Failed to Lead?

SHAKHAWAT LITON

Chief Election Commissioner Kazi Rakibuddin Ahmad is tired of his job. He has sought leave from work several times. None, but HT Imam, the political adviser to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on March 15 has disclosed this interesting information. Imam did not tell us who has granted him the leave, but we presume her to be the prime minister.

Rakibuddin did not need to seek leave from the government. He is holding an extraordinary constitutional office. His office is completely independent. He can visit any foreign country for official or personal purpose without taking leave from anyone. His predecessor ATM Shamsul Huda has never sought permission or leave from the government to visit any foreign country for any official or personal purpose. The EC Secretariat used to issue an official order, which completed all the formalities.



CEC Kazi Rakibuddin Ahmad PHOTO: STAR FILE

The present CEC however has opted to seek leave the way a government officer does. Since the Pakistan era, he was a public servant for around 36 years. During that long period, he would seek leave from his higher authorities. He might have forgotten that he is now holding a constitutional office. If he willingly surrenders his independence to a partisan government, the constitutional provision can in no way protect the independence of the high office he is holding.

Be that as it may, Rakibuddin was granted the leave. He left Dhaka on March 3 for the US for around one and a half months. He is expected to return home in the middle of April. The crucial question is why did he leave the country at a time when the Election Commission is struggling to hold the upazila elections in a free and fair manner?

The EC held the controversial and voter-less parliamentary election on January 5. The BNP-led alliance's boycott has made the EC's job easier. And thanks to the AL-led government's manipulation, the EC did not even need to hold polls in 153 parliamentary constituencies, more than half of the total seats. In fact, the EC had little role to play in the January 5 polls. So, the January 5 election has certainly not made Rakibuddin tired.