during the violence.

Only a few people went to the weekly bazaar (haat) near Guimara yesterday.

"I sell goods worth between Tk 70,000 and Tk 80,000 every Tuesday. But today, my sale proceed could not be more than Tk 4,000," said Titu Barua, a grocer at the bazaar.

Ukrachin Marma, who went to the bazaar to purchase goods from Haschhari area, said people are still in

panic. Yesterday a school became the shelter for 10 families whose houses got burnt. Others are still living under the open sky.

"I have been living under a tree since Sunday," said Thaichong Marma wife of Utol Marma, a farmer of Chhankhola Para in Boro Pilak union parishad. Paikrachuk Marma of the same village echoed it.

Jobeda Begum, a Bangalee settler of that area, said she received rice and pulse as relief but does not have a place where she can cook. "What will we do with these?" she said standing beside her charred house.

Khagrachhari Deputy Commissioner Anisul Haque Bhuiyan said, "We are yet to complete the process of identifying the affected families. This is why we failed to take necessary steps."

Manjurul Afsar, officer-in-charge of Guimara Police Station, filed two cases, one on the killings and another on arson and looting, against 250 unnamed people.

Kango Aung Marma, resident of Kongoripara of Mohamoni area in Manikchhari upazila, filed the other case with Manikchhari Police Station against 16 identified and a number of unidentified people in connection with vandalism and arson.

The local administration distributed utensils, rice,

pulse and Tk 5,000 among 11 each of the affected families in Manikchhari. The army distributed 5kg rice and 2kg pulse among the 11 families and 94 others of Ramgarh.

CID seeks

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Investigation Officer (IO) of the case, submitted the petition with Judge Mohammad Zohurul Hoque of the Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court.

In the forwarding report, the IO said Mufti Abdul Hannan, chief of Harkatul Jihad (Huji), confessed before a Dhaka court on April 7, claiming two former directors general of National Security Intelligence (NSI) to have been involved in the conspiracy.

Maj Gen (retd) Rezaqul Haider Chowdhury and Brig Gen (retd) M Abdur Rahim were shown arrested in the case and interrogated during remand. However, the interrogation process requires more time, said the IO.

Earlier on April 4, the court warned the IO for the second time for delaying the probe and asked to submit the report by April 20.

The CID got 20 months and 15 days in eight phases for investigating the case filed under the Explosive Substances Act in connection with the attacks on an AL rally at capital's Bangabandhu Avenue.

The judge, who will hear the petition today, warned the IO, that the court will not extend further time.

3 'carjackers' arrested at Shahjalal airport

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police yesterday caught three alleged carjackers trying to snatch a car at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport in the capital.

Airport Armed Police (AAP) made the arrests in terminal-2 area around 1:30am.

Of the arrestees, Ismail 20, and Nasiruddin are from Munshiganj and Taslim Ahmed, 24, is from Brahmanbaria.

Police said the three had approached the driver of a station wagon, saying they wanted to hire his car for Tk 4,500. One of them claimed to have just got back from abroad.

Suspicious, the driver requested the one posing as a returnee to show his passport. As the youth failed to do that, he declined to be hired, said Atiqur Rahman, assistant commissioner of AAP.

At one stage, the three tried to tie him up and take away the car. But as the driver cried for help, the AAP men on duty at terminal-2 rushed to the scene and caught the youths.

In primary interrogation, the arrestees admitted they are a carjacking gang, which also includes a youth named Swapan. They had been involved in lifting cars for years, the assistant commissioner added.

Halda fishes

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Manjurul Kibria, assistant professor of Zoology at Chittagong University, said they found such happening for the first time. It seems unusual.

This might be an impact of climate change, he said. They will observe the situation for a few days to find out the reasons.

Manjurul, however, said tests yesterday found Halda water salty, and they advised spawn collectors to preserve the eggs in sweet pond water.

Meanwhile, fishermen have started collecting spawns from the Halda but fear high tide might carry those away.

Indigenous fish species usually release spawns during the Bangla month of Chitra when it rains and thunders. But this time they did not, some fishermen said.

"We were really surprised to see spawns floating in the river yesterday," a fisherman said.

In the 1960s and 70s, Halda fish spawns used to meet about two-thirds of the need for that for fish cultivation in ponds in the country, experts say.

Illegal fishing has led to a drastic fall in the quantity of eggs available from the Halda. Only 20 kgs of fish fry were collected from the river in 2004 compared to 2,500 kgs in 1946, they add.

Helicopter

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The helicopter had 23 people on board including five crew members.

The Russian-designed civilian helicopter that crashed in the state's frontier Tawang region belonged to the state-run Pawan Hans Helicopters Ltd.

Chinese

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Hydro, at Sonapahar of the upazila.

Director (monitoring and enforcement) of DoE Munir Chowdhury imposed the penalty on Cino Hydro for destroying the ecosystem in the area by cutting hills illegally.

The team asked the Roads and Highways Department to realise the penalty and file a case against Abdul Quddus, owner of S R Enterprise.

It also directed the Chinese company to fill up the cut away portion of the hill with earth.

Contacted, Mr U, an official of the company, said they did not know that the contractor had not collected permission of hill cutting from the authorities concerned and no objection certificate from the DoE.