

JP unhappy over JS body formation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In a surprise speech in parliament, senior Jatiya Party leader Kazi Feroz Rashid yesterday said although the JP is the main opposition party in the House, people do not consider it to be so as the public perception of the party is very poor.

The lawmaker made the comment following Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's move of not picking any JP lawmaker as the chief of any parliamentary standing committee.

Speaking on point of order, Feroz said, "It is an utter humiliation for the Jatiya Party although we are the main opposition in parliament. People are questioning us why we were not given any chairman post in the parliamentary watchdog committees."

He argued that if the JP lawmakers were made chiefs of some parliamentary standing committees, they could have played role in making parliament more effective.

The JP leader blasted the government for making him a member of the parliamentary standing committee on

the post and telecom ministry. "Although I have knowledge of the telecom sector as a former minister, I have been made the ninth member of the parliamentary watchdog on the post and telecom ministry. I would have been happier if I was not included in the committee."

In the last parliament (2009-2014), leader of the House Hasina had set a rare example by making three opposition MPs chiefs of parliamentary standing committees, including two from her archrival BNP. The move was widely appreciated by all.

But in the current parliament, the PM has denied opposition legislators the chairmanship of any of the 45 parliamentary bodies, which are constitutionally empowered to ensure parliament's oversight function.

The Awami League last week finalised the formation of the committees by making its own lawmakers chiefs of the parliamentary bodies. Opposition MPs, however, have been made members of different committees.

Azhar, Pak army

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blindfolded my brother and tied his hands behind his back. A Pakistani army snatched away my earrings. Then they took my brother away in a military car."

Through the window, Shova saw some Bengali civilians with the Pak army. "Among the Bengalis, I saw Islami Chhatra Sangathan leader Azharul. He used to study with us," she said.

With the help of Ratan Das, cook of the college guest house, she then contacted his brother's student Salahuddin, who had some good connections inside the cantonment, to know about the fate of her brother.

"About two hours later, Salahuddin informed us that all the detainees were dead. They were killed half-buried near Damdama Bridge," she described.

Fearing further attacks, she left the college campus and went to her Pirojpur village to join the rest of her family members and later went to India with them.

Shova, who now lives in Kolkata, joined a camp of female freedom fighters in Gobra in India and took nursing training. She served freedom fighters in their camps inside the Indian territory.

The proceeding of the case was adjourned till tomorrow when the defence is supposed to cross-examine the witness.

On November 12, 2013, the Tribunal-1 indicted Azharul, former president of Rangpur district unit Islami Chhatra Sangha, the then student wing of Jamaat-e-Islami, on six charges of murder, genocide and crimes against humanity committed during the Liberation War in 1971.



Boats of fishermen and egg collectors fill the Halda river, the country's lone natural spawning ground for freshwater carps.

FILE PHOTO

Halda dying due to dams

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The Local Government and Engineering Department (LGED) constructed the 4.5 metre-high dam in 2012 at a cost of around Tk 10 crore without conducting any environmental impact study.

Carp fishes spawn in the Halda from where fishermen collect eggs, and then keep those in small ponds on the riverbank for 18 hours. Once fish fry are hatched, they send those to different parts of the country.

The increase of salinity in the river now threatens the livelihood of several thousand fishermen and egg collectors.

Moreover, around a five-kilometre stretch of the river next to the dam remains dry for around three months from January.

Though the dam was built to facilitate irrigation for Boro and IRRI cultivation on 10,000 acres of land in Bhujpur, Painsong and Narayanhat unions of Fatikchhari, three tea estates

-- Achhiya, Halda valley and Khoiyachhari -- draw water from its reservoir for plantation through a three-km-long pipeline.

The LGED is building a similar dam downstream of the Bhujpur dam at the mouth of Harualjuri feeder canal. The dam scheduled to be inaugurated on May 6 will reduce water flow further and worsen the situation.

"If they build more dams, it will harm us further. Last year, egg production dropped significantly. Only God knows what will happen this year," said Kamal Uddin Saodagar, an egg collector from Gorduara in Hathazari.

Halda Bachao Andolon has demanded that the government refrain from building dams on tributaries of the river or canals linked to it.

The 81-km-long river that originates from Badnatali Hill Ranges in Ramghar upazila of Khagrachhari flows through Fatikchhari, Hathazari, Raizan and Chittagong Sadar. At

Kalurghat, it meets with the Karnaphuli river which empties into the Bay of Bengal.

Asked whether the LGED carried out an environmental impact assessment (EIA) before building the dam, Project Director Khalifa Md Abul Kalam Azad said, "Yes, we conducted an EIA before implementing the project."

But consulting firm Bets Consulting Service Ltd, which conducted the study on the LGED project, said it carried out a feasibility study on the rubber dam, not any environmental impact assessment.

"Our focus was on the structural strength of the dam, not on its environmental impact," said Aftab Alam Ansary, a consultant of the firm.

Interestingly, the firm was asked to carry out the study in November 2012, around eight months after the dam went into operation in March.

"The dam was already built when we were asked to conduct the study."

The firm completed the study in January last year, Aftab said.

Asked about it, the project director said they had conducted a study before building the dam, and later asked Bets Consulting Service Ltd to do another study on the project.

In reply to a query why a five-kilometre stretch next to the dam remains dry, Kalam said the river shrinks to a narrow stream during this period of the year.

The government has formed a committee headed by Anisur Rahman, joint secretary at the Fisheries and Livestock Department, to conduct an assessment survey on the Halda river, he said.

It would not take more than a year to complete the assessment, according to Kalam.

He said they might not need to retain water up to 16 feet deep in the reservoir, and could bring it down to 12 feet.

Treatment shrouded

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The BCL activists, all being allegedly involved in torturing Saad with iron rods, cricket stumps and hockey sticks over a dispute centring on a class tutorial, left the hospital around 11:00pm.

Mizanur said doctors confirmed them that Saad did not have any injury in the head.

The Daily Star spoke to the surgery ward chief Prof Ashraf Uddin, who said a few doses of painkillers and an antibiotic injection were all that had been administered on Saad.

Referring to the postmortem report, the MMCH Director Brig Gen Fashiur Rahman tried to misguide these correspondents by insisting that Saad had blunt injuries all over the body from the neck down, but not in the head.

"Since it was not an emergency case, we decided to examine his whole body the next day," said Fashiur.

The Daily Star obtained a copy of the postmortem report that reads: "Extensive bruise of different size and shape found throughout the whole body. One haematoma [clot of blood] 1.5*1.5 inches size over occipital region of scalp.

"Extradural and subdural [two of the five layers that protect the brain] haemorrhage found in occipital region. Haemorrhage found in occipital lobe of brain."

Still, Saad was conscious. And weary about his treatment, he stayed at the hospital that night.

He had called his brother Muaz Ibne Momtaz around 1:30am on April 1 by borrowing a patient's cell phone.

"What I'm receiving cannot be called treatment," Muaz recalled Saad telling him.

This newspaper consulted doctors in Mymensingh and Dhaka about the postmortem report. They spoke on condition of anonymity as the case was under investigation.

"The head injury was severe and obviously life threatening. It had affected scalp layers finally reaching to the brain at the back of the head," said one of the physicians.

According to the postmortem report, Saad's liver was ruptured and abdominal cavity was full of clotted blood.

The report concludes: "The cause of death was due to hemorrhagic and neurogenic shock resulting from the above mentioned injuries."

Neurogenic is a complex medical condition born out of fear. It is not necessarily related to injuries: even people's fear of ghosts can cause it and it alone can cause deaths, doctors said.

According to them, Saad's injuries, that included a "dislocated left wrist," were enough to produce a neurogenic shock, which presumably aggravated every minute due to lax medical care.

Explaining further, doctors cited instances of cases of road accidents as bad as this or even worse.

"Many lives can be saved through timely diagnosis, surgery and proper care of the injuries," said a doctor at Birdem hospital in the capital.

According to a physician at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University, "He [Saad] was misdiagnosed and an immediate surgery could have saved his life."

Saad made his last call to his elder brother Muaz around 9:40am on April 1, after he was taken from MMCH to a nearby private clinic, Trauma Centre. He breathed his last on the floor at the centre's reception half an hour later.

"Saad sounded happier being convinced that he was receiving better treatment at Trauma Centre," said Muaz.

The Daily Star investigation reveals Saad did not receive any treatment except for an intravenous saline at Trauma Centre either.

The private clinic does not treat risky patients, said Alamgir Hossain, receptionist at the centre.

An unidentified youth took Saad in his care from MMCH around 6:00am on April 1 for having some tests, including a CT scan and X-rays, done on him. All these tests, prescribed by the on-duty doctor almost nine hours earlier, are available at the government hospital.

Ward Boy Rofiz while pushing the stretcher heard Saad having a conversation with the youth, who apparently decided to get Saad out of MMCH for better treatment.

Saad was taken out of the government's health facility without any authorisation from the doctor, who simply listed the case as "absconding" at 9:00pm that day as the patient did not return by then.

The hospital director, Fashiur, finds no problem in patients getting out of the hospital without any authorisation. According to hospital documents, 73 patients "absconded" in the first five days of this month alone.

The director is rather interested to add buttonhole CCTV cameras to the list of the already existing 64 cameras on the hospital premises for heightening the security.

He claimed to have handed over to police the footage containing Saad's admittance and departure. "Relatives can decide where it is better to treat their patients."

Many patients at the MMCH thought that Saad would get special treatments since he was a university student.

But now we know he is just one of the 73 "absconders" who ended up losing his life as help came too late for him. His death put the government health service management under scanner, with private medical facilities sprouting in their hundreds all over the country, particularly in the old district town of Mymensingh, either owned or patronised by doctors of government hospitals.

Fakhrul freed on HC bail

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP acting secretary general Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir was released on bail from prison yesterday evening.



Fakhrul walked out of Kashimpur Central Jail in Gazipur around 7:30 pm, Sayrul Kabir Khan, a media wing staff of BNP chief Khaleida Zia, told The Daily Star.

Earlier on Monday, the High Court granted six months' bail to Fakhrul in a murder case, clearing the way for his release from jail.

Police filed the case with Ramna Police Station on December 1 last year, a day after an unknown passer-by was killed during an anti-government demonstration by the BNP-led alliance at Malibagh Chowdhuripara in the capital.

On March 16, a Dhaka court sent Fakhrul and two other senior BNP leaders to jail in connection with four cases filed with Ramna and Shahbagh police stations on charges of

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Shouting

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lead to deterioration in discipline standards, it was claimed.

Researchers said that "reasoning with children" was more likely to have a positive impact on their behaviour at a young age.

But the study -- presented at the Royal Economic Society's annual conference this week -- warned that it was difficult to establish a direct link between one parenting style and outcomes because of the influence of other factors such as social class.

Wealthier parents are more likely to reason with their child but also more likely to provide healthy meals, structured bedtimes and frequent physical activities which have a knock-on effect on children's wellbeing, it said.

The study suggested that children in poor households were "more affected by their mother's parenting style" than in wealthier families.

The disclosure will add to growing concerns over the prevalence of poor parenting skills in large numbers of British families.

The study was based on an analysis of almost 19,000 children born in the first two years of the millennium. Data was collected from parents just before children's first birthday then when they turned three, five and seven.

2 ECs starkly different

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The EC has deployed 659 officers drawn from the central revenue services like the Income Tax and Customs and Excise departments, in all 543 parliamentary constituencies and state legislature seats where polling will be held over the next 35 days. They have been reporting cash seizures since the poll schedule was announced on March 5.

According to official data till Monday, Election Expenditure Observers had seized Rs 18.31 crore in Tamil Nadu, Rs 14.40 crore in Maharashtra, Rs 10.46 crore in Uttar Pradesh and over Rs four crore in Punjab, apart from smaller sums confiscated in other states.

The EC has also asked the Central Board of Direct Taxes and the Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU), the two agencies under the finance ministry, to keep a strict vigil while elections are on.

Chief Election Commissioner VS Sampath has acknowledged that to ensure that the expenditure ceiling of Rs 70 lakh for each candidate is not breached by the candidates has been one of the biggest challenges faced by the Commission. "The use of money power is one of the foremost challenges, particularly in some states," he added.

CONTROL OVER ADMIN

On receiving complaints, the EC on Monday ordered the transfer of some officials, including five superintendents of police, one district magistrate and two additional district magistrates in West Bengal ahead of the polls.

West Bengal goes to the polls from April 17 in five phases.

Mamata Banerjee, chief minister of West Bengal, was furious at the EC for ordering the transfer of officials in her state ahead of polling. "I challenge the Election Commission to remove anybody while I am in charge," she declared yesterday.

"How can the Election Commission transfer and name new officers without consulting the state government?" asked the chief minister.

In New Delhi, the EC did not respond to questions on Mamata's challenge, saying it would come out with a press statement if needed.

But things took a different turn when media, quoting sources in the EC, ran reports yesterday that the EC has the option of cancelling or postponing polls in certain West Bengal constituencies if the officers are not transferred.

This worked like tonic. Mamata calmed down. Her government yesterday reportedly agreed on transferring eight officials of her state.

The state government has, however, reportedly requested that the EC choose the officials who will replace the five superintendents of police, one district magistrate and two additional district magistrates, from a list of names it has forwarded.

This list, which reportedly does not include the names of officials that the EC had picked as replacements, was forwarded to the panel in a letter written by West Bengal's chief secretary yesterday morning.

The chief secretary also reportedly sought a reconsideration of its decision on the part of the EC, reports NDTV.

In February 2012, union law minister Salman Khurshid was compelled to apologise to the EC.

At an election rally for the ruling Congress candidate, Khurshid had violated the code of conduct relating to the Uttar Pradesh state polls by promising a nine percent sub quota to the minorities.

The EC then wrote a strong-worded letter to President Pratibha Patil, seeking her intervention. Finally, Khurshid apologised.

"I treat this matter as unfortunate and regret the statement. I bow to the wisdom of the EC and remain personally committed to ensure that such situations do not arise," Khurshid said in a letter to then chief election commissioner SY Quraishi.

In Bangladesh, the recent upazila parishad elections have exposed the fragile state of the EC. It was helplessly unable to ensure its control over the administration during the polls, which were marred by widespread rigging and violence.

The EC also failed to contain the use of black money in the polls. It did not make any effort to deploy as well as redeploy officials to ensure that no candidate exceeded the ceiling of his/her expenditure in the election campaign.

In the absence of monitoring, candidates had unlimited freedom to spend unauthorised money to influence the polls. The EC was also unable to prevent unabated violations of the electoral code of conduct by candidates, MPs and even ministers.

The past EC, led by ATM Shamsul Huda, had deployed the EC's own officials in some parliamentary by-polls and local government elections to monitor the enforcement of the electoral code of conduct and to check the use of unauthorised money in electioneering. This approach worked effectively.

But the practice could not be developed further, thanks to the current EC's indifference to carrying further ahead its predecessors' good efforts.

MONEY LAUNDERING

ACC grills wife of Mosharraf

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Anti-Corruption Commission has found involvement of BNP leader Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain's wife in laundering money to an overseas bank account, ACC Deputy Director Ahsan Ali said yesterday.

After a two-hour grilling, Bilkis Akhter Hossain confessed to holding a joint bank account with her husband in Lloyds TSB Offshore Private Banking (Guernsey) Ltd in St Peter Port, UK, Ahsan told reporters at the ACC's headquarters in the capital.

On February 6, the ACC filed a case against Mosharraf in connection with laundering over Tk 9.53 crore to the UK bank.

The commission is now considering starting a legal case against Bilkis, said Ahsan, also the investigation officer of the case.

Bilkis, however, denied making any comment after the grilling, saying she had told whatever she had to say before the commission. Earlier, Mosharraf was quizzed in the case.

According to the case statement, the BNP leader amassed the amount between 2001 and 2006 by exerting

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Kejriwal

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reached up to him, first garlanded him and then struck him hard on his left cheek.

The attacker was immediately overpowered by AAP supporters. The man has been identified as Laali who reportedly accused the AAP chief of "betraying auto-drivers."

Thousands of auto-drivers in Delhi actively had campaigned for Kejriwal and AAP before the Delhi state legislature elections in December last year in which the AAP scored an impressive second spot with 28 seats, just behind BJP.

On last Friday, the AAP chief was punched while campaigning at a place in south Delhi. Then too, the attacker had been beaten up by AAP workers before he was handed over to the police.

After yesterday's attack, Kejriwal said on microblogging site Twitter that "I am just thinking - why am I being repeatedly attacked? Who r the master-minds? What do they want? What do they achieve?... Let them tell me place n time. I will come there. Let them beat me as much as they want, but will that solve the country's problems?"

The former chief minister of New Delhi has been attacked a number of times in the past.

On March 28, he was attacked by a man, who claimed to be a supporter of Anna Hazare, during his election rally in Haryana.