

VIOLATION OF ELECTORAL CODE EC hears today allegations against 2 Jessore MPs

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission (EC) will hear today the allegations against two Jessore lawmakers-elect of violating the electoral code of conduct before the January 5 polls.

Election Commissioner Shah Nawaz told The Daily Star yesterday that the commission has directed the lawmakers to appear before it for the hearing.

Awami League leaders Sheikh Afil Uddin and Monirul Islam were elected members of parliament (MPs) from Jessore-1 and Jessore-2 constituencies respectively.

Afil unlawfully instructed the party men in Jhikargachha upazila of Jessore on December 30 to cast ballots again and again for Monirul Islam on January 5.

"One hundred boys will always be in the queue. One will enter the booth and afterwards stand at the end of the line again," he said during his campaign speech.

Afil's campaign speech was taped and published in different newspapers.

Following which, an electoral inquiry committee of Jessore-1 constituency investigated the incident and found it to be true.

On January 8, the EC issued show cause notices to the two MPs to explain why their

candidatures should not be cancelled for violating the electoral code.

On the same grounds, the commission did not include the names of the two in the gazette listing the members of the 10th parliament, and they were not sworn in as MP.

However, on January 15, Alif and Monirul in separate statements denied the allegations terming those "completely false and imaginary", and claimed that the tape may have been produced by electronic manipulation.

They further said they could not send rejoinders on the news reports as they were busy with electoral campaigns at that time.

Shah Nawaz briefing

The EC might remove the joint forces from the electoral areas, if the forces' drives hamper election activities or create problems in maintaining congenial atmosphere for holding the upcoming upazila elections, said Election Commissioner Shah Nawaz yesterday.

Talking to reporters at his office at the EC Secretariat, the commissioner said the law and order situation has improved compared to the situation in national election; and the upcoming upazila parishad elections will be held peacefully.

India honours

FROM PAGE 1

Rashtrapati Bhavan, his official home in Delhi.

Although the distinguished academician and essayist is yet to be informed officially by the Indian government, he is happy to hear the news from the media.

"I feel honoured and thank the Indian government for choosing me for the prestigious award," he told The Daily Star yesterday.

"I wish a good relationship between the two countries will continue," he added.

Anisuzzaman, who is among the 25 people selected for the award, was chosen for his "distinguished service of high order" in the field of Bangla literature and education.

His name along with other awardees was announced on the eve of the 65th Republic Day of India yesterday.

Born in Kolkata in 1937, Prof Anisuzzaman had a distinguished academic career at Dhaka University where he had obtained his BA in Bangla literature in 1956, MA in 1957 and PhD in 1962.

His publications include Muslim-manas O Bangla Sahitya, Swaruper Sandhane, Purono Bangla Gadya, Bangali Nari: Sahitye O Samaje, Kal Nirabadi and Ihajagatikata O Anyanya.

Anisuzzaman had been awarded the Ekushey Padak by the Bangladesh government in 1985.

Two other non-Indians -- Prof Lloyd I Rudolph and Prof Susanne H Rudolph of the USA -- have also been selected for their contribution to literature and education.

Noted Indian film actor Kamal Haasan, Tamil lyricist VR Thevar, tennis player Leander Paes, classical singer Parveen Sultana, justice Dalvir Bhandari and author Ruskin Bond are among the 22 Indians chosen for Padma Bhushan Award.

'Gunfights' kill 3

FROM PAGE 2

homemade bombs at them.

During the 20-minute "gunfight" with the joint forces, Enamul, a teacher of Balarampur High School, was hit. He died on the spot, Shahjahan claimed, adding that sub-inspectors Mizanur Rahman and Moktar Hossain and constable Joydev had sustained minor injuries during the "battle".

Law enforcers recovered a gun and two bombs from the spot.

Shahjahan said Enamul was an accused in a case filed in connection with an attack on policemen and snatching away of their weapons after a tribunal sentenced Jamaat leader Delwar Hossain Sayedee to death for war crimes in February last year.

Enamul was also wanted in cases filed in connection with illegal felling of trees, blockade of roads and torching of voting centres on the eve of the January 5 election, the OC claimed.

However, Tajul Islam, Kotchandpur upazila ameer of Jamaat, claimed that police had arrested Enamul around 4:00pm Saturday near the office of the upazila nirbahi officer when he along with Enamul was returning home from the UNO's office.

Our Satkhira correspondent, quoting Officer-in-Charge Tarok Biswas of Debhata Police Station, said police arrested Kalam and Maruf at their village Kulia in Debhata around 9:00pm on Saturday.

The OC claimed that on the basis of

information gleaned from them, members of the joint forces, taking the two arrestees along with them, raided several places in Debhata upazila to recover arms and arrest others accused of violence and murder.

When the joint forces entered Narkeli village around 5:30am yesterday, Jamaat-Shibir men surrounded the law enforcers, the OC claimed.

He said the party men opened fire and hurled crude bombs at the members of the joint forces to snatch away the arrestees, which led to a 15-minute "gunbattle".

Kalam and Maruf were hit during the "gunfight" when they tried to flee, the OC claimed, adding that Sub-Inspector Tapan Sinha and constables Mehedi Hasan and Abdus Salam received minor injuries.

Wounded Kalam and Maruf were declared dead around 6:45am at Satkhira Sadar Hospital, the OC added.

OC Tarok Biswas said Kalam was an accused in 10 cases, including the murder case of Debhata upazila Awami League organising secretary Abu Raihan. Jamaat-Shibir men allegedly stabbed Raihan to death on November 21 last year.

Kalam was also an accused in cases filed in connection with violence during the recent hartals and blockades and after Sayedee was sentenced to death.

Tarok said Maruf was an accused in nine cases filed in connection with violence and the murder of Raihan.

Jessore AL leader killed

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jessore

An Awami League leader was hacked and then burnt alive in Abhaynagar upazila of Jessore last night.

Chaitanya Kumar Mondol, 48, youth and sports secretary of Magura ward Awami League, was in his drugstore at Magura bazaar around 9:00pm when a gang of 10 to 12 led by Mesbahur-Rahman having ties to the opposition BNP stormed into the shop and hacked him, witnesses said.

The attackers then set Chaitanya, a village doctor, on fire and closed the shutter of the shop, Mollah Khabir Uddin, officer-in-charge of Abhaynagar Police Station told The Daily Star.

Villagers in the neighbourhood did not come to rescue Chaitanya in fear, the OC said, adding they saw the gang members explode handmade crude bombs before leaving the scene.

The shop caught fire. Noapara fire fighters later doused the blaze.

On information, police recovered the dead body and sent it to the Jessore Medical College morgue for autopsy.

OC Khabir said police were hunting for Mesbah, who was an accused in a case filed for attacking Chaitanya and his brother Kartik Mondol and injuring them three months back.

3 killed, 5 hurt in train accidents

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Three people were killed and five others injured in separate incidents in the capital yesterday where different trains were involved.

Lal Mohammad, 50, a day labourer, resident of the railway slum near Moghbazar wireless gate, died at Kamalapur Railway Station when a train hit him around 9:00am.

Meanwhile, a child, Aminul Islam Chand, was hit by a train at the station when he rushed there to collect some chocolates thrown on the rail tracks, said his mother Amana Begum. Aminul died at Dhaka Medical hospital.

While early Saturday, a passenger hanging at the gate of an overcrowded train was killed and five others were injured when their hands slipped and they fell off the running vehicle in Nakhhalpara, said Dhaka Railway police.

Deceased Abdur Rahim, a Muslim devotee, was going to Tongi to attend Ijtema.

Voice against Big Three gets louder

FROM PAGE 1

the young people arranging human chains in different parts of the country, including in the capital's Shahbagh over the past few days. They carried festoons and placards with a popular slogan: "Ek dafa ek desh, Test khelbe Bangladesh" (One demand, one country; Bangladesh will play Tests).

The protests continued yesterday and got a bigger platform as the sports ministry and the BNP expressed their solidarity with the protesters.

State Minister for Sports, Biren Sikder, lent his support by saying, "It is a very important issue which we will have to think deeply before delivering the official statement, but I think the cricket board [BCB] should not go against the public sentiment."

The BNP also expressed its full solidarity with the cause and asked for definite steps regarding

the issue from the government.

Several former ICC bosses and former players have also stood against the proposal.

Yesterday, former ICC presidents Ehsan Mani and Malcolm Gray, former ICC chief executive Malcolm Speed, former presidents of the Pakistan Cricket Board Shaharyar Khan and Tauqir Zia and former West Indies captain Sir Clive Lloyd undersigned a letter to the ICC and all the full, associate and affiliate members of the ICC, to withdraw the draft proposal.

The letter explained the disastrous outcome the proposal, if passed, would have on the ambitions of spreading the game globally and how it would enrich the coffers of the "big three" at the expense of the other full, associate and affiliate members.

The proposal needs at least two-thirds (eight) votes out of the 10 full members of the ICC to be

passed, and as things stand, consensus against the proposal is growing among the other full members and pressure from former players and former ICC officials is also mounting.

The South African Cricket Board, the Pakistan Cricket Board and the Sri Lankan Cricket Board have already voiced their opposition to the proposal while the Bangladesh Cricket Board, despite initially taking a stance in its favour, has backtracked since coming under tremendous pressure from the media and the cricket loving people.

As protests continue, BCB President Nazmul Hasan Papon flew to Dubai yesterday to attend the crucial meeting. Cricket fans of Bangladesh will have their fingers crossed that the BCB boss takes a bold stance and unites with the other board members to negate the proposal and thereby save the future of Bangladesh cricket.

Lakhs join

FROM PAGE 1

participated in the munajat from Bangabhaban and Gano Bhaban while BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia joined the prayers from the rooftop of Atlas (Honda) Factory at Tongi.

Thousands of people from 32 districts including the capital and nearby districts thronged the riverbank since early morning.

Devotees from the rest of the districts will participate in the second phase of the Ijtema beginning from January 31. It will conclude with Akheri Munajat on February 2.

Many devotees, including women, took risks by boarding overcrowded buses and trains while others walked miles to reach the venue yesterday.

The traffic on Dhaka-Mymensingh highway remained suspended since yesterday midnight with the sea of people marching towards the Ijtema ground.

Bacchu Mia, a resident of Dohar, said, "I came here at 11:00 am on foot from Mohakhali of the capital."

Shohag, a resident of Jatrabari, said, "I have come to join the munajat with a hope of getting mercy of the Almighty Allah."

Parul Akhter of Konabari in Gazipur said she had to change vehicles thrice and had to walk miles to reach the venue.

Around 20,000 devotees from 103 countries including Qatar, Australia, Denmark and India joined the first phase.

As hundreds of thousands of devotees had to walk miles to return home from the Ijtema venue, many social organisations and individuals distributed fruit juice, water and dry food among the devotees at different points on their way home.

On Saturday, three devotees died of cardiac arrest, raising the death toll to nine since Thursday.

They are Siraz Mia, 50, of Siddique Bazar in the capital, Samir Uddin, 75, of Gopalganj upazila in Sylhet and Kashem Ali, 57, of Dohar upazila in Dhaka.

Tablighi Jamaat has been organising the Biswa Ijtema every year since 1946.

First Test starts today

FROM PAGE 1

two-match series at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium.

The match will begin at 9:30 am and will be broadcast live on BTV and Maasranga.

The main point of contention for Bangladesh remains their opening position. The team management will have to choose between uncapped Shamsur Rahman and experienced Imrul Kayes to partner Tamim Iqbal at the top today.

The team management might also

reckon to bring in Mahmudullah Riyad instead of Abdur Razzak as an extra batting option.

The Lankans have a nearly flawless record against Bangladesh, when it comes to Test cricket. Of the 14 matches that the two teams faced, Sri Lanka have won 13 of them. The only draw took place last year in March at Galle; a match which saw Mushfiqur become the first Bangladeshi to score a double hundred.

Despite the visitors' strong record, Sri

Lankan captain expects the series to be challenging.

"The Bangladeshis have improved vastly in the last few years and we will be going hard at them," he said in a press conference at Mirpur yesterday.

The Tigers' response was similarly aggressive. "Gone are the days when we played for draws or a few good sessions. We are going for a win," said Shakib Al Hasan on Saturday.

Bank looted

FROM PAGE 16

General Hasna Ahmed Moin entered the vault.

A total of Tk 16.40 crore was kept on a table in the second cell, he said.

"There are two cells in the vault. When we needed more money for transactions, we entered the second cell and found the table empty. Then we spotted the tunnel," said Mohsinul.

Anwar said the tunnel was dug from the room of a person named Sohel, who is on the run.

"Nobody knows much about Sohel. He rented the room two years ago and stayed there at times ... The building's owner could not be contacted as she lives in Dhaka".

Some digging tools were found inside the bank's vault. "Electricity lines from Sohel's room were used to light the tunnel. Undoubtedly, the miscreants spent many days digging the tunnel," said the police official.

None was arrested in connection with the robbery, he said.

"The bank staff are being quizzed." The eight policemen stationed at the bank have been suspended for negligence in duty, he said.

Marjia Akter, who lives close to the spot, said, "We heard loud sounds at midnight many times, but we could not figure out where they came from."

The Detective Branch of police and the Criminal Investigation Department are probing the incident.

Independent commission

FROM PAGE 1

academics and NGO representatives, according to the draft.

A meeting chaired by Information Minister Hasanul Haq Inu at the ministry approved the finalised draft which prohibits broadcasting any programme that infringes privacy in unwarranted manner.

Inu said the draft would be placed before the cabinet within 15 days for final approval. In the draft, high priority has been placed on ensuring people's fundamental rights and strengthening broadcasting agencies in the interest of a free flow

of information.

Prof AJM Shafiul Alam Bhuiyan, chairman of Television and Film Studies Department of Dhaka University and a member of the draft policy formulation committee, said, "One can lodge a complaint with the commission if privacy is infringed. However, private information of a person will not be considered as private if it has public interest."

Terming the formation of the independent commission the most important part of the policy, Shafiul said all broadcasters would have to prepare their own charter of duties and editorial

policies and the commission would guide them in this regard.

Prime Minister's Media Adviser Iqbal Sobhan Chowdhury, Information Secretary Murtaza Ahmed, Principal Information Officer M Aminul Islam, joint secretaries M Abul Hossain and M Amzad Hossain Khan, BTV Director General M Hamid, Bangladesh Betar Director General Kazi Akhtar Uddin Ahmed, Bangladesh Computer Association President Mostafa Zabbar, Channel i Chief Executive Officer Faridur Reza Sagor and Samoy TV CEO Ahmed Zubayer were also present at the meeting.

South Sudan fighting on despite ceasefire

AFP, Juba

South Sudan's government and rebels traded accusations yesterday that each had breached a ceasefire deal by attacking the other, but insisted they were committed to ending weeks of brutal conflict.

Both sides insist they were attacked and have responded only in self-defence.

The ceasefire, aimed at stopping six weeks of bitter fighting in which thousands have died, began Friday evening with both sides reporting clashes as the deadline approached.

Up to 10,000 people are believed to have been killed in the fighting pitting forces loyal to President Salva Kiir against a loose coalition of army defectors and ethnic militia nominally headed by sacked vice president Riek Machar, a seasoned guerrilla fighter.

Rebel military spokesman Lul Ruai Koang reported yesterday "clear violations" of the ceasefire, claiming government forces had attacked rebel positions in the northern oil state of Unity and in the volatile eastern Jonglei region.

"In all the government's offensives, our forces only acted in self-defence," he said in a statement.

The army has dismissed the reports, blaming the rebels for attacking their forces.

Both sides insist they are committed to the deal, and the clashes reported since the agreement was signed late Thursday

appear to have been localised skirmishes, not large-scale assaults.

Verifying reports from across the vast and remote regions of South Sudan -- large areas of which have poor if any telephone networks -- is a difficult task.

Army spokesman Philip Aguer said he had received no fresh reports of fighting yesterday.

But both sides have also said they doubt the other can fully control the forces on the ground.

Information Minister Michael Makuei, speaking on Saturday in Juba after returning from the talks in Ethiopia that hammered out the crucial deal, said the clashes were not unexpected, as the "rebels are indisciplined".

SCALE OF SUFFERING 'ALARMING'

The fighting has seen waves of brutal revenge attacks, as fighters and ethnic militia use the violence to loot and settle old scores, with the United Nations and rights workers reporting that horrific atrocities have been committed by both sides.

Rebel spokesman Koang said government orders to soldiers not to kill civilians was a sign that Kiir was "not in full control of security forces" either.

Ateny Wek Ateny, spokesman of President Salva Kiir, insisted on Saturday they would honour the agreement.

Hasina for single

FROM PAGE 16

Sobhan Golap.

Party sources said AL General Secretary Syed Ashraful Islam would also send letters containing similar directives to district and upazila level leaders in a couple of days.

In the letter, Hasina asked her party men to work unitedly and give their best efforts to bring success for the party backed candidates.

Sources also said Hasina, in the letter, directed the leaders to complete the process at least three days before the deadline for withdrawal of candidature.

Insiders said the party high-ups would not interfere in the candidate selection process.

"Under the present political circumstances, upazila election is most important. Centring this poll, your [grassroots leaders] activities will help the government as well as the party to move forward," read a section of the letter.

Stressing the needs for democratic practice within the AL, Hasina viewed that selecting the lone candidate could be a sign of the party unity.

AL candidates emerged victorious in most upazilas in the last upazila election held in 2009.

Four missing as launch hits boat

Rescue operation on

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Four people went missing after a launch hit a boat in the Buriganga river near the capital's Sadar Ghat yesterday.

The incident occurred when the boat with ten passengers was sailing hurriedly to catch the Barisal-bound launch and capsized around 7:55pm, said Phulbaria fire service officials quoting witnesses.

Six of them were rescued while three of them are undergoing treatment at Mitford hospital.

A team of four divers was searching the missing people till filing of this report around 9:45pm.