



PHOTO: COLLECTED

Dhaka Tribune's Khulna correspondent Hedayet Hossain Mollah is being taken to a Khulna court in handcuffs yesterday, hours after he was arrested in a case filed under the Digital Security Act. The country's law discourages the authorities from using strict measures for transporting arrestees. Section 330 (a) of Police Regulations, Bengal says, "Prisoners arrested by the police for transmission to a magistrate or to the scene of an enquiry, and also under-trial prisoners, shall not be subjected to more restraint than is necessary to prevent their escape. The use of handcuffs or ropes is often an unnecessary indignity."

Two journos sued in Khulna

FROM PAGE 1
Rashidul Islam, staff reporter of the daily Manab Zamin, reports our correspondent in Khulna.

According to the initial announcement of the election results, the number of votes cast in Khulna-1 was higher than the total number of voters in the constituency. As the matter was brought to the returning officer's attention, he said it was a mistake and later came up with a correction, said local journalists.

By the time the correction could be made, the two media outlets ran reports saying the number of votes cast was around 22,000 higher than the actual number of voters, they said.

Documents provided by the returning officer's office showed 45,000 of the 2,59,420 voters did not cast their ballots.

Batiaghata Upazila Nirbahi Officer Debashish Chowdhury, also the assistant returning officer, filed the case against the two journalists.

The case statement said the accused

published false, fabricated and provocative information on the voting with the use of electronic devices, including laptops, which might confuse people and create a chaotic situation.

Such activities made the "fair election" questionable, the statement said.

Mahabubur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Batiaghata Police Station, told The Daily Star that they arrested Hedayet near Gallamary Bridge in connection with the case.

However, several witnesses said the journalist was picked up near Picture Palace intersection in the city when he was returning home from the Khulna Press Club.

Hedayet's wife Sayida Laila Akhter told this newspaper that she called her husband over the phone but another man picked it up and introduced himself as the OC of the police station.

"Last night, the returning officer had requested my husband to apologise for the news. Otherwise, he said my husband would face action," she said.

Despite repeated attempts, the RO could not be reached over the phone for comments.

Handcuffed, Hedayet was produced before a district court which sent him to jail.

Meanwhile, a former deputy secretary of the Election Commission has been picked up by detectives in the city's Agargaon area for "leaking information on the election".

Shamsul Alam was allegedly collecting election results submitted to the commission from across the country and sending those to "others", said police and EC sources.

He was picked up near the Nirbachan Commission office on Monday night, they said.

GG Biswas, officer-in-charge of Sher-e-Bangla Nagar Police Station, said the official was kept at the DB office on Mintoo Road.

Abdul Baten, additional commissioner (detectives) of the Dhaka Metropolitan Police, said they picked up Shamsul for interrogation.

YEAR	NUMBER OF CANDIDATES	SECURITY DEPOSITS FORFEITED
1996 June	300	36
2001	252	7
2008	260	14
2018	214 [available to us]	101

101 BNP

FROM PAGE 1
In that polls, held under an army-backed caretaker government, the party fielded 260 candidates and won 32 percent of the total votes cast in those constituencies.

The BNP boycotted the 2014 parliamentary polls, as the ruling Awami League government refused to meet its demand for an election under a nonpartisan administration.

This time, its candidates lost their security deposits even in the districts traditionally known as BNP stronghold -- Chattogram, Noakhali, Feni, Cumilla and Natore.

For example, the BNP candidate in Chattagram-1 got only 3,911 votes. In 2008, the party candidate secured 94,665 votes there.

In Cumilla-5, the BNP nominee got 12,113 votes this time, down from 77,260 in 2008. In Feni-2, the party candidate got 1,20,297 votes in 2008 polls and won the seat. In Sunday's election, the BNP aspirant got just 5,784 votes.

In Laxmipur-1, the BNP candidate secured 74,276 votes in 2008. It came down to just 3,892 this time.

In Natore-1 and 2, the party candidates got 15,338 votes and 13,197 respectively this time, down from over 1 lakh votes in each of these seats in 2008.

Record breaker!

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The asteroid measures about 1,600 feet (500 meters) in diameter.

"Entering orbit around Benu is an amazing accomplishment that our team has been planning for years," said Dante Lauretta, OSIRIS-REx principal investigator at the University of Arizona, Tucson.

Nasa said the orbit marks "a leap for humankind" because no spacecraft has ever "circled so close to such a small space object -- one with barely enough gravity to keep a vehicle in a stable orbit."

The spacecraft is orbiting Benu about a mile from its centre.

The European Space Agency's Rosetta spacecraft orbited a comet in May 2016, but at a further distance of about four miles from the centre of the comet 67P/Churyumov-Gerasimenko.

Benu has a gravity force only five-millionths as strong as Earth's, Nasa said.

Each orbit by OSIRIS-REx will take 62 hours. The plan is for OSIRIS-REx to orbit Benu through mid-February, using a suite of five scientific instruments to map the asteroid in high resolution to help scientists decide precisely where to sample from.

Then, in 2020, it will reach out with its robotic arm and touch the asteroid in a manoeuvre Rich Kuhns, OSIRIS-REx program manager with Lockheed Martin Space Systems in Denver, described as a "gentle high-five."

Using a circular device much like a car's air filter, and a reverse vacuum to stir up and collect dust, the device aims to grab about two ounces (60 grams) of material from the asteroid's surface, and return it to Earth in 2023.

A fragment of the early solar system, Benu is also considered potentially dangerous. It poses a slight risk - a one in 2,700 chance -- of colliding with Earth in 2135.

30 lakh reapply

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robbed the people and officials of precious time.

NRC officials said the pace of submission of claims had picked up in the last fortnight. "As of Sunday, 30 lakh of those excluded from the complete draft reappplied. With some more submitting their claims today [on Monday], the reapplication works out to 75%," an official said.

A B Khandakar, a Guwahati-based activist, said the number of applications increased after a clause was removed from the standard operating procedure issued by the Centre. That clause had made documents obtained after August 31, 2015, "inadmissible" for claims.

"While this came as a relief for many, others hit the hurdle of not being allowed to use a fresh legacy. This meant applicants could not change the person from whom they had drawn their ancestry in the original application that was rejected at the time of the complete draft," he said.

There have been cases in which illiterate people, dependent on

NRC Seva Kendras or cybercafe operators, used the same legacy person as others genealogically linked to someone else. While some cases were fraudulent, many were cases of the legacy person having the same name or belonging to the same area.

A legacy person is one who figures in the NRC of 1951, which is being updated, the voters lists published up to March 24, 1971, and other documents, including refugee registration certificate.

"What marked the claims round was lack of campaign or awareness drive. An overwhelming majority of the ground-level officials appeared ignorant of the court's directives and many of those manning NRC service centres went beyond their brief to reject documents whimsically," said Dharmananda Deb, an advocate and activist in Silchar.

The deadline for completing the exercise after processing the claims and objections is June 2019. The service centres, officials said, would be open from January 2 to 31 for correction of the names published in the complete draft.

It 'should be settled'

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Following the unprecedented Shahbagh movement in February 2013, the government amended the International Crimes (Tribunals) Act-1973 and the agency in August that year launched a probe into the war crimes allegedly committed by Jamaat.

The agency handed over the probe report to the prosecution in March 2014 with a recommendation to ban Jamaat and six other organisations, which were associated with the party in 1971. It found involvement of these anti-liberation bodies in grievous crimes committed during the war.

But the prosecution could not initiate trial of Jamaat as the government did not take initiatives to amend the act.

Trial of an organisation is not possible under the existing law, which does not specify punishment in case the organisation is found guilty of crimes, some experts said.

Meanwhile, the EC in October last year scrapped Jamaat's registration following a High Court verdict that declared the party's registration illegal in August 2013.

APPEALS PENDING WITH SC

The agency said some 20 appeals over war crimes cases had been pending with the Supreme Court for years.

"Hundreds of cases are now pending with the Appellate Division [of the SC]. The government can attach importance to these [war crimes] cases if it has the scope. We have nothing to do with the matter," Hannan said.

He said the authorities concerned should take necessary measures to dispose of the cases.

Sanaul Huq, co-coordinator of the agency, said, "Not only as a member of the agency but also as pro-liberation people, we think these cases should be disposed of."

"Both the victims and accused of the cases are elderly people. All of them want to see completion of the trial. We also want to see this."

The last appeal the apex court heard was of executed Jamaat leader Mir Quasem Ali and the hearing was concluded in February 2016.

Replying to a question about a list that the BNP gave to the media over

alleged anti-liberation role of 22 Awami League candidates in 1971, Hannan said they did not get any written complaint against them.

They will look into the matter as it came to the media, he added.

EVIDENCE AGAINST TWO

According to the agency, the two Habiganj men were involved in genocide, killing, abduction, confinement, torture, looting, arson and rape in the district's Baniachang Police Station.

Accused Madhu Mia Talukder, 62, was arrested on May 23 and is now in jail. The agency did not reveal the name of another accused as he was not arrested yet.

Madhu, currently the president of Muradpur union BNP, was involved in the Muslim League and formed a Razakar Bahini named after him in his locality during the Liberation War, the agency said.

After the war, he fled but returned to his locality in 1976 and was elected chairman of Muradpur Union Parishad in the upazila in 2016 with BNP ticket, it said.

The agency will hand over the probe report and other documents to the Chief Prosecutor Office today, said Nur Hossain, investigation officer of the case.

Greetings

FROM PAGE 2
Sirisena and Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe also congratulated Sheikh Hasina.

Sirisena and Wickremesinghe separately called Hasina over phone and congratulated her, said Ihsanul Karim.

They also greeted the Awami League and the people of Bangladesh for the party's overwhelming victory, he added.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and the Sri Lankan leaders hoped the bilateral relations and cooperation between the two countries would be strengthened in the coming days, the press secretary said.

Awami League won a landslide victory in the Sunday's election. The party alone secured 259 out of 299 parliamentary seats that went to polls.

UN calls

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on Monday said, "The United Nations is aware of violent incidents and reports of irregularities in the Bangladesh general election."

The UN regretted the loss of life and injuries sustained by candidates and voters during the electoral campaign and on the voting day, it said.

US STATEMENT

The US in a statement yesterday commended the Bangladeshis who voted in the election as well as the decision of all major opposition parties to participate.

"The United States remains deeply invested in the future of Bangladesh and its democratic development. The United States is Bangladesh's largest foreign investor, largest single-country market for Bangladesh exports, and home to a large community of Americans of Bangladeshi origin," said Robert Palladino, deputy spokesperson of the US state department.

However, it expressed concern over reports of harassment, intimidation, and violence in the pre-election period saying that those incidents made it difficult for many opposition candidates and their supporters to meet, hold rallies, and campaign freely. "We are also concerned that election-day irregularities prevented some people from voting, which undermined faith in the electoral process."

He said his country strongly encourages all parties to refrain from violence and request the EC to work constructively with all sides to address claims of irregularities.

"Bangladesh's impressive record of economic development and respect for democracy and human rights are mutually reinforcing, and we look forward to continue working with the ruling government and opposition towards advancing these interrelated goals," reads the statement.

EU STATEMENT

The EU said the mobilisation of voters and the participation of the opposition in the polls reflected the people's aspirations for democracy.

"However, violence has marred the election day, and significant obstacles to a level playing field remained in place throughout the process and have tainted the electoral campaign and the vote," an EU spokesperson said in a statement yesterday.

Maja Kocijancic, spokesperson for foreign affairs and security policy of the EU, in his statement said the relevant authorities should now ensure a proper examination of allegations of irregularities and commit to full transparency in their resolution.

Nine sued

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League, refuted the allegations on Monday.

There has been no other report of such incident from any other part of the country following the December 30 election.

The complainant yesterday told this newspaper that a police team led by Inspector (investigation) Md Ibrahim Khalil took him and his son to Char Jabbar Police Station around 9:00pm on Monday.

"I told police that former member of Char Jubilee Union Parishad Ruhul Amin ordered his accomplices to rape my wife as she voted for 'sheaf of paddy'."

"But in the case statement, police neither mentioned Ruhul Amin's name, nor the reason for rape," he added.

Contacted, Ibrahim, also investigation officer (IO) of the case, said the complainant had informed them that the accused were supporters of ex-UP member Ruhul.

Asked why Ruhul's name was not there in the case statement, the IO claimed that the complainant himself did not mention Ruhul's name.

Police on Monday night arrested one of the accused -- Badsha Alam.

The police officer said they were trying to arrest the other accused in the case filed under the Women and Children Repression Prevention Act.

The other accused are: Md Sohel, 35; Hanif, 30; Swapan, 35; Chowdhury, 25; Bechu, 25; Basu, 40; Abul, 40; Mosharraf, 35; and Salauddin, 35. They are from Maddhya Bagya village in Subranachar.

According to the case statement, around 12:30am on Monday, Salauddin, a neighbour of the complainant, went to his house and called his name.

As the complainant's wife opened the door, the accused forcibly entered the house and started beating him and his wife as a sequel to previous enmity, it said.

At one stage, the accused tied hands and legs of the complainant and his children, and gagged them. Then they took his wife to a nearby pondside and gang-raped her, mentioned the statement.

Before leaving, the accused vandalised the tin fence of the complainant's house.

Later, the complainant freed himself and found his wife near the pond.

Talking to this newspaper, Superintendent of Noakhali General Hospital Dr Md Khalil Ullah said the medical test report on the victim was yet to be available.
CALL FOR ACTION

National Human Rights Commission Chairman Kazi Reazul Hoque yesterday said they would investigate the incident if the Election Commission, which has the authority to deal with it, fails to do so.

At a press briefing at his office in the capital, the NHRC chairman said, "They [the EC] are supposed to deal with this." If they don't do so, the NHRC will take steps.

Different human rights bodies, including Bangladesh Mahila Parishad and Human Rights Forum Bangladesh (HRFB), a platform of 40 human rights organisations, condemned the incident and demanded exemplary punishment to the perpetrators.

They also called for ensuring security of the victim and her family.

BNP to collect

FROM PAGE 2
other parties, rejected the result and demanded a reelection.

Chief Election Commissioner KM Nurul Huda ruled out the demand saying there was no scope for holding any fresh election.

The BNP high command would prepare a summary report and brief foreign diplomats stationed in Dhaka following the compilation of data on the centre-wise results and alleged polls anomalies, said a party source.

The high command was observing the overall situation and the reaction of the international community over the election.

Asked about the party's next course of action, a senior leader said they would not do anything hurriedly.

"We will take some time as the party leaders and activists have been devastated by government repression. We will certainly devise our next course of action once we turn around," BNP Standing Committee member Moudud Ahmed said.

The BNP high-ups have already decided that MPs elected from the party would not take oath as they have rejected the results alleging various polls irregularities, including ballot-stuffing and driving away of their polling agent from voting centres.

A senior leader from the Oikyafront, wishing anonymity, said the main challenge for the BNP was to keep the unity within the combine and the 20-party alliance intact.

The Oikyafront nominated candidates in 299 constituencies, only seven of them won.



Poly



Meem

Mayhem in Malibagh

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The accident took place around 2:00pm when a Gazipur-bound bus of "Shupravat Paribahan" hit Meem and Poly near the Abul Hotel in Malibagh Rail crossing area, said Biplob Kumar Sarker, deputy commissioner (Tejgaon Division) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police.

The two went out to have their lunch, said Sumi, a coworker of Poly.

Following the incident, several hundred agitated workers of nearby garment factories took to the streets around 3:00pm and blocked the Malibagh-Rampura road for around four hours, vandalised around 40 vehicles and set fire to two buses.

The blockade caused immense public suffering.

The clash left over a dozen people injured, including Nazmun Nahar, an additional deputy commissioner of police.

Two units of firefighters went to the spot and doused the fire, said Rana Mia, an official at the fire service and civil defence headquarters.

The agitators fought a pitched battle with police when the latter tried to disperse them with armoured personnel carrier around 6:00pm.

DC Biplob said police had arrested the bus driver and seized the bus from the spot immediately after the incident.

The bodies were sent to Dhaka Medical College morgue for autopsies.

Jorina Begum, mother of Meem, filed a case in this connection last night accusing Md Junayed, the driver of the bus, for reckless driving, said Abdur Rashid, sub-inspector of Hatirjheel Police Station.

A notice was found hanging at the main entrance of MH Fashion saying the factory would remain shut today.