

4 CITY CORPORATION POLLS

Electoral rules flouted

STAR REPORT

Ignoring warnings from the returning officers, mayoral hopefuls of the four city corporations are allegedly violating electoral code of conducts, according to reports from our district correspondents.

In Rajshahi, Awami League-led alliance-backed candidate AHM Khairuzzaman Liton used four-colour portraits of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at his Dori Khorbona election office and New Market areas.

BNP-supported candidate Mosaddek Hossain Bulbul used portraits of Leader of the Opposition Khaleda Zia, her son Tarique Rahman and BNP leader Mizanur Rahman Minu at different areas, including Greater Road and Dori Khorbona.

Contacted, both Liton and Bulbul refuted allegations of irregularities.

The Rajshahi office of the Election Commission (EC) yesterday evening issued a letter to Liton, seeking his explanation for using political leaders' portraits in his campaign.

In Barisal, a large number of colourful billboards were seen at different key points of the city, describing the achievements and promises of 14-party alliance backed candidate, Shawkat Hossain Hiron.

Dulal Talukdar, assistant returning officer of the district, said after receiving allegations and visiting the spots, the EC observation team asked magistrates of seven mobile court teams to dismantle those billboards.

In Khulna, two main mayoral candidates -- Moniruzzaman Mony of BNP-led alliance and Liaquat Ali of AL -- yesterday accused each other of violating electoral rules.

Mony yesterday filed an application to the returning officer, alleging that the

No-1 ward unit Sramik League set up an arch and an office in favour of AL-backed candidate Talukder Abdul Khaleque at the truck terminal near Maniktola.

On the other hand, Liaquat Ali filed an application, along with a copy of a news item of a local newspaper, to the returning officer accusing Mony of violating electoral rules.

Ruhul Amin Mallick, assistant returning officer, said, "We asked the magistrates concerned to take necessary legal action against the accused after investigation."

In Sylhet, Returning Officer SM Ejharul Haque issued separate letters to all three mayoral candidates, asking them to submit the list of election campaign offices by today.

The move came following a complaint against the outgoing mayor Badar Uddin Ahmed Kamran who had set up additional camp offices for campaign.



In violation of electoral code of conducts, party symbols, portraits of national leaders, four-colour placards being used in campaigns by mayoral candidates in Rajshahi.



PHOTO: STAR

DEROGATORY COMMENTS ON WAR TRIAL

Jamaat leader Selim apologises

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Jamaat-e-Islami leader Selim Uddin yesterday sought unconditional apology to International Crimes Tribunal-2 for his provocative and derogatory remarks about trial proceedings and the tribunal.

Two other Jamaat leaders Rafiqul Islam Khan and Hamidur Rahman Azad, MP, however, did not appear before the court, even after his order and did not give explanation over their comments.

On April 21, the tribunal initiated contempt proceedings against the Jamaat leaders for their "provocative and derogatory remarks".

Yesterday, the court, after holding the hearing on a

written reply of Selim Uddin, fixed June 9 for passing order in this regard.

Selim Uddin's lawyer Tajul Islam yesterday said he was not "justifying" his client's comments, rather seeking "unconditional apology" for the comments.

The February 4 video footages of RIV and ATN News of a Jamaat rally were screened in the tribunal and Selim Uddin, who was produced before the court, himself sought apology.

"I had no intention to disrespect the court. Even though, if it hurts the court, I apologise for my comments," said Selim Uddin.

On February 7, the tribunal asked the trio to explain as to why contempt of court proceedings should not be initiated against them for

their comments about trial proceeding and the tribunal at the rally on February 4.

On March 6, the court ordered the police to arrest the Jamaat leaders and produce them before the court for "deliberately avoiding" appearance before the tribunal in connection with a contempt of court ruling.

Of them, Selim Uddin, Dhaka city unit assistant secretary general of Jamaat, was arrested following a warrant for arrest issued by the tribunal, while acting secretary general Rafiqul Islam Khan, and central executive council member Hamidur Rahman Azad, are on the run.

The court, on its own, issued the notice for contempt of court on the basis of reports published in The

Daily Star and Bangla daily Prothom Alo on February 5.

The Prothom Alo quoted Selim Uddin as saying: "There is no scope for the controversial tribunal to deliver any verdict if the country is to be saved from a civil war."

The daily quoted Azad as saying at the same programme, "This tribunal cannot exist any more."

The Daily Star, in a report headlined "Jamaat warns of civil war", quoted Rafiqul Islam as saying, "Don't push the country into a civil war by delivering one-sided verdicts against our leaders. If anything happens to Quader Mollah, every house will be on fire."

If found guilty, the tribunal, as per section 11 (4) of the act, may award the Jamaat leaders simple imprison-

ment which may extend to one year or with fine which may extend to Tk 5,000 or with both.

MOJAHEED'S CASE

The defence of Jamaat leader Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mojaheed yesterday placed their closing arguments before the tribunal for the fifth day.

During his around two-hour arguments, Mojaheed's chief defence counsel Abdur Razzaq placed his submission mainly on the alleged command responsibility of Mojaheed over the infamous Al-Badr forces.

Razzaq said five of seven charges framed under section 4(2) of the International Crimes (Tribunals) Act-1973 were "defective."

The tribunal adjourned the case proceeding until today.

Nizami's followers involved in genocide

Witness tells war tribunal

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A prosecution witness yesterday told the International Crimes Tribunal-1 that Motiur Rahman Nizami's followers had committed genocide during the Liberation War in 1971.

"During the [liberation] war Nizami's followers killed, raped and tortured the Hindus," said 10th prosecution witness Tofazzal Hossain Master in the war crimes case against the Jamaat-e-Islami chief.

The witness then gave an account of one such incident.

"One Sunil Jowardar's wife was raped in front of her husband. Later, Sunil's wife committed suicide," said the septuagenarian witness.

The witness however did not elaborate how the incident had come to his knowledge.

Tofazzal and Nizami were classmates at Boalmari Madrasa. Tofazzal obtained bachelor degree in 1964.

The witness, who fought for the country, was a teacher of Sathia Pilot High School in Pabna.

He said a Razakar camp was set up at Sathia Pilot High School in mid-May in 1971.

"Nizami, Maulana Abdus Subhan [a war crimes suspect] and Moulana Ishak were present at the launching ceremony in presence of about 100-150 Razakars and some curious locals," said Tofazzal who witnessed them from afar.

A meeting was held on

the occasion of the launching ceremony.

People who were present later told Tofazzal about the decision of the meeting.

"Those who have connection with liberation and freedom fighters will be caught and killed. The youth will be encouraged to join the Razakar force," said the witness quoting participants.

Tofazzal later joined the guerrilla force and fought against anti-liberation elements.

The witness said Razakars and Pakistani occupation army had begun atrocities on Bangalees in September 1971. They had killed many people and detained unarmed people at Pilot High School, he added.

On November 17, freedom fighters attacked the Razakar camp set up at the school. About 26-27 Razakars were killed and 14 were caught alive, said Tofazzal.

The witness said freedom fighters gathered at Sathia Police Station on December 7.

"While they were conducting a meeting, army and Razakars jointly launched an attack on them. They opened fire from cars. A bullet grazed just below my left eye," said Tofazzal.

He then put off his eyeglasses and showed the tribunal his damaged eye caused by the bullet.

Tofazzal fell on the ground unconscious. He had come round when water was sprinkled on him.

Defence counsel Mizanul Islam sought an adjournment saying they could not

take enough preparations for cross-examination as the prosecution had informed them about the witness before the beginning of the day's proceeding.

The tribunal admonished the prosecution for not informing the defence earlier.

The proceeding of the case was adjourned until June 4.

MOBARAK'S CASE

The third prosecution witness in the war crimes case against Mobarak Hossain yesterday gave deposition before Tribunal-1.

Witness Rafiqul Islam gave a deposition similar to that of his sister Khodeja Begum, second prosecution witness, on the killing of his father martyr Abdul Khaleque.

According to the charge, Mobarak killed Khaleque on November 11, 1971.

Rafiq said his father had come to visit home on November 10, 1971.

Khaleque was caught by Razakars. "His hands were tied and he was dragged to Suhilpur Razakar Camp," he added.

Khodeja's father was taken to the Razakar camp of Suhilpur Union Parishad. Mobarak was the commander of the camp.

They had sought help of a neighbour to free Khaleque from the camp. But on the night of November 11 Mobarak killed Khaleque of the bank of the Titas river.

Defence counsel Ahsanul Huq Hena later cross-examined him. The proceeding of the case was adjourned until June 9.



Charges against four bloggers

FROM PAGE 16

Shuvo, Parvez and Biplob were arrested in the capital on April 2 for their online posts deemed insulting to Islam. The fourth blogger, Asif, was arrested the next day on the same charges.

The arrests of the bloggers drew huge criticism from people across the board as those fol-

lowed a campaign by Islamist groups that said "atheist bloggers" were involved in the Shahbagh movement to demand the death penalty to war criminals.

On April 17, the Detective Branch of police submitted probe reports against the four, accusing them of hurting religious

sentiments via social media.

The charges against them were brought under the Information and Communications Technology Act, 2006.

According to the law, anyone against whom such charges are proved faces 14 years' rigorous imprisonment and a fine of Tk 1 crore.

21 BCL men

FROM PAGE 16

Proprietor of Amantron Tailors at Shakhbaribazar area in Sutrapur, Bishwajit, 24, was on his way to his shop in the morning of December 9 when the BNP-led 18-party opposition alliance enforced a road-blockade programme.

Following some blasts in front of Bahadur Shah Park, BCL men from JnU rushed there and swooped on Biswajit, mistaking him for a blockader. They hacked him with machetes and beat him up with iron rods and hockey sticks.

The ill-fated youth bled to death at Mitford Hospital.

As newspapers and television channels ran series of reports with stills and footages showing the perpetrators, law enforcers arrested the seven in December.

They are: Nahid, Saiful, Kayyum, AHM Kibria, GM Rasheduzzaman Shaon, Saiful Islam, Mohammad Rafiqul Islam alias Shakil and Emdadul Haque.

Shakil, Nahid, Shaon and Emdad admitted their guilt and disclosed before the court names of others who participated in the killing.

On March 5, detectives pressed charges against the 21 accused.

The fugitives are Md Alauddin, Obaidul Quader Tahsin, Imran Hossain alias Imran, Rajon Talukder, Khondoker Md Yunus Ali, Tarique Bin Zohor alias Tamal, Azizur Rahman, Noor-e-Alam Limon, Al Amin Sheikh, Monirul Haque Pavel, Mosharrar Hossain and Kamrul Hasan and Rafiqul Islam.

JS boycotted

FROM PAGE 1

Daily Star collected data on the previous sessions from TIB, and calculated the total time and money wasted due to quorum crisis in all 17 sessions.

TIB had earlier published two reports on the current parliament in July 2009 and June 2011.

The Leader of the Opposition Khaleda Zia has so far attended eight parliamentary sittings while her archival and the Leader of the House Sheikh Hasina took part in 266 sittings.

Lawmakers spent 502 hours and 19 minutes in 163 sittings from the eighth to 15th session. Though the main task of lawmakers is to make laws, the TIB study found they spent only 13 minutes [7 percent of the total time] on an average to pass a bill in parliament.

And a total of 72 bills were passed between the eighth and 15th session.

In India, lawmakers spent 30 percent of the total time to pass a law in 2012, while it was 55 percent in the UK in

2009-10, TIB said.

Of the total time (from the eighth to 15th session), lawmakers spent highest 114 hours and 22 minutes for discussions in two budget sessions (2011-12 and 2012-13), and the second highest 97 hours were spent for discussions on thanksgiving motion on the president's speech.

There was no participation of opposition lawmakers in the law-making process though they were present in 10 sittings between the eighth and 15th session.

Opposition lawmakers also boycotted all four budget sessions of the current parliament, said the report.

"The way a bill was passed in parliament indicated that people's participation was not there in the process." Besides, women lawmakers' participation in the law-making process is very limited, said TIB.

Lawmakers spent 11 percent of the total time on discussions on public interest issues, and 4 percent on

unscheduled discussions in which they used unparliamentary and abusive words to criticise their rivals, observed the report.

No discussion was held on any of the 381 adjourned motions for absence of opposition lawmakers or the Speaker's rejection, according to the report.

On the parliamentary bodies, the report said 51 standing committees have so far held 1,661 meetings and made over 2,500 recommendations, most of which were ignored by ministries concerned.

TIB recommended bringing an end to "the culture of parliament boycott". "And if needed, a law should be made to prevent any lawmaker from remaining absent in parliament for more than 30 sittings at a stretch," it said.

On the issue of boycotting parliament, Awami League lawmaker Tofail Ahmed said all parties should shun the culture of boycotting parliament and there should be a law to stop this practice.

JS budget session

FROM PAGE 16

If the BNP lawmakers join the House sitting, they will speak on various important national issues like law and order, corruption of the ministers, share market crash and the government's failed foreign policy, Moudud added.

BNP lawmaker Mahbub Uddin Khokon submitted a notice to the parliament secretariat demanding discussion in the House on restoration of the caretaker government system.

Parliament secretariat sources said opposition MPs have submitted more than two dozen notices demanding discussions on other important issues including the unofficial ban on holding rallies and meetings in the capital.

Lawmakers from the BNP and its allies Jamaat-e-Islami and Bangladesh Jatiya Party have remained absent from the House for 83 consecutive sittings since March last year, said the sources.

They will lose their membership of parliament if they are absent from seven more

consecutive sittings, the sources mentioned.

On return to parliament, the BNP legislators would not bring any bill or place any proposal on the caretaker government. They want the government to place a constitution amendment bill for installing a non-partisan election-time government.

If the opposition MPs return to the House, the present parliament will avert the record of not having the opposition in all its budget sessions. It already has a record of passing four budgets without the participation of opposition MPs.

No other parliament since the restoration of parliamentary democracy in 1991 had to face such a situation.

Finance Minister AMA Muhith is likely to place the budget for fiscal 2013-14 on June 6. This will be the last budget of the Awami League-led government.

This government, however, will not be able to implement the budget fully as its tenure expires at the middle of the next fiscal year.