

HC rejects 2 writs challenging legality of Shahabuddin's election process

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday summarily rejected two separate writ petitions challenging the legality of the process of electing Md Shahabuddin as president of the country.

The HC bench of Justice Md Khasruzzaman and Justice Md Iqbal Kabir Lytton passed the order after holding a hearing on the petitions.

The grounds on which the HC rejected the petitions could not be known as the full text of the order is yet to be released.

However, Deputy Attorney General Bepul Bagmar told The Daily Star that the HC rejected the petitions on the ground that the reasons mentioned in the petitions are not acceptable as the president is holding the office of profit in the service of the republic.

The president is the master employer, who is not under the service of the government, the DAG added.

Supreme Court lawyers MA Aziz Khan and Abdul Momin Chowdhury filed the petitions on March 7 and March 12 respectively, also praying

SEE PAGE 6 COL 2

3 die in septic tank of Savar factory

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Three people, including a cleaner, died yesterday while working inside a septic tank of a garment factory in Ashulia.

Officials of local fire service station and locals said that Mithu, 16, first went inside the septic tank of Al Rahman Knitting Fashion Bd Ltd in Dargarpur area of Shimultala to clean it around 3:00pm.

Not getting any response from Mithu for around an hour, Rakib, 22, a worker of the factory, went in looking for him.

Later, Muhammad Ali, 26, also went inside the tank to look for the duo and he too did not return.

On information, fire service started rescue operation around 8:10pm.

The firemen recovered three bodies around 10:00pm.

DEPZ Fire Service Station officer Zahurul Islam told The Daily Star that bodies of the three was to be handed over to the police station concerned.



Police trying to restrict journalists from entering a polling booth at the Shaheed Shafiur Rahman Auditorium of the Supreme Court Bar Association building in the capital yesterday during the SCBA elections.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Putin wants to 'expand' war Says Ukraine after US drone crash; Moscow urges Washington to stop 'hostile' flights

AGENCIES

Kyiv yesterday accused Russian leader Vladimir Putin of trying to widen the conflict in Ukraine after Washington said Russian fighter jets intercepted a US drone over the Black Sea, causing it to crash.

"The incident with the American MQ 9 Reaper UAV -- provoked by Russia over the Black Sea -- is Putin's way of signalling his readiness to expand the conflict to involve other parties. The purpose of this all-in tactic is to always be raising the stakes," Ukraine's National Security and Defence Council secretary Oleksiy Danilov said on social media.

Washington has said neither it nor the Russians had recovered the wrecked drone.

US European Command said two Russian Su-27 fighters intercepted the unmanned MQ-9 Reaper over international waters on Tuesday and one clipped its propeller.

Washington blamed Moscow for the incident, calling its fighters' conduct reckless and unprofessional, but Russia has denied any wrongdoing, reports AFP.

"We assume that the United States will refrain from further speculation in the media

and stop flights near Russian borders," Russia's ambassador to Washington, Anatoly Antonov, said yesterday.

"We consider any action with the use of US weaponry as openly hostile," he wrote on social media channel Telegram.

Russia's defence ministry said Tuesday it scrambled fighter jets following the detection of a US drone over the Black Sea and denied causing the crash.

The Pentagon said its drone was on a routine mission when it was intercepted "in a reckless, environmentally unsound and unprofessional manner," while Russia countered the aircraft was out of control.

"As a result of a sharp manoeuvre... the MQ-9 unmanned aerial vehicle entered an uncontrolled flight with loss of altitude and collided with the surface of the water," the ministry said adding that the two Russian jets had no contact with the US aircraft and did not use their weapons.

The US State Department said it had summoned Russia's ambassador to protest. White House national security spokesman John Kirby followed up saying, "obviously, we refute the Russians' denial".

Rohingya volunteer shot dead in Cox's Bazar

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

A youth was shot dead in a Rohingya refugee camp in Ukhiya upazila of Cox's Bazar's yesterday.

The dead is Abdur Rashid, volunteer at Balukhali camp-8.

Syed Harunur Rashid, commanding officer of Armed Police Battalion-14, said a gang opened fire at Rashid around 8:00am, leaving him critically injured.

He was rushed to a hospital inside the camp where doctors declared him dead, he said.

The body was sent to Cox's Bazar Sadar Hospital morgue for autopsy, said Sheikh Mohammad Ali, officer-in-charge of Ukhiya Police Station.

Schoolboy's body found with throat slit

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

Police recovered the body a seventh grader with a slit throat in Dinajpur's Chirirbandar upazila on Tuesday.

The deceased is Mirajul Islam, 14, son of Aminul Islam and a student of Palapara Dwimukhi Adarsha High School.

The victim's mother Meher Nigar said he had gone out around 8:00pm to buy some groceries from Ranirbandar Bazaar. As he did not return till 10:00pm, the family started searching for him.

Bazlur Rashid, officer-in-charge of Chirirbandar Police Station, said that around 11:00pm, locals found Miraj's body with a slit throat in Ranirbandar area and informed police, who recovered the body and sent it to M Abdur Rahim Medical College Hospital for autopsy.

He added that police were investigating the murder but are yet to make any headway.

Driver killed, his auto-rickshaw missing

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

Police yesterday recovered the body of a battery-run auto-rickshaw drivers in Tangail's Basail upazila.

The deceased is Julhas Miah, 50, of Tangail Sadar.

Mohammad Hanif, inspector (investigation) of Basail Police Station, said that locals found Julhas's body lying next to Basail-Nalua road in Gazirbhanga area and informed police, who recovered the body and sent it Tangail General Hospital for autopsy. His vehicle, however, was missing.

The victim's family said Julhas had gone out with his auto-rickshaw on Tuesday and did not return home.

Mostafizur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Basail Police Station, said the victim's hands were tied and mouth was gagged, while there were injury marks on his body, adding that they suspect criminals killed him to snatch his auto-rickshaw and later dumped his body on the roadside.

Man handed death for burning three children to death

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jhenaidah

A Jhenaidah court yesterday sentenced a man to death in a case filed against him for burning three children to death in 2016 in the district's Shailkupa upazila.

The accused, Iqbal Hossain, 35, Kabirpur village, was also fined Tk 3 lakh.

Judge Md Nazimuddaula of the District and Sessions Judge Court passed the sentence at noon.

According to the case, Iqbal was in a land dispute with his brother Delwar. On the evening of January 3, 2016, he invited his nephews Safin, Amin and Mahin to his house to "watch cartoons". When they came, he beat them with a hammer, locked them in a room with an opened gas cylinder and then set it on fire. Safin and Amin died from burn injuries on the spot, while Mahin died while undergoing treatment.

Violence mars SCBA polls

FROM PAGE 1

carried out by policemen upon the instructions of Ramna DC Shahidullah and ADC Harun or Rashid. The journalists who were present at the scene saw and heard it."

The statement signed by LRF President Ashutosh Sarkar and General Secretary Ahammed Sarwar Hossain Bhuiyan said this was the first time police assaulted journalists on the Supreme Court premises and demanded immediate withdrawal of the two police officers and actions against other cops involved.

Journalists were beaten up even though their identities were made clear, it said.

Police threw away the microphones of journalists and assaulted a female reporter. Several TV camerapersons were locked inside an auditorium and police were heard hurling abuse at them, it added.

The injured journalists include Zabed Akhter of ATN News, Fazlul Haque Mridha of Jagonews, SM Nur Mohammad of Ajker Patrika, Jannatul Ferdousi Tanvee of Independent TV, Shubhra Kanti Das of Prothom Alo, and Ibrahim of Boishakhi TV.

The policemen kept kicking Zabed Akhter even after he fell to the floor, the statement said, adding that he was rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

Chief Justice Hasan Foez Siddique expressed shock at the police attack on journalists when Law Reporters'

Forum leaders met him at his SC office around 1:30pm.

The chief justice and Law Minister Anisul Huq later promised the Law Reporters' Forum leaders that proper steps will be taken.

Dhaka Reporters' Unity, Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalists, Broadcast Journalist Center and Gontontro Moncho also condemned the police attack.

Around 3:30pm, a group of pro-BNP lawyers chanting "Joy Bangla" attacked and vandalised the marquee outside Shaheed Shafiur Rahman Auditorium in which the polling booths were set up.

Several pro-AL lawyers who were hurt said they got confused by the slogan, usually chanted by the pro-AL men, and did not see the attack coming.

The pro-BNP lawyers entered the auditorium, vandalised a desk, and tried to enter a polling booth. But they were stopped by pro-AL lawyers and police.

The pro-BNP lawyers then left the auditorium, chanting slogans for cancelling the election and fixing a fresh date for a free and fair election.

Around 3:00pm, pro-BNP president candidate AM Mahbub Uddin Khokon and secretary candidate Md Ruhul Quddus Kazal told a press briefing at the SC Annex building gate that several pro-BNP lawyers were injured during attacks by police and pro-AL lawyers.

They said the sub-committee conducting the election was not formed as per the SCBA constitution.

Pro-AL SCBA secretary candidate and the current Secretary Abdun Nur Dulal told The Daily Star that legal action will be taken against those who tried to stop the SCBA election and attacked the lawyers.

Additional law enforcers including riot police were deployed on the court premises.

Md Moniruzzaman, convener of election-conducting subcommittee last night filed a criminal case with Shahbagh Police Station accusing AM Mahbub Uddin Khokon, Md Ruhul Quddus Kazal, 10 other lawyers, 100 other unnamed people of stealing ballot papers and assaulting lawyers.

A seven-member subcommittee led by senior lawyer Munsurul Hoque Chowdhury was formed earlier to conduct the election. But Munsurul resigned from the post on March 13 citing personal reasons.

The ruling Awami League backed SCBA executive body then formed a sub-committee led by Md Moniruzzaman while the pro-BNP lawyers formed another committee headed by ASM Moktar Kabir.

Polling will resume at 10:00am today, said SCBA Administration Officer Rabiul Hasan.

A total of 8,589 lawyers were set to cast their votes in the two-day election.

Only 2,217 votes were cast yesterday.

diamond jewellery and dinner sets. Khan has denied wrongdoing.

The legal proceedings against Khan began after he was ousted from office in a parliamentary vote early last year. Since then, he has held nationwide protest rallies demanding a snap election, during one of which he was shot and wounded.

Current Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has rejected Khan's demands, saying the election will be held as scheduled later this year.

Political infighting is common in Pakistan, where no prime minister has yet fulfilled a full term and where the military has ruled for nearly half of the country's history.

Russia proposes payment in rouble

FROM PAGE 1

of the Russia-Bangladesh commission, which concluded yesterday.

The existing Russian-Bangladeshi interbank infrastructure is not sufficiently robust to service all mutual foreign trade settlements without the involvement of intermediary banks from third countries, said the Bank of Russia in a letter to Bangladesh Bank Governor Abdur Rouf Talukder ahead of the three-day virtual meeting.

The current situation sets special requirements for the financial infrastructure in use: it should be resilient and independent from third parties, and it should be able to fully ensure uninterrupted and reliable settlements under trade and economic activities, the letter read.

"In view of this, we would be grateful if you could support and facilitate the establishment of direct correspondent relations between our countries' banks."

Should BB agree to this, the Bank of Russia sought a list of interested Bangladeshi banks.

The letter also mentioned a

currency swap agreement and setting up a currency clearing scheme to settle payments between the two countries.

Under the proposed arrangement by the BB, Bangladesh would deposit money in a Chinese bank account of the Bank of Russia. But Russia has been insisting on direct payment in roubles.

It appears Russia is softening its stance on this: Bank of Russia wanted to know the procedure for determining the conversion rate under the proposed currency clearing scheme and the anticipated timeframe by which it can be made operational.

It also sought the BB's opinion on connecting to the Bank of Russia Financial Messaging System (SPFS) for transferring financial information as well as the anticipated timeframe and method of connection.

The Bank of Russia also sought the central bank's opinion on the possibility of using Russian roubles to settle the foreign trade balance. It wanted to know the BB's experience as a member of the Asian Clearing Union.

At the three-day meeting, a host

of issues ranging from clearing mechanism for exports and imports to payment for the Rooppur nuclear power plant, from the import of liquefied natural gas to wheat from Russia were discussed among others.

"They gave us some proposals and we gave them some," Uttam Kumar Karmaker, additional secretary of the Economic Relations Division, told The Daily Star yesterday.

A mission will come from Russia next to further the talks and arrive at a decision.

"The issues are too important to be resolved over a virtual meeting. We did not arrive at any decision at the meeting," he added.

The security of SPFS is being assessed as SWIFT is said to be watertight, said another ERD official on the condition of anonymity as he is not authorised to speak with media.

"We have some requirements. Russia has sent us a letter over Rooppur payment and we are assessing the various modes as Russia has a lot of sanctions on it," said Md. Mezbaul Haque, BB spokesman.

Verification begins for first batch

FROM PAGE 1

least two attempts of repatriation and Chinese officials were also involved in the process as China began mediating under a tripartite arrangement involving China, Bangladesh and Myanmar.

However, not a single refugee of the over one million sheltered in Cox's Bazar's Teknaf and Ukhiya upazilas was repatriated, as the Rohingyas said the conditions in Rakhine were not safe and there was no guarantee of citizenship after returning.

Talks between Myanmar and Bangladesh had slowed since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic in early 2020, and military takeover of Myanmar in 2021.

Meanwhile, the global pressure piled on the Myanmar junta that is accused of killing thousands of civilians fighting for the return of democracy.

On the other hand, a genocide case is ongoing with the International Court of Justice, while the US has also termed the atrocities against the Rohingyas a genocide.

In December, the US Senate passed the BURMA Act to bolster support for

the Myanmar democratic forces.

Foreign ministry officials said Myanmar has shown growing interest for the Rohingya repatriation in recent times and has also arranged a trip for ambassadors of ASEAN countries and of Bangladesh, India and China to Rakhine last week to show the conditions.

They said that out of the list of 8.82 lakh Rohingyas sent to the Myanmar authorities, the identities of around 70,000 had been verified by the latter.

"We found that some members of the same families were left out of the list of verified Rohingyas. When we asked why it happened, the Myanmar authorities said there may have been spelling mistakes in the names or addresses," a foreign ministry official said.

He added that the Bangladesh government then invited the Myanmar officials to visit the Rohingya camps and verify the identities in person. "This visit [of the delegation] is meant to do that."

Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner Mohammed Mizanur Rahman told Reuters there was a

list of 1,140 Rohingyas who are to be repatriated under the pilot project, of which 711 have had their cases cleared.

Cases of the remaining 429 on the list, including some newborns, were still being processed, he said.

Those dropped out of the list will be added back and verified.

"We are ready to send them back," Mizanur said, adding that he did not yet know when exactly the repatriation would begin.

However, Chinese Ambassador to Bangladesh, Yao Wen, on Tuesday said he expects the first batch of Rohingya will be repatriated soon.

Patients to get

FROM PAGE 1

Prof Deen Md Noorul Haque, former Director General of Health Services, handed over an issue of KPJ Dhaka Journal of Medical Science to the prime minister.

Bangladesh Securities and Exchange Commission (BSEC) Commissioner Sheikh Shamsuddin Ahmed handed over the dummy of a Slit Lamp and Operative microscope to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.