Feeling Sick? Call the Rab

Jatiya Party chief Gen HM Ershad has been infamous for changing his political stance overnight. But his recent decision of not going to the polls under Sheikh Hasina, it seems, will not change. So caught between Ershad and the deep blue sea (rescheduling the election), the government decided to arrest the former military strongman. But even by AL standards, picking Ershad up just like that must have looked quite a strange thing to do. Hence, it came up with an ingenious story where the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab), which was established to deal with serious crimes, took Ershad to the Combined Military Hospital (CMH) as, the Rab said, the former President 'was not feeling well'.

It came as a welcome change from the 'crossfire' ridden Rab reports that hit newspaper headlines. But as it sometimes happens in a farce, the tragedy (Ershad's ill health) turned out to be something to be laughed about: a healthy Ershad receiving a bouquet of flowers from an AL adviser was soon published in the newspapers. To make matters even more laughable, Ershad, supposed to be confined to some hospital bed, was seen playing golf. What happened to Ershad is a mystery. Something, however, is unmistakably clear: Ershad thought (perhaps still thinks) that January 5 general election would not take place. It is still not the time though to tell if he was right.



PHOTO: STAR FILE

HM Ershad

Bangladesh's First Woman Speaker

April 30, 2013 won't be celebrated as a national holiday but it still was a momentous day for Bangladeshis all over the world. Dr Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury was elected as the first woman of the National Parliament on that day.

Before being elected in this important post, Chaudhury was the State Minister of the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs. Her nomination as the speaker did trigger controversies as she was not elected as a Member of Parliament through direct popular voting but was chosen by the Awami League – she was the International Affairs Secretary of the party – to occupy one of the parliamentary seats reserved for women.

We are glad to finally see a woman in this pivotal post in the government. Electing a woman as the 13th speaker of Bangladesh might seem like a small step by a government but it is definitely a giant leap for the whole of womankind.



PHOTO: STAR FILE

Dr Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury