SKIRTING DISASTER… Four youngsters on roller skates go round a curve on the capital's Topkhana Road yesterday. This is risky because they are rolling alongside much faster and bigger vehicles including buses, the drivers of which often operate recklessly and with little regard for smaller vehicles or pedestrians. PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

It's 'out of vengeance'

Mahbub fires back at CEC

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

Election Commissioner Mahbub Talukdar yesterday hit back at Chief Election Commissioner KM Nurul Huda saying that the latter criticised him "out of vengeance" as they had differing positions on different election issues.

Mahbub in a statement said the EC bears medical expenses of all its current and former commissioners according to rule, and CEC Huda also availed it.

"As an election commissioner, it is my right to get proper medical treatment. The CEC has chosen the worst option to wreck his vengeance on me due to my differing stance on election-related issues," said Mahbub.

Huda and Mahbub on several occasions traded barbs in public in recent years.

Speaking at a press meet on Thursday, Huda said Mahbub has a "personal agenda".

Asked about Mahbub's criticism of candidates

"He [Mahbub] had been in ICU and CCU, spent Tk 30 lakh to Tk 40 lakh a year as medical expenses ..."

Chief Election Commissioner **Nurul Huda**

"As an election commissioner, it is my right to get proper medical treatment."

Election Commissioner **Mahbub Talukdar**

getting elected unopposed and other election related issues, the CEC said, "The Election Commission cannot do anything if political parties do not contest polls.

"He [Mahbub] had been in ICU and CCU, spent Tk 30 lakh to Tk 40 lakh a year as medical expenses, which was paid by the Election Commission, and he made comments for getting those published by the media."

Mahbub in his statement said the CEC did not give accurate information about his medical expenses.

He said he had been suffering from prostate cancer; went to Singapore and Chennai, India for treatment as per advise from BSMMU medical boards.

"I did not go abroad for treatment on government expenses in the last two years. But I went to [United States of] America for treatment on my own expenses during these two years," he added.

On January 6, Huda said Mahbub was "intentionally spreading falsehood, with an agenda to defame the Election Commission".

He was countering Mahbub's comment that violence was an integral part of the ongoing union parishad elections.

On November 14 last year, Huda differed with Mahbub's comment that election was now in ICU, democracy on life support.

"I don't believe that there is no proper atmosphere for elections...the comments he [Mahbub] made are not decent," the CEC said.

Speaking at an event on March 2 last year, Mahbub said local government elections turned

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COVID DETECTION BEFORE TRIP

Migrants forced to cancel flights

RASHIDUL HASAN

Some 550 Bangladeshi expatriate workers, including 200 UAE-bound ones, are forced to cancel their flights every day at the last moment, said sources at Dhaka airport.

Their tickets get cancelled as they test positive for coronavirus, said officials of Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport, seeking anonymity.

Talking to The Daily Star, multiple expatriate workers expressed serious concerns over their return to workplaces before the expiration of visas.

One such expatriate worker Jumadin Ahmed, of Madaripur, said he was scheduled to go to Dubai on January 26.

"As required by the papers, I took a coronavirus test 48 hours before the flight and I tested negative.

"I went through the same test six hours before the flight again and this time I tested positive."

Another such passenger Mohammad Rakibul Hasan was scheduled to leave the country on January 25. He too could not fly for testing positive six hours before his flight.

As per the rules, all UAE-bound passengers will have to undergo a coronavirus test six hours before their flights and receive a negative report.

Both Jumadin and Rakibul said that their visas would expire by early February and that they would be in serious trouble if they did not manage to reach their workplaces before that.

In such a situation, the authorities of Dhaka airport and different airlines suggested passengers book a fresh ticket after around 14 days.

Around 10,500 passengers, the majority of whom are expatriate workers, leave the country to join workplaces in different countries every day, HSIA sources said.

Of them, between 150 and 200 UAE-bound passengers return from Dhaka airport as they test positive for the virus six hours before their flights, the sources added.

Apart from the UAE, outbound passengers to other countries need to go through the Covid-19 test 36 to 72 hours before their flights.

Officials at the HSIA said around 350 to 400 passengers who test positive for Covid-19, do not come to the airport for their flights every day.

Dr Shahriar Sajjad, assistant director of HSIA heath desk, said around 2,500 to 3,000 UAE-bound passengers take the Covid-19 test at the airport every day.

Analysis of the data collected from expatriate migrant workers whose flight was cancelled due to the infection showed that most of them bought flight tickets keeping a close gap with their joining date at their workplaces abroad.

At the last moment, they meet their relatives and friends, increasing the risk of coronavirus infection among them.

Most of the migrant workers whose flights were cancelled say they had no Covid-19 symptoms.

Doctors at the HSIA said that most people think that if they are infected with coronavirus, they will get symptoms like fever, cough and cold.

"Many people are being affected nowadays whose bodies do not show any symptoms."

Shahriar said outbound passengers should be very careful from seven days before their flights at least.

They will have to stop shopping and meeting with relatives seven days before their flight date, he said.

He also said that the passengers must ensure social distancing and follow health guidelines while they are going outside.

According to the health directorate, if any outbound passenger is tested Covid-19 positive, he or she will not be able to go abroad within the next seven days.

The directive, issued in June 2021, further said that the infected passengers will have to test negative from a government-run lab before flying abroad after those seven days.

Star HEALTHLINE

Know your deshi 'superfoods' GOOSEBERRIES

STAR HEALTH DESK

Gooseberry, or Amloki, is widely available in Bangladesh and the subcontinent. It has a following throughout the world as a "superfruit" and rightfully so.

The small berries are round and bright yellow-green. They are quite sour and bitter when eaten raw and a 100gm serving contains almost as much vitamin C as 20 oranges.

There are many ways you can consume it, such as in jelly or curry forms. Here are some of the health benefits the fruit offers.

Diabetes control: The soluble fibre in gooseberries helps slow the rate of our body's absorption of sugar, helping diabetes patients.

Better digestion: Eating gooseberries regulate bowel movements and may help relieve symptoms of conditions like irritable bowel syndrome.

Healthier eyes: The richness of the fruit in vitamin A can be key to improvement of eye health.

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Turn the screw on Myanmar junta

UN rights chief urges world ahead of coup anniversary

AFP, *Geneva*

The United Nations yesterday urged the world to ramp up the pressure on Myanmar's junta to cease violence against the country's own people and quickly restore civilian rule.

One year on since the military seized power, UN human rights chief Michelle Bachelet said the country's people had paid a high price in terms of lives and freedoms lost.

Bachelet said that while there had been near-universal condemnation of the coup and the ensuing violence, she branded the international response as "ineffectual", saying it "lacks a sense of urgency commensurate to the magnitude of the crisis".

"It is time for an urgent, renewed effort to restore human rights and democracy in Myanmar and ensure that perpetrators of systemic human rights violations and abuses are held to account," she said.

The former Chilean president said the UN Security Council and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations had not done enough to convince the junta to facilitate humanitarian access.

Myanmar's military seized power on February 1 last year, ousting the civilian government and arresting its de facto leader, Aung San Suu Kyi.

The UN Human Rights Office said that since the coup, at least 1,500 people had been killed by the military in a brutal effort to crush dissent, while thousands more would have been killed in the wider armed conflict and violence.

At least 11,787 people have been arbitrarily detained for voicing their opposition to the military, the office said.

Pedestrians walking past a mound of garbage consisting of discarded masks, face shields, gloves, PPE, etc. right next to the Dhaka-Aricha highway near Baliapur in Savar on the outskirts of the capital. Disposing Covid-19 safety equipment in an open space like this increases health risk. The photo was taken on Thursday. PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

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