

EC halts elections

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M Sakawat Hussain termed the postponement of the elections by the EC a bad precedent. "It seems that the Election Commission can't take any decision independently. It can't work according to its will," he told The Daily Star.

The LGRD ministry should not have requested the EC to postpone the polls, observed Sakawat.

"Once the Election Commission announces the schedule, the LGRD ministry doesn't have any jurisdiction to seek a postponement of the polls," he noted.

Defending the EC move, Election Commissioner Shah Nawaz said holding elections to local government bodies depends on the wishes of the LGRD ministry. As per electoral laws, the ministry creates the ground for the polls and the EC only

conducts the elections, he added.

"So, the Election Commission has to consider any requirements of the ministry regarding local government elections. That is why the commission has postponed the polls," he insisted.

The Local Government (municipalities) Act, 2009 empowers the LGRD ministry to redraw the boundaries of the municipalities and the EC to conduct the polls.

The LGRD ministry in several letters to the EC requested it not to hold the overdue elections to Chandpur, Fulbaria of Mymensingh, Manikganj, Chuadanga and Shariatpur municipalities.

The EC had been preparing to announce the polls schedules for these municipalities.

31 held in Barguna sent to jail

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Barguna town Monday afternoon.

According to police, the arrestees were then holding a "secret meeting".

Law enforcers lodged a case with Barguna Police Station against the 31 under section-57 of Information and Communication Technology Act, said Officer-in-Charge of the police station Shilmoni Chakma.

ASP Jahangir Alam claimed that police had found Jasim's connections with militant activities and that his statements to police were inconsistent.

Mufti Jasim, however, claimed himself to be a Pir (spiritual leader) and rest of the arrestees as his followers, who had gone there to hear his sermon, said the

ASP.

A director of Markajul Ulum Al-Islamia at Basila of Dhaka, Mufti Jasim used to encourage young people to eliminate atheist bloggers, he added.

The other arrestees are: Rahman Matubbar, 39, Asraf Ali, 34, Awal Siraj, 45, Yusuf Mridha, 24, Alamgir Hossain, 43, Jamal Hossain, 45, Abdul Jabbar, 60, Badol, 30, Kari Abdus Salam, 38, Abu Saleh, 50, Hasan, 19, Aslam, 37, Abdullah, 18, Nayeem, 18, Al Amin, 22, Abul Kalam, 50, Forkan, 32, Hasan, 17, Mizanur Rahman, 17, Abu Saleh, 20, Aiyub Ali, 52, Abdullah, 25, Selim, 32, Moniruzzaman, 28, Mainuddin, 40, Shahidul Islam, 30, Khalil Hawlader, 50, Jonayet Islam, 17, Abdul Jalil, 40 and Mohibbullah, 18.

Of them Aiyub Ali, Khalil and Abdul Jalil are the brothers of Mufti Jasim.

Locals said Jasim Uddin, son of late Nur Hawlader of South Hewlibunia village under Barguna sadar upazila, is the fourth among his five brothers.

He passed Hafezee from Islamia Hafezee Madrasa in Barguna town and later got admitted to Jameya Rahmania Madrasa set up by Shaikhul Hadith Azizul Haque at Mohammadpur in Dhaka. He passed Dowra Hadith from this institution in 1990.

He later studied on Deobond (Arabic) and passed Mufti in Fiqh subject from Sabelus Salam Madrasa in Hyderabad, India. Returning home, he served

as a teacher at Jameya Rahmania Madrasa in Dhaka and Mahmudia Madrasa in Barisal. He had also been the Imam of Sadarghat Jame Mosque in Barguna in 2004.

Jasim also served as a part time teacher at Lisanos University in Medina, Saudi Arabia. Thereafter, he became the Imam of Hatembagh Jame Mosque in Rayerbazar, Dhaka and established a madrasa, Markajul Ulum Al-Islamia at Basila in Dhaka.

ANSARULLAH HQ IN BASILA

Mufti Jasim began delivering radical sermons from Hatembagh mosque seven to eight years ago.

In early 2011, he moved to sparsely populated Basila area where he built a mosque and a residential

madrasa on a piece of land donated to him by several of his followers, said local people. He named his headquarters "Markajul Ulum Al-Islamia, Dhaka." The madrasa houses around 100 students.

Talking to around 10 persons in and around Jasim's headquarters yesterday, The Daily Star learned that while a few local people attended prayers at this mosque, more than 100 outsiders used to attend the Juma prayers every Friday. Sometimes 20 to 30 cars were seen parked outside.

He used to record his own sermons and sell those in the form of CDs at different prices inside the mosque, said locals, adding that copies of the recordings were also made available for pen drives.

Many of his sermons were anti-government and in favour of war criminals, like Delawar Hossain Sayedee, who are now under trial for crimes against humanity committed during the 1971 Liberation War of Bangladesh.

He promoted his sermons through leaflets attached to the wall of his one-storey house adjacent to the mosque.

Following the killing of blogger Rajib in February, the name of Ansarullah Bahini came out from the five arrested self-confessed killers. Locals wonder, why the police did not arrest him after that incident.

They told The Daily Star that police and detective personnel were often seen hanging around the mosque.

Hall-Mark

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It would submit 10 more petitions in a few days to cancel the other bail orders in the rest of the cases, he added.

Citing the statements in a petition, he said the Dhaka court had granted the bail illegally, as investigations were going on and there were serious allegations of money laundering against Jasmine.

Granting conditional bail to an accused is always illegal, Khurshid observed, adding that Jasmine was released from jail on the same day as the bail.

He also mentioned that he would move yesterday's petition before the HC as soon as possible.

The Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court of Dhaka on February 19 sent Jasmine, wife of Hall-Mark Managing Director Tanvir Mahmud, to jail after she had surrendered to it in connection with the corruption cases.

The ACC filed the cases on October 4 last year against 27 top officials of Hall-Mark and the bank for involvement in the swindle.

Tanvir Mahmud, the mastermind behind the scam, and Tushar Ahmed, the group's general manager and Tanvir's close relative, are now in jail.

Shutdown makes people suffer

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Abdullah Md Taher told The Daily Star that they had curtailed the shutdown by 12 hours "considering the sufferings of the holidaymakers".

But in another press release sent at 10:21pm, the party said the shutdown would end at 6:00am tomorrow.

Supporters of the party and its student wing Islami Chhatra Shibir clashed with law enforcers in Meherpur and Chittagong, leaving at least 60 people, including 14 police personnel, injured on the first day of the hartal, report our correspondents.

Pro-hartal pickets went on the rampage during hartal hours, and torched and vandalised at least 18 vehicles in different parts of the country. A driver suffered severe burns at Sitakunda in Chittagong.

In the capital, a mobile court sentenced five Jamaat-Shibir activists to six months' imprisonment each for picketing at Nayapaltan, Lalbagh and Armanitola, Masudur Rahman, deputy commissioner of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, told The Daily Star last night.

A man was killed and five others were seriously injured, as their jeep fell into a roadside ditch at Cox's Bazar sadar. The driver lost control of the vehicle after it was chased by Jamaat-Shibir men during the hartal, said Jasim Uddin,

officer-in-charge of Sadar Model Police Station.

The incident happened around 9:50pm when they were travelling to Ramu from Chittagong, said the OC.

The dead was identified as Hamidul Haque, 48, of Cox's Bazar sadar upazila. The injured were rushed to the Cox's Bazar Sadar Hospital.

A large number of people, who went to their village homes to celebrate Eid, could not travel back to the capital for lack of transport yesterday.

But those who had no alternative but to reach Dhaka yesterday remained stranded at Sadarghat launch terminal and Gabtoli and Mohakhali bus stations for hours, as the number of public vehicles was very low in the capital because of the shutdown.

"I had been in a state of panic the whole Monday night while I was returning to Dhaka by a bus. Though I reached the capital safely, I cannot find any transport to go home," said Abdus Salam, a bank official who reached Dhaka from Khulna around 6:00am yesterday.

Like him, many others were seen waiting for vehicles for hours to reach their destinations.

Several hundred women and children were found waiting at the Sadarghat launch terminal after a whole night's journey to the capital.



Jamaat-Shibir cadres, wielding sharp weapons, block the Meherpur-Chuadanga highway in Rajnagar during hartal hours yesterday.

No buses on long routes travelled to or from the capital, but train and launch services remained unaffected during the hartal, which was enforced just two days after Eid-ul-Fitr.

In Meherpur, at least 50 people, including 10 police personnel, were injured in two clashes between law enforcers and Jamaat-Shibir activists during hartal hours. Police arrested three Jamaat-Shibir activists, reports our correspondent.

Jamaat-Shibir men attacked police with sharp weapons and sticks when the law enforcers barred them from blocking a road in Garadob Bazar area in the morning, Masudul Alam,

officer-in-charge of Gangni Police Station, told The Daily Star.

An injured Masudul said police fired 50 rubber bullets and lobbed 13 teargas canisters during the clashes.

BUSINESS LEADERS CONCERNED

Kazi Akram Uddin Ahmed, president of the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry, said, "We want a settlement of political disputes through a political dialogue between the leaders of the two parties."

Echoing his view, Sabur Khan, president of the Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry, said businesses were the main losers in shutdowns.

Mueen was among

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proceeding until today when Iftekhar is set to face cross-examination.

On June 24, the tribunal framed 11 charges against Mueen and Ashraf for their alleged involvement in the killings of 18 intellectuals in the last week of the nine-month-long war.

Iftekhar, an industrial relations manager of a foreign company, said his [paternal] uncle had obtained gold medal from Kolkata University for his outstanding performance in master's.

Mofazzal was an active supporter of all progressive activities including the Language Movement in 1952, said Iftekhar, adding that his uncle was a non-communal person who had believed in Bangalee nationalism.

Mofazzal, a faculty member of Bangla department at Dhaka University, protested against the then Pakistani government's decision of banning Rabindra Sangeet and a signature campaign launched by several DU teachers in favour of the then Pakistan government.

Feeling insecure, Mofazzal and his family members left his campus residence on December 12 and took shelter at Iftekhar's father's house in

Shantibagh, said the witness. Noor, a domestic help of Mofazzal, remained in the DU residence.

Iftekhar later learned from his aunt and his parents that a group of Al-Badr men had raided the DU residence on December 14 and forced Noor to give Mofazzal's whereabouts, the witness added.

The Al-Badr men arrived at their house being accompanied by Noor and asked his father Prof Lutful Haider Chowdhury about Mofazzal, the witness said.

He said the masked Al-Badr men had stormed into their house asked Mofazzal to go with them. They had given him some time to get prepared following a request by Lutful, he added.

As Mofazzal was getting ready, Lutful engaged in a conversation with an Al-Badr man, whose face was covered by a handkerchief. At one stage of the conversation, Lutful removed the handkerchief.

"My uncle [Mofazzal] looked at that man and said 'aren't you Mueen Uddin?' The man replied, 'yes, I am Mueen Uddin, I am your student'. I myself heard this brief conversation standing beside my uncle and my father," said

the witness.

Mueen Uddin had assured them that his teacher would return after meeting a Pakistani captain, said Iftekhar, adding that later Al-Badr men took away his uncle in a microbus.

After victory on December 16, Iftekhar's family had learned that many other intellectuals were abducted in the same way and remained unaccounted for. They had looked for Mofazzal's body in different killing grounds but did not find him, added Iftekhar.

After the victory, daily Purbadesh and other newspapers had published several reports on Mueen Uddin and Ashrafuzzaman's involvement in the killings of intellectuals, he added.

The tribunal had meanwhile adjourned the case proceedings against war crimes accused BNP leader Abdul Alim until August 19 following the prosecution's time petition.

Yesterday was fixed for recording cross-examination of ZM Altafur Rahman, investigation officer in the case, but the prosecution sought time as Altaf could not appear before the court due to his illness.

Bhola suffers

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SUFFERINGS MOUNT

Villagers and senior citizens said this was the longest power outage in the district since it was brought under power connectivity in 1970.

The blackout has led to the collapse of the water supply system in the municipality, mounting the sufferings of people.

More than 600 patients in different hospitals and six upazila health complexes have been suffering immensely due to the unprecedented breakdown in the power supply system.

Duty doctors were found stitching up patients in candlelight or using hurricane lanterns at Bhola Sadar Hospital.

Resident medical officer at the hospital Dr Nityananda Chowdhury said fire service men helped them filling up water tanks.

But it was still very difficult for them to provide proper services to 131 patients undergoing treatment there.

Students, especially those in primary level, were preparing for their upcoming exams by candlelight.

The blackout also spiked the prices of essentials. Rickshaw fares have doubled as the battery-run human haulers lay idle for not being able to recharge the batteries.

Meanwhile, some agitated people demonstrated before the PDB office around 12:00noon yesterday protesting the blackout.

They hurled brickbats at the building and chanted slogans as they were not allowed inside.

A little later, police reached the scene and brought the situation under control.

7 charged with fixing in BPL



Selim Chowdhury



Shihab Chowdhury



Mohammad Rafique



Mosharraf Hossain



Mahbulul Alam

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Bangladesh captain Mohammad Ashraful, on the pretext of what was understood as standard procedure.

The seven facing the more serious fixing-related charges have been provisionally suspended and are immediately barred from participating in all cricket activities organised or recognised by the BCB, the ICC or of the ICC's member associations, pending resolution of the disciplinary proceedings brought against them.

The obvious point of speculation now surrounds the identity of the remaining eight players and officials barring Ashraful. According to sources, former Bangladesh left-arm spinner Mohammad Rafique, left-arm spinner Mosharraf Hossain, pacer Mahbulul Alam, Gladiators owners Selim Chowdhury and Shihab Chowdhury, its Indian CEO Gaurav Rawat, Sri Lankan spinner Kaushal Lokuarachchi and

Englishman Darren Stevens are those charged.

Ashraful, who has been in the eye of the storm ever since his confessional statement to the Anti-Corruption and Security Unit (ACSU) about his involvement not only in this year's BPL but allegedly also in international games for his country, admitted that he was one of the seven who had been charged with match-fixing in the BPL.

When asked about international match-fixing at the press conference organised jointly by the BCB and the ICC, Richardson said: "Yes, there has been speculation as to what Ashraful might have said in his statement. This investigation will be specific to allegations of fixing or attempts to fix matches in the BPL 2013. The investigation is, however, ongoing. If there are other incidents that do get unearthed, we will make a decision in the later stages if those incidents need to be prosecuted any further. At this stage, however, the charges are related to

matches in the BPL 2013 only.

"We place ourselves in an impossible position if we start commenting on whether we are carrying out an investigation [on Bangladesh's corruption involvement in international matches] or not," he said, adding that this disclosure was a milestone for the ACSU.

It was the end of a long wait for BCB president Nazmul Hassan Papon, but he was not in a position to make it public as under the BCB's anti-corruption code the organisation is not at liberty to disclose any details until the disciplinary process is completed. "It is a very painful disclosure for us, but at least we have been able to bring the corruption to light," Papon said.

Richardson also said that all match-fixing and spot-fixing 'conspiracy' involved BPL franchisee Dhaka Gladiators, who won the tournament in both editions.

All those charged will now have 14 days to

appear before a three-member BCB tribunal and either plead guilty or deny the charges.

The BCB has already started its work on forming a ten-member disciplinary committee headed by a retired Supreme Court Judge, who will also lead the three-member tribunal.

According to Article 6 of the BCB's anti-corruption code, those found guilty of fixing offences can be suspended for a period between five years up to a lifetime and those guilty of failure to report a corruption approach can be suspended for a period of one to five years.

Corruption in the country's favourite sport has been the loudest talking point over the last few months, and that will continue as the identities of the accused remain a mystery. Therefore, yesterday's disclosure from the high-voltage press conference was just the lifting of one curtain to reveal the first among many more that remain.

Defence get more time

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yesterday morning, but they failed to comply with the order and sought more time.

The tribunal extended the time till the afternoon session, but the defence failed to complete it again. The tribunal finally gave them one hour today.

Every time the tribunal attempted to close the arguments, SQ Chowdhury himself stood up from the dock and requested for time extension.

At one stage, the war crimes accused told the tribunal that everyone had their limitation. "You [tribunal judges] too have your limitations. But there won't be any harm if you allow one more day," he said.

"I have been in jail for two years and eight months. Can't I demand half a day?" appealed SQ Chowdhury.

When the judges left the courtroom, the war crimes accused addressing his family and friends flippantly said, "You see! I reminded them of their limitations."

It was not the first time that

the tribunal experienced such time extension prayers from the defence. During recording of defence testimony, SQ Chowdhury and his counsels repeatedly prayed for time extension and the tribunal entertained the prayers over and over.

Defence counsel Ahsanul Huq Hena during arguments yesterday claimed the pieces of evidence produced by the prosecution were no good at all. "None of the witnesses can be trusted," said the defence counsel.

Hena added the investigation officer had recorded testimony of 10 witnesses and the prosecution produced six of them to prove the killing of Nutan Chandra Singha, founder of herbal medicine factory Kundeshwari Oushadhalaya, on April 13, 1971.

The defence counsel pointed out "discrepancies" between the testimonies of the witnesses.

He said none of the witnesses except Nutan's son

Prafulla Ranjan Singha mentioned about looting of wealth.

Referring to a case filed in 1972 in connection with Nutan's murder, the defence claimed that it was not mentioned in the FIR that SQ Chowdhury shot Nutan.

Though the defence did not rely upon the rest part of their claimed FIR which says Pakistani army accompanied by SQ Chowdhury raided the Kundeshwari factory, they relied on the part of shooter.

When the tribunal pointed out the matter, the defence counsel said they were pointing it out just to show "discrepancies".

Defence counsel Fakhrul Islam placed argument on SQ Chowdhury's alibi during the Liberation War.

Mentioning testimonies of the defence witnesses and other non-exhibited documents, the defence counsel claimed their client was not present in Bangladesh from March 29, 1971 to April 28, 1974.

Palestine-Israel

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Ashrawi urged Kerry "to stand up to Israel" and deliver a tough response.

The latest construction is to take place in Gilo, an area in east Jerusalem that Israel considers to be a neighborhood of its capital. Israel's annexation of east Jerusalem, which the Palestinians claim as their capital, is not internationally recognised.

Efrat Orbach, an Interior Ministry spokeswoman, confirmed that approval had been given for expanding the

Jewish neighborhood of Gilo.

The housing plan, which received initial approval last year, would expand Gilo's boundaries further toward a Palestinian neighborhood. The plans for 900 housing units in Gilo come in addition to an earlier announcement this week of some 1,200 other settlement homes in the West Bank and east Jerusalem.

The Palestinians have refused to resume negotiations with Israel unless Israel halted its settlement construction,

a demand that Israel has refused.

After six trips to the region, Kerry managed to persuade Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas to drop the settlement issue as a condition for negotiations to start.

In exchange, Kerry Israeli agreement to answer another Palestinian demand and release 104 Palestinian prisoners serving long sentences, many for involvement in "killing" Israelis. The first batch of 26 inmates was set to be released by midnight.