



Sylhet City Corporation Mayor Ariful Haque Chowdhury, *third from left*, in a procession in Habiganj-1 area campaigning for Jatiya Oikyafront nominee Reza Kibria on Friday. Ariful is one of the accused in the case filed over the murder of Reza's father and former finance minister Shah AMS Kibria. Reza declined to comment on this.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Satkhira OC

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clip of his speech at a programme went viral.

Oikyafront candidate for Satkhira-1 Habibul Islam Habib, also a former BNP lawmaker, had submitted a written complaint to the EC demanding his immediate withdrawal.

However, Maruf denied the allegation.

Talking to The Daily Star, he said he attended the programme to ensure security and gave a welcome speech. He claimed the footage of the speech was manipulated.

The video clip shows Maruf asking the audience to vote for the AL for continuation of the ongoing development projects.

Meanwhile, Oikyafront leaders in Tangail yesterday demanded withdrawal of Amir Hossain, OC of Sakhipur police, for his "controversial role" ahead of the December 30 election.

They placed the demand at a press conference at Sakhipur Press Club where Dulal Hossain, joint secretary of Sakhipur upazila Krishak Shramik Janata League, read out a written statement on behalf of the Oikyafront, reports our district correspondent.

He alleged that the OC was harassing and torturing activists and supporters of Jatiya Oikyafront candidate Kuri Siddiqui in Tangail-8 (Sakhipur-Basail).

Dulal further complained that police were arresting their leaders and activists in "false cases". Even those who came out of jail on bail have been picked up again and implicated in other cases by the OC, he added.

Despite repeated attempts, The Daily Star could not reach the OC over phone for comments.

Make sure

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"In such a situation, it is normal that people will be doubtful about fair polls," she added.

Placing a five-point demand that included ensuring EC's neutral role, she said space should be created for local and foreign observers and journalists so that they can perform their duties independently.

She urged the authorities concerned to ensure security of religious and ethnic minority groups along with the marginalised people during the election.

Noted economist Prof Anu Muhammad said the EC's role, which is necessary for holding a democratic election, is so far absent.

The EC severely lacked authority over the civil administration and the police. Besides, the roles of law enforcement agencies and administration over recent violence were also not sufficient for holding fair polls, he said.

"Amid this, people are the only hope," he said, adding that the country can only overcome the present situation through their active participation in the election.

As the election will be held under a partisan government, it will be a challenge for them to hold it in a free and credible manner, he also said.

Criticising violation of the electoral code of conduct by the ministers and the lawmakers during electioneering, Supreme Court lawyer Dr Shahdeen Malik said they were doing so as they have no respect for the rule of law and any morality.

"Such an act is not possible without utter disrespect for the rule of law and morality," he said.

The electoral code of conduct has been formulated to create level-playing field, said Dr Malik, a noted jurist of the country.

If the next government is not formed through a transparent process then the country's image will be tainted in the outer world while foreign investment will also be hampered, said eminent historian Prof Ahmed Kamal.

Criticising the restriction on journalists over covering the election, photographer Shahidul Alam said such a restriction was imposed as the government was scared.

They're not Jamaat candidates

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commission would have rejected their candidacies, instead of giving them the symbols," he said.

The BNP leader was replying to reporters' queries on a High Court directive to the EC on disposing of an application filed for cancelling candidacies of 25 Jamaat leaders.

While delivering the letter, the BNP team led by Nazrul demanded the EC create scopes for fielding alternative candidates or reschedule the polling in the constituencies where party candidates have been disqualified by the HC on different grounds.

He alleged that the government was creating obstacles for foreign observers to monitor the election.

Yesterday, the ruling Awami League in another letter urged the EC not reschedule the election in those constituencies.

After submitting the letter to the CEC's office, AL central leader M Akhteruzzaman told reporters that there was no scope for rescheduling the election under the Representation of the People Order (RPO).

The party also sought steps from the EC to stop "attacks on its campaigns in

different parts of the country" and demanded measures to prevent "attacks on the minorities".

Meanwhile, Projonmo 71, an organisation of children of martyrs, and Gourab 71, a cultural platform, yesterday urged the EC to scrap the candidacies of the 25 Jamaat leaders.

RESTRICTION ON JOURNOS' BIKES

Journalists, deployed on the election day, will not be able to use motorbikes.

Journalists and election observers would be provided with stickers for their motor vehicles, not for their bikes, according to EC guidelines on journalists issued yesterday.

The guidelines said no one would be allowed to telecast live from polling booths. If any media outlet wants to telecast anything live, it would have to do that from a "safe distance" from the booths.

No one would also be allowed to broadcast any election activities on social media, including Facebook.

All media people would have to refrain from any activities which might obstruct vote casting, according to the guidelines.

Fireworks

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After a brilliant bowling show at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium had restricted the West Indies to 190, wayward batting and the controversial no-ball decision turned the game on its head and saw the hosts, who were eventually bundled out for 140 with three overs to spare, finish the year on a losing note.

Bangladesh replied well after Tamim departed cheaply for eight, but the previous game's half-century, Liton Das, continued his fine run. The right-hander struck two sixes and a four before the no-ball controversy in an Oshane Thomas over that yielded 30 runs.

The no-ball call from on-field umpire Tanvir Ahmed came off the penultimate ball of the fourth over. Liton went for a big shot but could only manage to hand a catch to the fielder at mid-off but things got heated after the giant screen showed that the Thomas' foot was just behind the line, irking the visiting cricketers.

West Indies skipper Carlos Brathwaite was screaming in anger at the umpire and even signalled for a review as things heated up at the home of Bangladesh cricket. He then went near the boundary and had a conversation with the match referee before eventually relenting and resuming the game with the decision upheld.

Soumya Sarkar supported Liton and the two maintained a fast tempo till the fourth over, with the hosts cruising on 62 for one.

However, while the West Indies players got charged up, the Bangladesh batsmen kept gifting away their wick-

ets.

Soumya was the first to depart, being caught off Fabian Allen at long-on for nine. Shakib Al Hasan departed off the very next ball in similar fashion, also caught trying to clear long-on.

Paul then took over, removing Mushfiqur Rahim (1), Mahmudullah Riyad (11) and Liton, who hit a 25-ball 43 with three six and as many fours before the Tigers helplessly surrendered at the end.

Earlier, it was Lewis who took on the Tigers' bowling after the visitors were sent in to bat.

The hard-hitting 27-year-old smote four sixes off pacer Abu Hider in the third over which cost 27 runs before registering his fifty off just 18 balls -- the third fastest T20I fifty by a West Indies batsman.

Things seemed like getting out of hand with Lewis on a roll and the West Indies on 120 for two in nine overs, but Mahmudullah pulled things back with some sensible bowling and removed the dangerous Lewis, who hit a scorching 36-ball 89 with eight sixes and six fours, with his second ball.

The experienced cricketer grabbed two more wickets to finish with figures of three for 18 from 3.2 overs as the hosts staged a comeback. The visitors could add just 21 runs from the last five overs before being bundled out for 190 with four balls to spare.

Apart from Mahmudullah, skipper Shakib and Mustafizur Rahman bagged three wickets each but both were expensive.

Polls officials

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for the AL candidate.

Among the presiding officers are Abdul Maleq Mollah, Kabiruzzaman and Kamrul Hasan. Maleq, principal of Abdur Rashid Khan Degree College, is the forest and environment affairs secretary of Bauphal upazila AL.

Kabiruzzaman, another teacher of the college, is assistant publication secretary of the same AL unit. Kamrul, a teacher of Nurainpur College, is a member of Sujyamon union Jubo League and also a former Chhatra League secretary in the same union.

Among the others are Headmaster Mahbubur Rahman of Najirpur Chhoto Dalima High School and Mizanur Rahman, an English teacher of Engineer Faruq Talukder Women's Degree College. Mahbubur is the organising secretary of Dashpara union AL while Mizanur is a member of same AL unit.

BNP contender Salma Alam alleged that Humayun Kabir, principal of Dr

Eaquad Sharif Degree College, was taking part in the polls campaign of the AL candidate.

The other election official appointees are Nazmul Kabir (accounting), Mostafizur Rahman (political science) and Swapan Kumar Samaddar (sociology) of Bauphal Degree College.

Contacted, all the seven presiding officers declined to comment on their appointments.

The Daily Star phoned Humayun for his comment, but he did not pick up the call.

BNP candidate Salma alleged that the local administration enlisted the AL men as polls officials to use them in "election engineering".

She urged the local administration to withdraw these officers for the sake of a credible election.

Pijush Chandra Dey, assistant returning officer and also the Bauphal UNO, said, "We will investigate the allegations and take steps if those are found to be true."

Khan Bahadur Ahsanullah remembered

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a seminar yesterday called for a combined research initiative on the life of social reformer Khan Bahadur Ahsanullah.

Speaking as the chief guest, Prof Shamsuzzaman Khan, former director general of Bangla Academy, said, "Had Khan Bahadur Ahsanullah not taken initiatives in the field of education and literature, the Muslims of Bengal would not have reached where they are now."

Shamsuzzaman termed Ahsanullah pioneer of Muslim renaissance of Indian sub-continent.

Khan Bahadur Ahsanullah, also an educator, litterateur and Islamic theologian, was involved in the setting up of Dhaka University.

Nalta Central Ahsania Mission organised the seminar marking his 145th birth anniversary at Nalta Sharif in Satkhira's Kaliganj upazila.

Prof Mujibur Rahman of Rajshahi University, who has done PhD on Ahsanullah, said, "The universities should adopt the philosophy of Khan Bahadur Ahsanullah in their syllabus."

Prof Gazi Azizur Rahman presented the keynote paper at the seminar.

ANTI-VEDANTA PROTEST IN INDIA

Protesters killed by shots to head, chest; half from behind

REUTERS, Thoothukudi

Twelve of the 13 protesters killed when police opened fire on a demonstration against Vedanta's copper smelter in southern India in May were hit by bullets in the head or chest, and half of those were shot from behind, autopsy reports show.

Two others died after bullets pierced the sides of their heads, according to the reports produced by forensic medicine experts from several government hospitals and reviewed by Reuters. They have not been previously published.

In the case of the youngest to be killed, a bullet entered the back of 17-year-old J. Snowlin's head and exited through her mouth, the autopsy found.

"The deceased would appear to have died of cardio-pulmonary arrest due to firearm bullet injury to the back of the neck," forensic medicine experts who examined Snowlin's body wrote.

When Reuters visited her family, they said they had not collected the teenager's autopsy report. "We are continuing to exist, that's it," said her mother.

Indian police rules allow the use of live ammunition to quell civil unrest, but stipulate the response should be proportionate and officers should not shoot to kill. Police Standing Orders for Tamil Nadu, the state where the shootings took place, say that, when using firearms, "aim should be kept low, preferably well below the waist level, and directed against the most threatening part of the mob".

The incident was the deadliest at an environmental protest in India in a decade. A working group of United Nations' human rights experts in May condemned the "apparent excessive and disproportionate use of lethal force by police".

Ice-filler

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The presence of liquid water on Mars has been the subject of much debate for years, and its discovery could hold the key to finding alien life there.

However, scientists have long known that much of the red planet's polar regions are adorned with a layer of ice.

Scientists noted the Korolev site was a particularly well-preserved example of a frozen Martian crater.

It was named after the renowned engineer Sergei Korolev, known as the father of Soviet space technology, who worked on the Sputnik programme.

Images of the crater were sent back by the European Space Agency's (ESA) Mars Express mission, which was launched in 2003 and now sits in orbit around the planet.

The complete picture of the enormous crater was assembled using five different picture strips that were combined to make a single image.

Describing the resulting scene as a "beautiful winter wonderland", the ESA said it was an "excellent celebration" of the spacecraft's 15-year anniversary in space.

The region around the planet's northern polar cap, known as Olympia Undae, is a particular zone of interest for other missions, including ESA's ExoMars programme, which aims to establish if life ever existed on Mars.

Due to land in 2021, the ExoMars rover will drill into the surface of the planet to search for evidence of ancient life-forms buried underneath.

In November after much discussion within the European-Russian project, the team settled on a landing site called Oxia Planum, which scientists suspect was the home to a large body of water billions of years ago.

US govt in partial shutdown

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end-of-the year holidays some national parks have shuttered completely, while others remain open but without any visitor services including restrooms and maintenance.

New York's governor provided funding to the Statue of Liberty monument and Ellis Island so those key attractions could remain open.

The budget wrangling and subsequent shutdown -- the third in a year -- cast a dark cloud over the US capital already reeling from Defense Secretary Jim Mattis's resignation announcement Thursday.

The uncertainty pushed Wall Street into a third straight rout on Friday, to end its worst week since late 2008 at the start of the global financial crisis.

"President Trump threw a temper tantrum and convinced House Republicans to push our nation into a destructive Trump Shutdown," Chuck Schumer, the top opposition Democrat in the Senate, and his House counterpart, fellow Democrat Nancy Pelosi, said in a joint statement.

Trump has dug in on his demand for \$5 billion for construction of a wall to curb illegal immigration on the US border with Mexico. Democrats are staunchly opposed, and the absence of an elusive deal means federal funds for dozens of agencies lapsed at midnight Friday.

The House of Representatives and the Senate are due back in session later yesterday.

But it remains unclear how long the shutdown will last, with Washington unable to accomplish one of its most basic tasks -- keeping the government up and running.

"This is a dereliction of duty by Congress and the president," said David Cox, national president of the American Federation of Government Employees.

Trump voiced hope late Friday that it "will not last long" -- after earlier saying he was ready for just that.

His own Republican party still controls both the House and Senate, but in January the House comes under Democratic control.

Governor Ralph Northam of Virginia -- a state bordering the US Capitol that is home to many federal workers -- urged Trump in a letter Saturday to push immediate action to end the shutdown, saying it "inflicts real harm" on workers.

21 sued

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fire using flammable substances. Soon, it engulfed adjacent seven houses, the victim said.

After the attack, local Awami League and BNP leaders brought allegations against each other. They alleged that the attack was carried out for creating panic among the local Hindu community ahead of the election.

Inspector Chitta Ranjan Roy of Thakurgaon Police Station said they were raiding different places to arrest the criminals.

Local lawmakers, officials of civil and police administration visited the spot and assured the victims providing them with legal assistance.

Worker killed

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The two were working on a high-rise in the project's construction site when a crane's rope tore and it fell, leaving them severely injured, said Bahauddin Faruqi, officer-in-charge of Ishwardi Police Station.

They were rushed to Ishwardi upazila health complex where Sikhon breathed his last. Later, Rana was sent to Rajshahi Medical College Hospital, the OC added.

The body was sent to Pabna Medical College morgue for autopsy.

Media failing to play its role

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national elections.

"The political implication of such inadequacy is bound to prove bad for all concerned in the days to come. However, I am optimistic that things would change for the positive, someday."

Matiur Rahman Chowdhury, editor in chief of the Daily Manabzamin, said, "What will I say? When self-censorship has already weakened journalists, what else can I say?"

"If journalists want to come out of this situation, they can do it in three days. But we don't want it. Because, we are in a stiff contest to take partisan benefits," said the senior journalist. "We [journalists] are no less responsible for this situation."

About the upcoming polls, he said the question was now whether people would be able to cast their vote. "People want to vote... But the situation in the countryside is very dangerous. A good election can't be expected in this situation."

Brig Gen (retd) M Sakhawat Hussain, a former election commissioner, blamed both the political parties and the media managers for the current state of the press.

"Why don't you go to the Election Commission and raise your point? You went to the commission when we were there. I think the media managers have some faults," he said.

Hossain Zillur Rahman, adviser to a former caretaker government, said the election process had entered into the last phase and whether the voter could cast their votes was now the prime issue.

He said three matters -- poor presence of opposition men in campaign-

"I share your desire for strong economic growth throughout the United States, but the current partial government shutdown makes it harder to achieve this goal," the Democratic governor said.

About three-quarters of the government, including the military and the Department of Health and Human Services, is fully funded until the end of September 2019, leaving 25 percent unfunded as of yesterday.

Most Nasa employees will be sent home, as will Commerce Department workers and many at the Departments of Homeland Security, Justice, Agriculture and State.

"It's up to the Democrats whether or not we have a shutdown tonight, Trump said earlier Friday, blaming his political opponents for the crisis.

"I hope we don't," the president added, but "we're totally prepared for a very long shutdown."

Tarique

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21 grenade attack cases. Besides, the High Court handed him 10 year's jail term in a graft case.

The PM said Bangladesh earned recognition from around the world as her successive governments in the last 10 years implemented numerous development projects for the welfare of the country and its people.

"Bangladesh will march forward with this honour and recognition. This honour must not be allowed to be lost. That's why we need your votes in favour of 'boat'."

Hasina blasted the BNP for giving nominations to "war criminals". She alleged that the party auctioned nominations to earn money from the nomination seekers.

"Being frustrated with the party's attitude, senior BNP leader and former ambassador Inam Ahmed Chowdhury has joined the Awami League," she said.

The PM lamented that former finance minister SAMS Kibria's son Reza Kibria was contesting the national election from Habiganj-1 with BNP's electoral symbol "sheaf of paddy". "Nothing could be more deplorable than this."

The AL chief said the former BNP-Jamaat government had portrayed Bangladesh "as a country of corruption, militancy and terrorism". She alleged that the state of emergency was proclaimed in the country in 2008 due to the misdeeds of the BNP-Jamaat clique. In the name of resisting the election in 2014, they had unleashed a reign of terror by carrying out arson attacks and killing people, she told the meeting.

Hasina said the Sylhet-Dhaka highway would be turned into a four-lane one and Sylhet city would be provided with all the facilities of a divisional city.

She said the Sylhet international airport would be extended further and each district of the Sylhet division would have a university.

The AL president also introduced the party and grand alliance candidates in Sylhet, Moulvibazar, Sunamganj and Habiganj before the audience.

Finance Minister AMA Muhith, Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid, AL joint secretaries Mahbubul Alam Hanif, Jahangir Kabir Nanak, Abdur Rahman, organising secretaries Ahmed Hossain, AFM Bahauddin Nasim and Misbahuddin Siraj, Jubo League Chairman Omar Faruk Chowdhury and AL candidate for Sylhet-1 AK Abdul Momen also spoke at the rally, chaired by Sylhet AL acting president Lutfar Rahman.

ing, continuous filing of ghost cases and limited number of observers -- had become a matter of concern.

The media has to play their due role, he added.

Prof Nazmul Ahsan Kalimullah, chairman of Jatiya Nirbachon Porjebekkhon Parishad (Janipop), said the media would be counted as the "last resort" as relatively less number of election observers, as per the latest information, would be deployed during the election.

"So the role of the media here will be very vital," he added.

Shamsuzzaman Dudu, vice chairman of the BNP, claimed that a very dangerous situation was prevailing in the country and that it was going towards darkness.

"I don't want to blame the media because there is a question about their capability in this situation," he added.

Yusuf Hussain Humayun, member of the ruling Awami League advisory council, claimed the government was giving all kinds of support to the Election Commission and a very congenial atmosphere for election was prevailing in the country.

Prof Syed Anwar Husain of Dhaka University's history department, Ikter Ahmed, a former judge, Rezwan Siddiqui, acting editor of The Daily Dinkal, Chandan Nandi, executive editor of South Asian Monitor in India, Shakhawat Hossain Sayantha, general secretary of BNP think-tank G-9, among others, spoke at the programme moderated by CGS Executive Director Zillur Rahman and chaired by CGS Chairman Prof M Ataur Rahman.