

BNP loses 8 candidates after SC, HC orders

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Supreme Court yesterday placed a bar on three upazila chairmen -- all of them BNP-nominated candidates in the upcoming parliamentary election -- from contesting the polls.

Besides, the High Court also stayed the Election Commission's decision that allowed two other incumbent upazila chairmen and four other BNP candidates to run the polls.

Following yesterday's separate orders, BNP nominees Sarkar Badal, Tamiz Uddin, Abdul Muhit Talukder, Khondokar Abu Ashfaq, Morshed Milton, Nadim Mostafa, Afroza Khan and Abdul Hannan have been disallowed to contest in the polls.

The Appellate and High Court Divisions of the SC passed the orders following separate petitions filed by some opponent candidates and the EC.

Tamiz Uddin was nominated for contesting from Dhaka-20 constituency, Abdul Muhit Talukder from Bogura-3, Sarkar Badal from Bogura-7, Khondokar Abu Ashfaq from Dhaka-1, Morshed Milton from Bogura-7, Nadim Mostafa from Rajshahi-5, Afroza Khan from Manikganj-3 and Abdul Hannan from Chandpur-1.

Barrister Shanjid Siddique, a lawyer for Tamiz, told The Daily Star that no incumbent upazila chairman can contest the parliamentary election following three SC orders.

The SC passed the orders based on the argument that the upazila chairman holds the office of profit, he said, adding that if any upazila chairman resigns from the post and if the resignation letter is not accepted, they will not be eligible to

contest the general election following the SC orders.

Yesterday, the HC directed the EC to allocate BNP's election symbol "sheaf of paddy" to its candidate Prof Nazrul Islam for Rajshahi-5 constituency.

The court also stayed the returning officer's decision allocating "sheaf of paddy" to BNP's other candidate Nadim Mostafa for the same constituency.

The HC bench of Justice JBM Hassan and Justice Md Khairul Alam passed the order following a writ petition filed by Nazrul Islam challenging the returning officer's decision.

Nazrul's lawyer Advocate Minhazul Haque Chowdhury told The Daily Star that BNP has nominated his client for contesting the December 30 general election.

But, the returning officer cancelled Nazrul's nomination and allocated "sheaf of paddy" to Nadim Mostafa which is a violation of the Representation of People's Order (RPO), he said, adding that as per the relevant provision of the RPO, a political party can give nomination to a single candidate for a constituency.

The same HC bench yesterday stayed for three months the EC's decision that allowed BNP nominees Khondokar Abu Ashfaq, Morshed Milton, and Abdul Hannan to contest the election.

The bench passed the order following separate writ petitions filed by their opponents citing different grounds, he added.

Yesterday, the SC upheld an HC order that stayed the EC's decision allowing BNP nominee Afroza Khan to contest the election from Manikganj-3 constituency.

NATIONAL POLLS: DHAKA-17

Four heavyweights leading 'poster race'

MATHEWS CHIRAN

Just last week, Gulshan 1 and 2, considered among Dhaka's most upscale areas, were overrun with posters of two candidates competing in the Dhaka-17 constituency.

The candidates whose faces were ubiquitous in the locality -- that includes the diplomatic zone and is also known as the "VIP area" -- are veteran actor Akbar Hossain Pathan, popularly known as Farooque, and Jatiya Party (JP) leader Hussain Muhammad Ershad.

Farooque is the nominated candidate from Awami League, competing with the "boat" symbol, while Ershad is running with the "plough" symbol.

However, the scenario has changed in the last few days. Posters with faces of other candidates have emerged, including that of former BNP minister Barrister Nazmul Huda who is contesting with the "lion" symbol, drawing attention of locals and commuters passing through the intersections.

BNP-led 20-party alliance candidate Andaleev Rahman Partho, running with "sheaf of paddy" symbol, is lagging behind in the "poster race". His posters were sparsely seen in Banani, Niketan and Baridhara.

Of the 10 candidates running in the constituency, the above four are considered heavyweights.

Four chiefs of parties are competing in the constituency: Andaleev is the chief of Bangladesh Jatiya Party (BJP), Ershad is the head of JP, Huda leads Bangladesh National Alliance (BNA) and the sitting lawmaker of the seat, SM Abul Kalam Azad heads Bangladesh Nationalist Front (BNF).

The constituency has a total of 3,13,998 voters, of whom 1,45,998 are female.

Yesteryears film star Farooque, who is running in the election for the first time, is a household name with a string of blockbuster films from the '70s and '80s. His campaign is in full gear in the area.

Andaleev, considered one of the strongest competitors of Farooque, won



Gulshan-1 DCC Market flooded with campaign posters of Awami League candidate and veteran actor Farooque and his main rival in Dhaka-17, Jatiya Party Chairman HM Ershad.

PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

in the 9th parliamentary election from Bholal-1 constituency. This is the first time he is contesting in Dhaka. He started campaigning in the constituency on December 14.

Contacted, Andaleev told The Daily Star, "We have been putting up our posters and banners but somehow, they are being removed. We'll keep our campaign going regardless."

Asked about his campaign starting later than other prominent candidates', he said, "We were busy with other fieldwork and I had to meet leaders of my alliance before starting my campaign to make it successful. We decided to go in full force on December 16."

His party is a splinter group of Ershad's Jatiya Party. BJP was founded by Andaleev's father Naziur Rahman Manzur in 2001.

Ershad, who is currently undergoing treatment in Singapore, is the chairman of Jatiya Party. In his absence, the party's presidium member SM Foysal Chisty is campaigning for the former president of Bangladesh.

Ershad was the MP of Dhaka-17 in the 9th parliament. This time around, he is contesting in the constituency as well as in Rangpur-3, where he is the incumbent lawmaker.

Nazmul Huda resigned from BNP in 2012, before forming BNF. He was ousted from BNF by SM Abul Kalam Azad, who he will attempt to succeed in Dhaka-17 this election. Huda later formed BNA.

Contacted, Huda said, "I think voters are eager to cast their votes."

Regarding his campaign, he said that he got his symbol later than other candidates,

and therefore could not put up posters earlier.

He also said that he believes in approaching voters personally.

Azad, the BNF chairman is contesting with the "TV" symbol.

Among other candidates, SM Ahsan Habib Bulbul from Bangladesh Samajtantrik Dal (BSD), who is contesting with the "ladder" symbol, said, "During campaign, voters ask me whether they'll be able to vote or not. It is quite disconcerting."

Other candidates running in Dhaka-17 are: AKM Saifur Rashid from Bikalpadhara Bangladesh with "kula" (winnowing fan); Ali Haider from Progressive Democratic Party with "tiger"; Kazi Md Rashidul Hasan from Zaker Party with "rose"; and Aminul Haq Talukder from Islami Andolon Bangladesh with "hand fan".



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina during her meeting with US Ambassador Earl R Miller at Gonobhaban yesterday.

PHOTO: PTI

NAT'L POLLS

US to deploy 11 observer teams: Miller

UNB, Dhaka

Earl Robert Miller, the newly appointed US ambassador to Bangladesh, yesterday said the US embassy will arrange 11 teams, comprising 32 observers, during the 11th general election in Bangladesh.

He said this during his meeting with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at her official residence Gonobhaban, said PM's Press Secretary Ihsanul Karim while briefing journalists after the meeting.

"We hope the next election will be free, fair, credible and peaceful," the ambassador also said.

Commenting on the Rohingya issue, Miller said the US will continue to provide its support to Bangladesh.

He also put emphasis on a suitable atmosphere in Myanmar so the Rohingyas can return to their homeland.

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Abduction, murder of child 'inspired by TV show'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A live-in private tutor, who was a drug addict and allegedly wanted to make quick money by seeking ransom, has killed his 10-year-old student after abduction in Gazipur.

The tutor, Parvez Sikder, 18, a diploma degree holder in agriculture, registered the help of his friend and ninth-grader Faisal Ahmed, 19, to commit the crime.

Both were neighbours of the victim, Sadman Iqbal Rakin, 10, the son of Gazipur municipality engineer Syed Shamim Iqbal in Faugan village of Sreepur upazila.

The Rapid Action Battalion-1 (Rab) arrested them in the village on Sunday night. Before that, the team spent 36 hours following different leads to close in on the suspects.

During a press briefing at Rab-1 media centre in Karwan Bazar, officials

said the youths were "inspired" by Indian crime anthology series "Crime Patrol" and thought of ransom-seeking abduction as the quickest way to riches. They worked out the plan six months ago.

Lt Col Sarowar Bin Kashem, commanding officer of Rab-1, said the duo lured Rakin to a nearby bamboo grove, only 150 yards away from his house, on December 5. They wanted to keep him there, but the boy tried to escape. In fear, they strangled him right away, he said.

Later the abductors called his father and demanded Tk 10 lakh as ransom, he said. They used the same phone they stole from the victim's family six months ago as part of the plan, he added.

When the family returned their calls, the phone was switched off. Two days later, on December 7, the family

filed an abduction case with Sreepur Police Station. The boy's decomposed body was recovered from the bamboo grove on December 11, the officer said.

Among the killers, Parvez had been living in the house of Shamim Iqbal and teaching his son Rakin, a fifth-grader, for the last two years, said Maj Md Rakibuzzaman, who led the operation.

The two had been planning the abduction for more than six months, he said. "They admitted that they took the decision after watching 'Crime Patrol' episodes."

At the beginning of the 36-hour operation, the Rab team studied the call log and found the phone had a top-up of Tk 20 from a local shop hours before the ransom call was made, said Maj Rakib.

After interrogation, they learned that the phone number was written on a

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HC rejects Rajuk's fifth amended land-use proposal

Rules in favour of Bela

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The fifth amended land-use proposal by Rajdhani Unnayan Kartipakkha (Rajuk) for Purbachal New Town project in Gazipur was rejected as its implementation will damage the ecology and environment, High Court ruled yesterday.

The bench of Justice Moyeenul Islam Chowdhury and Justice Md Ashraf Kamal delivered the verdict after disposing of a petition filed by Rajuk, seeking necessary directive in favour of the new proposal.

Earlier on March 11, 2014 the HC approved the fourth land-use plan and directed Rajuk authorities not to bring any change to it without the court's permission.

On November 11 this year, Rajuk filed a petition with the HC seeking its approval on the draft of the fifth amended land-use proposal.

In the petition, Rajuk said that the new proposal is being pledged to bring consistency between the previous plan and Private Land Development Rules 2004 (Revised 2015).

The amended plan will have more area for open grounds and parks compared to the previous plan, Rajuk's petition also said.

Meanwhile, seven rights organisations,

including Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association (Bela), opposed the petition filed by Rajuk.

In a petition, filed jointly by the organisations, they claimed that Rajuk was taking away school playgrounds and allocating the land to residential, commercial, health and research structures, by breaching the HC rule of 2014.

Bela also argued that Private Land Development Rules 2004 (Revised 2015) does not apply to Rajuk.

"Rajuk's move to amend the fourth land-use-plan to make it consistent with the revised private land development rules is absurd," Bela's press release said.

It has been initiated only to legalise the construction of three new proposed commercial buildings, which was not included in the previous plan, Bela claimed.

The court ruled in favour of Bela and dismissed the petition by Rajuk, saying that Private Land Development Rules 2004 (Revised 2015) does not apply.

It also said that the new plan proposed by Rajuk is contrary to the HC verdict of March 11, 2014.

Advocate Syed Rizwana Hasan and Advocate Sayeed Ahmed Kabir appeared for the rights organisations, while Deputy Attorney General Motaheer Hossain Sazu and Barrister Tanjib-Ul-Alam argued for Rajuk.

Classify child domestic work as hazardous

Speakers tell roundtable

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Enactment of a law and its implementation, along with changed social mindset are required to properly address plight of the country's child domestic workers, speakers said at a roundtable yesterday.

They said employment of children as domestic workers could be reduced through facilitating and improving livelihood of their poor parents.

Bangladesh Shishu Adhikar Forum (BSAF) arranged the roundtable on "Situation of Child Domestic Workers and Human Rights: Protection, Challenges and Way Forward" at The Daily Star Centre in the capital.

The speakers also stressed the need for adding child domestic work in the list of hazardous works for children, to alleviate it.

Referring to a 2005 study by Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies, child protection specialist Sharfuddin Khan said about thirty lakh people were working as domestic help in Bangladesh.

Of them, 83 per cent were girl children and young women, he said, while presenting a paper on the topic.

On the other hand, Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics data shows the estimated number of child domestic workers was 3.31 lakh in 2006 in the country, he added.

Study has found that almost all child domestic workers got three meals a day. However, about one-third of them did not get meals timely, he further said.

Addressing as chief guest, eminent rights activist Sultana Kamal said despite concerns, problems of child domestic workers were not prioritised.

"Why are we failing to give priority to the rights of children, especially those who work as



Guests speak at a roundtable on "Situation of Child Domestic Worker and Human Rights: Protection, Challenges and Way Forward" at The Daily Star Centre yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

domestic help? This is because they are facing the risk," she observed.

"Either we have subconsciously established in our minds that we will not do it [enacting the law], or we consciously do not do it because we have to save a certain group," she added.

Sultana also said rights activists will continue to be vocal until rights of the oppressed are ensured. BSAF Chairperson Khawja Shamsul Huda said household work are now easier to do than in the past, because of technological advancement.

Alongside this, if mindset of the employers is changed then concerns over such issue may not be raised in future anymore, he said.

Mostafizur Rahman, joint inspector general of

Department of Inspection for Factories and Establishments, said the government has formulated the "Domestic Workers Protection and Welfare Policy 2015" to protect interests of domestic workers.

The department is committed to end hazardous domestic work, he said.

However, enactment of a law in line with the policy and formal recognition of domestic work will be helpful to this end, he added.

Tomoko Uchiyama, country director of Shapla Neer Bangladesh; Mahmudul Kabir, country director of Terre des Hommes Netherlands; and Abdus Shahid Mahmood, director of BSAF, among others, spoke.