

Trial of Holey Artisan case begins

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A tribunal in Dhaka yesterday started the trial of the sensational Holey Artisan Café terror attack case with recording the complainant's testimony.

Ripon Kumar Das, the complainant of the case and also a sub-inspector of Gulshan Police Station, gave his statement before the Anti-terrorism Special Tribunal.

Ripon, the first prosecution witness, narrated his experience of how the law enforcement agencies and army personnel completed the operation and rescued the victims following the harrowing attack on the café in the city's Gulshan area on July 1, 2016.

Judge Majibur Rahman recorded Ripon's statement for over two hours. Later, the defence lawyers for two of the accused were cross-examined.

During the hearing yesterday, six of the accused, now in jail, were produced before the court under tight security.

As the defence could not complete cross-examination of the complainant, the tribunal fixed today for continuing the hearing.

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A policeman frisks a biker at a checkpoint in the capital's Banani area yesterday. Security has been beefed up in the capital to avert any untoward situation ahead of the national polls.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

CEC's nephew meets him at the EC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

SM Shahjada Saju, who came into the limelight after getting the Awami League nomination for Patuakhali-3, met his uncle Chief Election Commissioner Nurul Huda at the latter's office yesterday evening.

The visit took place a day after the nomination of Golam Maula Roni, who wanted to contest as BNP candidate from the same constituency, got cancelled.

Roni yesterday filed an appeal challenging the cancellation.

Saju said he went there to hand over the medical prescription of CEC's ailing mother.

Asked why it had to be at the CEC's office, Saju said, "How else can I hand it over to him?"

The AL nominee said he also had come to the CEC's office before the declaration of polls schedule.

Responding to the query whether he sought any assistance from his uncle, he said, "Not at all. Things will go on as per rules."

He also said his uncle did not bar him from becoming a candidate in the upcoming national polls.

64pc polling centres risky

FROM PAGE 1 according to a police assessment.

"As a law enforcement agency, we don't use the word 'vulnerable' because it may send a negative message to the people about our security arrangement. So we have used the term 'important' and prepared our security plan giving importance to those centres," a top police official said.

Five policemen will be deployed in each risky centre while three in each "normal" centre. Besides, there will be members of other law enforcement agencies, officials said.

Usually during polls, 20 members of the law enforcement agencies and Ansar are deployed in each vulnerable centre and 15 in each normal centre.

The police prepared the security plan and categorised the polling centres after taking opinion from the field level police and intelligence officials across the country.

As per the plan, 1.23 lakh policemen will carry out their duties at the

DIVISIONS	CLASSIFICATION OF POLLING CENTRES		SPECIAL AREA	
	NORMAL	*IMPORTANT	NORMAL	*IMPORTANT
Dhaka	4,193	5,679	40	140
Mymensingh	958	1,753	0	209
Rajshahi	2,116	2,975	0	33
Rangpur	1,359	2,987	0	148
Chattogram	1,965	4,424	234	753
Khulna	1,775	3,059	0	0
Barishal	705	1,823	2	141
Sylhet	981	1,495	118	208
TOTAL	14,052	24,195	394	1,632

* VULNERABLE CENTRE SOURCE: POLICE HEADQUARTERS

field level while around 50,000 officials will be involved in election-related activities, officials involved in security planning told The Daily Star yesterday.

Besides, there will be 2,226 "mobile teams", 767 "striking teams" and 356 "standby teams" to ensure peaceful

atmosphere for the election.

The Election Commission estimated that around 6 lakh law enforcers would be deployed on election duties.

RISKY CENTRES

Of the 25,827 "important" centres, 24,195 are in plain land and 1,632 in "special" areas (remote and hilly areas

and Chittagong Hill Tracts).

In Dhaka division, a total of 5,679 polling stations out of 9,872 are vulnerable and 28,395 police personnel will be deployed there.

Sohel Rana, assistant inspector general of police at the Police Headquarters, yesterday said, "Police have taken necessary preparations for a fair and peaceful election. We have special measures for 'important' polling centres."

TWO MONITORING BODIES FORMED

As part of its security plan, the police have already formed two monitoring bodies to oversee the security arrangement during the election. The bodies are Law and Order Monitoring and Coordination Cell and Law and Order Monitoring and Coordination Committee.

Under the cell, eight top officials -- ranging from additional inspector general of police -- will monitor and coordinate

law and order, dividing the country into four zones.

On the other hand, the six-member committee, led by IGP Mohammad Javed Patwary, will monitor and coordinate the overall law and order in the country.

DRIVE AGAINST ILLEGAL ARMS ON

Police have already intensified its drive against illegal arms, listed criminals and wanted accused after the announcement of the polls schedule by the Election Commission on November 8, officials said.

The law enforcers didn't give the specific number of listed criminals. However, police statistics of June show that around 2.42 lakh GR warrants (cases filed with police stations), 1.49 lakh CR warrants (cases filed with the court) and 27,485 conviction warrants have been issued by courts.

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday, Chittagong Metropolitan Police Commissioner Mahabubor Rahman said, "Although we conduct drives

against illegal arms and wanted accused and criminals round the year, drives have gained momentum after the announcement of polls schedule."

Humayun Kabir, commissioner of Khulna Metropolitan Police, also made similar comments about their activities.

Besides, 100 police teams, formed in September to monitor social media to prevent rumours and fake news, recently started conducting "cyber patrolling", a top official at the Police Headquarters said.

"The teams are actually monitoring whether anyone is spreading rumours and misleading information using the social media ahead of the election," he said wishing anonymity.

A Social Media Monitoring and Cyber Crimes Prevention Committee at the Police Headquarters was closely working with the teams and giving necessary directives to them, the official added.

Weighed down by cases

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Many of those were for carrying out subversive activities, obstructing police from discharging duties, blasting crude bombs, disrupting law and order, according to his affidavit submitted along with his nomination paper.

Ninety-nine out of the 267 cases are under investigation while 95 under trial, shows the affidavit. Most of the cases were filed during BNP's street agitations against the government in 2010-15.

Interestingly, the party did not launch any major street agitation this year but he was made accused in 58 fresh cases.

For the same constituency, the party also fielded a backup candidate, Anwaruzzaman, a former commissioner of Dhaka City Corporation. The number of cases filed against the leader of Dhaka city BNP is 72.

The nature of the cases filed against him is similar to Nirob's.






Of the 72 cases, hearing on charge framing is going on in 30 while 24 are now under trial, according to Anwaruzzaman's affidavit. He is now on bail.

Nirob and Anwaruzzaman are no exception.

Most of the BNP aspirants for the 11th parliamentary election have criminal lawsuits against them with some of them facing over a hundred cases.

For instance, SM Jahangir Hossain,

BNP LEADERS BARRAGED WITH CASES

 <p>SAIFUL ALAM NIROB DHAKA-12 BNP's first choice against AL's Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal TOTAL CASES: 267 UNDER TRIAL: 95 INVESTIGATION: 99 STAYED: 41 DROPPED FROM CHARGE SHEET: 24 OTHER STATUS 8</p>	 <p>ANWARUZZAMAN DHAKA-12 BNP's back-up candidate against AL's Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal TOTAL CASES: 72 CHARGE HEARING: 30 INVESTIGATION: 24 STAYED: 1 OTHER STATUS 17</p>	 <p>SM JAHANGIR HOSSAIN DHAKA-18 BNP's first choice against AL candidate Sahara Khatun, ex-home minister TOTAL CASES: 138 UNDER TRIAL: 48 DISCHARGED: 2 UNDER INVESTIGATION: 57 STAYED BY HIGH COURT: 26 ACQUITTED 1 OTHER STATUS 4</p>	 <p>NABIULLAH NABI DHAKA-5 BNP's first choice against JP's Abu Hossain Babla TOTAL CASES: 121 STAYED: 37 UNDER INVESTIGATION: 56 ON BAIL: 10 BAIL IN ADVANCE: 4 CHARGE HEARING: 5 UNDER TRIAL: 2 OTHER STATUS 7</p>	 <p>SHIMUL BISWAS (NOW IN JAIL) PABNA-5 BNP's first choice against AL's Golam Faruk Khandakar TOTAL CASES: 108 UNDER TRIAL: 20 STAYED: 64 INVESTIGATION: 24</p>
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another Dhaka city BNP leader, is accused in 137 cases.

Of those, 48 are under trial and 57 under investigation. Besides, 26 cases were stayed by the High Court and he was acquitted in one, shows his affidavit.

He filed nomination for Dhaka-18, a seat where AL lawmaker and former home minister Sahara Khatun is contesting.

"I have no option but to carry out all electoral activities in secret," Jahangir, who got bail in all the cases, told this

newspaper. Nabiullah Nabi is another BNP leader who is facing over a hundred cases.

The vice president of Dhaka South BNP is contesting for Dhaka-5 and his main contender is sitting AL MP Habibur Rahman Mollah.

Of the 121 cases, 56 are under investigation and 37 are stayed by the HC.

Things are even trickier for Shamsur Rahman Shimul Biswas, personal assistant to BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia. Now in jail, the BNP aspirant, who

filed nomination paper for Pabna-5, is facing 108 cases.

All his cases were filed with different police stations in the capital since 2015, according to his affidavit.

Sixty-four cases were stayed by the HC.

"He [Shimul] is the victim of political harassment. He is mostly accused in false cases. If the party finally chooses him as BNP candidate for this constituency, we will campaign for him," said Abdullah Al Mahamud Mannan, vice president of Pabna

district BNP.

His main challenger is AL candidate Golam Faruk Khandakar, incumbent lawmaker of the constituency.

Another BNP nominee Salauddin Ahmed for Dhaka-4 constituency is accused in at least 80 cases. The party fielded Salauddin's son Tanvir Ahmed as a backup candidate. But Tanvir too is accused in 75 criminal lawsuits.

Till November 30 this year, as many as 537 BNP leaders and activists were sued since the election schedule

Lot of chatter ahead of polls

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Rangpur; AKM Shahabuddin Khan of Khan Arms Store, Mymensingh; and Ali Babul of Netrakona Arms Shop -- were arrested between March and June.

The fourth, Jakir Hossein Bacchu, worked as a manager at Samsul Islam Arms shop in Dhaka's Kamalapur. He was held in April.

All of them helped criminals by lending and selling legally imported arms to them to make easy money, according to the CITC.

The demand for small arms among criminal gangs had shot up before the election due on December 30, an official of the CITC's arms enforcement team told The Daily Star.

A boost in the smuggling of gunpowder and explosives indicates that plans for subversive activities centring the election

are underway, said the official, preferring anonymity.

In a meeting with law enforcers on November 22, Election Commission Secretary Helal Uddin Ahmed asked law enforcers to expedite drives against illegal arms before the polls.

Anwar Hossain, deputy inspector general (operation) of the Police Headquarters, said raids against illegal arms was a continuous process and that they would intensify it when necessary.

On October 22, detectives arrested 11 people with five kgs of gunpowder at a hotel in Dhaka's Motijheel.

"The explosives were brought to the capital for carrying out subversive activities ahead of the election," said a top official of DB police, requesting anonymity.

A month later, a patrol team of Border Guard Bangladesh recovered

two firearms and ammunition from a border area in Chapainawabganj.

The demand for firearms usually rises before election, said Jahangir Alam, additional deputy commissioner of CITC arms enforcement team.

"We are conducting raids to nab arms dealers with links to criminals," he said.

According to the Police Headquarters, 1,872 cases were filed under the Arms Act and 735 under the Explosives Act in the first nine months of this year. Most of these cases were filed in September when law enforcers began the special drive against illegal arms.

Explosives are smuggled into the country through four border points -- Jashore, Kustia, Chapainawabganj and Jhenidah. Strong vigilance has been ensured at those points ahead of the polls, said Jahangir.

FROM PAGE 1 claimed that he didn't receive any copy of his resignation letter as upazila chairman.

Nomination papers of BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia and two of her party leaders were rejected in Bogura-7.

This constituency still has an opposition candidate who is from Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (Rab), a component of the Oikyafront. The nomination paper of JSD nominee Reazul Morshed has been accepted.

The RO rejected nominations of BNP candidates Momotaj Hossain and Solaiman Alam Fakir for Rangpur-5. In this seat, nomination paper of Mofakkharul Islam, a candidate of Nagorik Oikya, another

component of the Oikyafront, was accepted.

Three other constituencies, Dhaka-1, Manikganj-2 and Shariatpur-1, do not have any opposition candidate.

The BNP leaders, however, hope that party candidates' nominations will be accepted after appeals. The party has asked its nominees to file appeals with the Election Commission.

They said the RO rejected nomination papers of two BNP candidates in Manikganj-2 as the party secretary general's signature did not match. The BNP on Sunday informed the EC that it nominated the two candidates for the seat.

Nomination papers of three candi-

dates in Dhaka-1, Bogura-7 and Jamalpur-4 were rejected on the grounds that they didn't resign from the post of upazila chairman.

But the three refuted the claims of the ROs concerned and said they submitted copies of their resignation letters to the ROs during scrutiny.

The nomination paper of BNP candidate Nasiruddin in Shariatpur-1 was cancelled on the grounds that he didn't pay telephone bills of Tk 3,815 from 1988-1991.

Denying the allegation, Nasiruddin on Sunday told journalists that he would file an appeal with the EC against RO's decision.