

## Police form

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The government is reluctant to approve the bureau, which was supposed to look into militancy-related crimes across the country, due to objections from some other agencies working on militancy, police sources said.

The Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime unit is expected to start work next month, as the government has already completed all formalities regarding its formation.

Police officials working on militancy and counter terrorism in the DMP and the Detective Branch (DB) of police in particular would be incorporated into the unit.

"The unit will work to combat cyber crimes, terror financing and mobile banking related crimes," Monirul Islam, joint commissioner of DB, told The Daily Star yesterday.

Members from Special Weapons And Tactics (SWAT), bomb disposal unit, and the dog squad would also be included in the unit to be led by a police official with the rank of a deputy inspector general (DIG).

The unit would also have an additional DIG, four deputy commissioners, 10 additional deputy commissioners, and 20 assistant commissioners.

The rest would be inspectors, sub-inspectors, assistant sub-inspectors and constables.

Atiqur Rahman, DIG at the police headquarters, said they had gotten 7,000 newly recruited policemen for the DMP and the unit would be manned by some of the new policemen.

The unit would collect information and data on militants and transnational criminals at home and abroad, monitor their activities, and arrest them, police sources said.

They said officials with specialties and foreign training on counter-terrorism would be posted in the unit.

"We'll ask the authorities not to transfer officials with specialties in counter-terrorism elsewhere, and that they be allowed to work in the unit at least for three to five years," Monirul said.

## Needle-free life

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transplantation, an effective but experimental diabetes treatment.

Using the technique pancreatic islets - clusters of insulin-producing cells from the pancreas - are injected into a recipient's liver.

Ahead of the operation the cells are kept frozen to preserve them, but the freezing process can damage the cells because it produces sharp ice crystals.

Now researchers from the Okinawa Institute of Technology and Science Graduate University (OIST) are suggesting using a hydrogel capsule made with alginate, a natural polymer extracted from seaweed, to avoid potential cell damage during freezing.

The capsule's structure includes non-freezable bound water which protects the cells from ice damage.

Further, the technique could reduce the risk of the transplanted tissue being rejected by the host as the capsule membrane prevents direct contact with the host's cells, while still allowing small molecules to pass across it.

The project is being led by Professor Amy Shen, and working in collaboration with the University of Washington and Wuhan University of Technology.

## Polls free, fair

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except for some sporadic incidents.

Asked if the commission was satisfied with the polls, he said: "It's not a matter of satisfaction. It's our duty and we are performing it. You [media people] will evaluate it."

About BNP's complaints of vote rigging, the CEC said they received the highest number of complaints from the party. "We verified BNP's claims and took steps wherever necessary."

Although the BNP demanded re-elections in around 1,500 polling centres in 157 municipalities, Rakibuddin said the party called for re-polling in only 60 centres.

Apart from Madhabdi municipality in Narsingdi, the EC postponed elections in 38 polling centres of 18 municipalities due to anomalies, he added.

### AL BRIEFING

Speaking at a press conference at the party president's Dhanmondi office, AL Joint General Secretary Mahbubul Alam Hanif said yesterday's municipal polls were more free and fair than any other previous local elections.

He thanked the BNP for staying in the polls race till the end and urged all the political parties to accept the polls results. "We all should be prepared to accept the results whatever they might be."

Meanwhile, prime minister's Political Affairs Adviser HT Imam claimed the elections were held in a "congenial atmosphere" except for some stray incidents. He accused the police of causing some of the incidents.

Imam was talking to newsmen after handing over a letter to the CEC at the latter's office in the afternoon. He termed BNP's allegations of vote rigging blatant lies.

## Freedom of press

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It said prejudice to or interference with the due course of any judicial proceeding, interference or obstruction of the administration of justice in any other manner, interference with the court's officers, parties and witnesses, abuse of process of the court and disobedience of an order of the court are among the categories of contempt of court.

"The first category is scandalising the court or a judge. The second is the interference with the administration of justice. The third is disobedience of an order of the court," said the SC.

"Another category is writings which are calculated to obstruct or interfere with the due course of justice which is also contempt. Any insinuation to a judge which undermines the authority of the court is another type of contempt," the top court said in the 182-page judgment.

"Another type of contempt is scurrilous abuse of a judge or court or attacks on the personal character of a judge," it said.

About sanction of law with regard to curtailing of the freedom of the press, the SC said, "The law must fall squarely within one or more heads of restrictions specified in article 39 namely, (a) security of the state, (b) friendly relations with foreign states, (c) public order, (d) decency or morality, (e) contempt of court, and (f) defamation or incitement to an offence."

The court said restriction on freedom of expression cannot be imposed on omnibus grounds as "in the interest of the general public".

"The restriction must be reasonable. In other words, it must not be excessive or disproportionate. The procedure and the manner of imposition of the restriction also must be just, fair, and reasonable," it said.

The media may play a positive role in the administration of justice, and it has played such role, according to the SC.

On August 13, the apex court

sentenced the editor and publisher of the daily Janakantha and its executive editor to confinement in the courtroom for over three hours for contempt of court by publishing an article relating to war crimes convict Salauddin Quader Chowdhury, who was executed on November 22.

A six-member bench of the apex court headed by Chief Justice Surendra Kumar Sinha also fined the two journalists Tk 10,000 each.

"All elements of grave contempt of court are present in the impugned article," the SC had said about the write-up published in the daily on July 16.

Executive Editor Swadesh Roy wrote the piece headlined "Saka Paribarar Totporota! Palabar Path Kome Gechhe (Lobbying by Salauddin Quader's family! Escape route getting narrowed)".

In the full judgment released yesterday, the judges said, "We were astonished and bewildered on reading the remarks and comments made in the impugned article. We cannot believe that a sensible writer can make such comments."

"The writer cannot publish the same [article] because this is completely internal matter of the administration of justice that a puisne judge had discussed with the chief justice over two pending cases, expressing the desire to be included in the bench."

"The chief justice has exclusive power to constitute any bench for hearing any matter before it and the High Court Division, and the chief justice being the guardian of the judiciary cautiously constitutes the benches. It is one of the crucial jobs for a chief justice," the judges said.

Chief Justice Surendra Kumar Sinha has written the 182-page judgment. Five other judges have agreed with him.

The five other judges are Justice Md Abdul Wahhab Miah, Justice Nazmun Ara Sultana, Justice Syed Mahmud Hossain, Justice Muhammad Imman

## Police witnessed

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the cops helped supporters of AL mayor hopeful stuff ballot boxes at midnight.

Meanwhile, around 20 to 25 Chhatra League men stormed Mozharuddin Biswas Degree College polling centre in Patuakhali and snatched ballot papers and stuffed those in the boxes around 9:30am.

Panicked, voters, including female voters, ran away from the centre.

Though police and Border Guard Bangladesh members were deployed 50 metres off the centre, they did not do anything, voters and witnesses claimed.

The rowdy BCL cadres also handled at least four journalists who went there to cover the incident of ballot box stuffing. They also tried to snatch cameras from the journalists.

The police and BGB members did not take action in this case as well.

Inspector Milon Mitra, who was in-charge there, said he was not aware of any such incident.

GM Nazrul Islam, assistant presiding officer of the centre, said he tried to stop the BCL activists, but could not do so as the BCL men threatened him of dire consequences once the voting was over.

In Kuakata municipality of Patuakhali, some 20 to 25 Jubo League men snatched ballot papers and seals, stamped and stuffed those in favour of AL candidate Abdul Berek Mollah at Panchupara Government Primary School polling station around 9:30am, witnesses said.

"I had nothing to do. I was a victim of the situation," said Presiding Officer Morshed Alam.

On duty policemen did not take any action, witnesses added.

As supporters of BNP mayor candidate tried to prevent the Jubo League men from stuffing ballot papers, a chase and counter-chase took place between them.

Police fired 25 shots in the air to bring the situation under control.

Inspector AKM Tariqul Islam who was in-charge there said being informed he went to the spot and dispersed the groups.

In Jessore Sadar municipality, police did nothing to stop the ruling party men who took control of Institute Government Primary School voting centre and allowed only Awami League men to enter the centre and cast their votes.

The ruling party activists also did not allow any polling agent except the ones working for them thanks to negligence of the on-duty police.

Contacted, Sub-Inspector Sarajeet claimed that the voting was going on peacefully.

Rezaur Rahman, presiding officer of the centre, too said "fair" voting was going on.

Visiting Police Lines School centre, Zila School centre, Abdus Samad

Memorial Academy centre, and MM College centre in Jessore between 9:00am and 4:00pm, our correspondent found policemen playing the role of silent spectators when an AL candidate's supporters prevented voters from entering the centre, and stuffed ballot boxes.

While the officer-in-charge of Jessore Kotwali Police Station was claiming that voting was going on a free and fair manner, a bomb exploded in a nearby polling station just then, much to the embarrassment of the OC.

At Zila School centre, a female agent of BNP mayor aspirant was arrested as she threw a ballot box on the floor, protesting ballot box stuffing. The district's deputy commissioner, superintendent of police and a magistrate were present at the centre at that time.

Talking to The Daily Star, she claimed that she was exasperated when she saw some youths of the age of her son were stuffing ballot papers.

Mir Shafin Ahmed, assistant superintendent of police in Jessore, refuted the allegation of police inactivity.

In Magura Sadar municipality, ruling party activists captured Kadirpara Government Community Primary polling station and started stuffing ballots in front of policemen, reports a correspondent.

Contacted, Returning Officer Azim Ahmed declined to comment.

In Kalia municipality of Narail, police and BGB members did not do anything when the supporters of the ruling party drove out polling agents of independent candidates and stuffed ballots at all six booths at Purba Kalia Government Model Primary School around 8:30am, reports a correspondent.

On duty policemen at the centre refused to comment.

Presiding Officer Hasanuzzaman, however, admitted that there was stuffing of ballot boxes.

At Gahira Degree College polling centre under Raozan municipality in Chittagong, policemen allegedly guarded some youths as they cast fake votes at a couple of polling booths around 8:15am, witnesses said.

Wishing anonymity, an assistant presiding officer of the centre said, "We've nothing to do. If a university student slaps me, then what can I say?"

Contacted, Humayun, sub-inspector of Raozan Police Station, said they were not able to do anything.

In Sitakunda municipality of Chittagong, police asked one of our Chittagong correspondents to leave the Ponthichila High School voting centre when he went to notify on-duty police officer of ballot box stuffing. There were two voting centres at the school.

The EC had allocated around Tk 55 crore for law enforcement agencies for the election.

## 'Early' the concept

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and law enforcers were seen helping the AL men rig the vote.

To cover up all these irregularities, polls officials, cops and members of other law enforcement agencies restricted the access of the media to the polling stations in many municipalities. In some centres, ballot-stuffing by law enforcers took place even in presence of the media.

In many centres, voters were given ballot papers for councillors only while ruling party men themselves cast votes for their mayor candidates.

At Kabirpur Govt Primary School in Jhenaidah, for example, polling agents of boat symbol were seen stuffing ballots in front of police personnel around 11:00am.

Police first intercepted The Daily Star correspondent when he was entering the centre. Later, cops took away the ballot papers and asked the boat symbol agents to return to their seats.

Some women voters returned home without voting as they were not given the ballot papers.

In fact, vote rigging took place in all the five polling booths of the centre. A constable was heard asking women to vote for boat.

AL men and supporters of the party's mayor candidate Shahiduzzaman Selim captured two centres -- Dudshar and Sugarcane -- Kotchandpur municipality and started voting for boat symbol around 8:40am.

Following complaints of BNP-supported mayoral candidate, presiding officers of the centres looked into the allegations and found those true. Later, 300 ballots of Dudshar centre and 50 votes of Sugarcane centre were cancelled.

Sheikh Sajjad Hossain, presiding officer of Dudshar centre, said some outsiders entered the centre forcibly and cast votes for boat.

In Shailakupa municipality, Rajib Hasan, son of AL mayor candidate Kazi Ashraf Azam and his men stormed the City College Centre to stuff ballots. Proof of it was later found when presiding officer informed that 900 votes, out of 1,500 votes, were cast by 10:00am.

Hasan and many BCL and Jubo League men were freely moving inside the centre while BNP mayor candidate Khalilur Rahman was not allowed to enter.

A group of journalists went to PTI New Admin and Academic Building centre in Munsiganj around 3:25pm and found a man stashing ballot papers inside a ballot box at a polling booth on the first floor. He fled when journalists came.

Some women alleged they were waiting in line for long but were not allowed inside the booth for voting.

In Bhola, presiding officer Nazrul Alam was seen giving ballot papers to AL men for stuffing at Abdul Jabbar College centre. He fled sensing the presence of newsmen.

AL-backed councillor candidate and his supporters also stuffed ballots on the first floor of Charnoabad Govt Primary School centre.

Supporters of ruling party mayor candidate Bipul Hawlader stuffed ballot at two Mozahar Uddin Biswas Degree College and Fazil Madrasa centres in Kalapara municipality.

Voting began smoothly at Biswas Degree College centre, but a group

led by former BCL general secretary of Putuakhali district Shahanur Rahman Sujon stuffed ballots for Bipul for about an hour from 9:45am.

Split in groups, they entered all the six booths of the centre, snatched away ballot papers from polls officials, put seals on boat symbol and put them in ballot boxes as the on-duty police members looked on. A number of journalists were present at the time, but nobody cared.

Earlier, one of them went to the room of the presiding officer and snatched all the ballot papers.

The story of Fazil Madrasa centre was, however, different. Journalists, including the Patuakhali correspondent of The Daily Star, found a ballot book where supporters of AL-backed councillor candidate Mahbub Alam and put seals on his symbol, 'panjabi'.

Assistant Presiding Officer GM Nazrul Islam expressed helplessness to The Daily Star, saying that some cadres threatened him with dire consequences if he did not hand the ballot books over to them.

The Daily Star correspondent witnessed casting of fake votes and ballot-stuffing at two polling centres at Sonargaon municipality in Narayanganj.

Around 3:30pm, when fresh vote casting started after a suspension for more than one-and-a-half hours for irregularities, AL candidate's agents were seen stuffing ballot boxes with the help of an assistant presiding officer at booth-4 of Sahapur Talimul Quran Madrasa centre.

An agent of AL mayor candidate Fazle Rabbi asked this correspondent to go out of the booth. The agent then openly put seals on several ballots for the party candidate and stuffed them in a ballot box.

This continued till five minutes after voting ended at 4:00pm.

Several men cast fake votes at the same centre. Two of them were handed over to the police by the presiding officer.

Around 1:50pm, supporters of the AL candidate were seen stuffing ballot boxes at Vattapur Model Government Primary School. As a photographer of this newspaper took snaps of this, they got angry and forced him out of the booth on the first floor of the building.

Later, more men of the candidate joined the stuffing. Police were reluctant to prevent them. The AL candidate was inside the centre for more than an hour.

In Jessore Sadar municipality, AL men captured all the 55 stations. In the MM College centre, all the 2,719 male votes were cast by 2:00pm (that's more than seven votes per minute).

Presiding Officer Mustafizur Rahman completed the vote count even before the voting hours ended.

On hearing the news, Additional District Magistrate Sohel Hasan rushed to the centre to ask the presiding officer how this could happen and why he counted the ballots during the voting hours.

At the Institute Govt Primary School centre, The Daily Star correspondent found AL men guarding the entrance and barring all voters, except the ruling party supporters, when voting began at 8:00am. Inside all the eight booths, ruling party men were busy stuffing ballot boxes.

The AL men took away the accredi-

tation card of The Daily Star correspondent and forced him out of the centre with the help of police around 9:35am.

At Purbo Kaliya Govt Model Primary School centre in Narail's Kaliya municipality, some people were putting seals on ballot papers around 8:30am. Polls officials and members of police and BGB looked on as silent spectators.

On information, the returning officer suspended voting for two and a half hours.

In Magura sadar municipality, an 80-year-old woman expressed grievances as she could not vote.

"They took away the ballot paper from my hand and said they would cast the vote on my behalf," she said while coming out of Kadirpara Govt Community Primary School centre around 12:45pm.

"This is the birthplace of our candidate. We promised him some extra votes from this centre," said Arab Ali, an agent of boat symbol, while stuffing ballot boxes.

Similar incidents also took place in three out of six municipalities in Jamalpur. The three municipalities are Jamalpur Sadar, Sarishabari and Dewanganj.

In Sarishabari, all votes were cast even before the voting began, alleged BNP mayor candidate Foyazul Kabir Talukdar Shahin.

In Sadar municipality, voting ended by 11:00am and in Dewanganj by 11:30am, according to voters, BNP candidates and AL rebels.

Hafizur Rahman Badsha, Jatiya Party's mayor candidate there, could not cast his vote. When he went to Jamalpur Zila School Centre at 9:30am, he saw his vote had been cast. He then boycotted polls.

In Gopalganj, many voters alleged they could vote although they waited in long queues for a long time.

"Agents of the Awami League-nominated candidate told us to cast votes for councillors only. They [the agents] said: 'We will cast your vote for mayor,'" alleged a voter at Amena School centre.

The picture was similar in all the 19 polling centres there, voters said.

With the help of police, supporters of boat symbol cast about 500 votes in Janarandi Govt Primary School centre and 800 votes in Kastagar Govt Primary School centre in Madaripur between 3:00am and 4:00am yesterday.

Madaripur Deputy Commissioner Kalamuddin Biswas admitted it and said voting was cancelled there.

When votes were being counted in various centres of Thakurgaon Sadar municipality, AL men confined the DC to his office for about four hours from 7:15pm, sensing BNP candidate's win there. They allegedly forced the DC to suspend voting of five centres, eventually changing the results.

At Haji Enayet Ali High School centre in Tarabot municipality of Narayanganj, there was hardly any voter in the morning. Around noon, a large number of voters lined up. In a live coverage, a Jamuna TV reporter asked some voters to show their voter ID cards and tell their fathers' names, but they failed.

## 1m reach

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migration patterns.

The conflict has forced more than four million people to flee the country, but until this year, an overwhelming majority of them were spread among Syria's neighbours.

While Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey continue to host massive numbers of Syrians displaced by war, the UN figures show that beginning in the spring increasingly large numbers of Syrians resolved to reach Europe.

In June, more than 50,000 people crossed the sea, a number that shot up to over 150,000 by September, culminating in a record 218,000 crossings in October.

After Syrians, Afghans were the second largest group at 21 percent of arrivals this year, followed by Iraqis at eight percent and Eritreans at four.

Other migrants originated in Pakistan, Nigeria, Somalia, Sudan, Gambia and Mali, but in relatively small numbers.

The UN has warned that there may be no let up in sea crossings next year, especially if efforts to end the conflict in Syria continue to falter.

Meanwhile, rising anti-migrant rhetoric continues in parts of Europe, with Czech President Milos Zeman called the current wave of refugees "an organised invasion" in remarks at the weekend.

Hungary too has taken a hard-line stance on migrants.

Last week, UNHCR and the Council of Europe accused Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban of portraying those fleeing conflict as "criminals, invaders and terrorists based on their religious beliefs and places of origin".

## BNP rejects polls results

FROM PAGE 1

demanding fresh elections to around 157 municipalities for "widespread electoral irregularities."

The hour-long meeting at Khaleda's office, starting at 9:00pm, also discussed a demonstration in protest at yesterday's "farical" and "stage-managed" polls, said meeting sources.

The party would formally announce its decision about rejecting the election results this morning, BNP acting secretary general Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir told reporters after the meeting.

Later, Khaleda met the chiefs of some components of the BNP-led 20-party alliance.

In both the meetings, the coalition leaders demanded resignation of the chief election commissioner, said sources.

The combine plans to hold a rally in the capital on the second anniversary of last year's January 5 national elections that it boycotted.

Earlier in the day, Fakhrul at a briefing at Khaleda's Gulshan office, said, "As per the information we have received so far, more than 1,000 polling centres were captured in 157 municipalities. The figure will be much higher and the number of municipalities will be at least 200 where ballot box-stuffing took place. We still did not get the complete scenario of the elections."

He said BNP candidates did not get any remedy despite repeatedly lodging complaints with the EC throughout the day.

"We demand fresh elections at the centres where the ruling party indulged in vote rigging, forcing our agents out."

"We earlier had said the election would not be free and fair. It was a farical and stage-managed election. The polls results were pre-set."

"The polls have once again proved no election can be free and fair under Awami League," Fakhrul added.

Jatiya Party, the main opposition in parliament that contested the polls in 76 municipalities, also demanded fresh elections to 26 municipalities, citing similar reasons.

"Overall, the municipality polls were not held in a free and fair manner. Sporadic incidents of violence took place in the polls for which the ruling Awami League should be blamed," JP Senior Joint Secretary General Rejaul Islam said at a post-poll press conference at the party's Kakrail central office.

He alleged that AL men captured polling centres and drove out their polling agents from different centres in 26 municipalities.

Bangladesher Samajtantrik Dal, Khelafat Majlish, and Tarikat Federation that contested the polls in one municipality each also alleged that the EC had once again failed to win people's confidence in it.

Three BNP teams led by three senior leaders were present at the commission throughout the voting hours and filed a series of complaints with it.