

BSF 'tortures' Bangladeshi on Jhenaidah border

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole

A Bangladeshi was tortured allegedly by Indian Border Security Force members along Maheshpur border in Jhenaidah early yesterday.

The victim was Faruk Hossain, 42, of Berli village in Narail's Kalia upazila.

Farmers found Faruk in the Cumilla Para border area in the morning.

Later, the villagers informed his family members. After primary treatment, he was taken home.

Local UP member Obaidul Islam said Faruk was trying to enter Bangladesh through the Khasulpur border around 12:30am with his wife Hasi Sheikh and daughter Ayesha Khatun. At that time, he was detained by the BSF members and tortured brutally.

Injured Faruk told the media that he was tortured after being detained by the 194th Battalion BSF in Baranbera, India.

"They tied a rope around my neck and threw me towards the border, thinking I was dead," he said. He regained consciousness around dawn.



The Ismail Shah Shrine at Bottola in Barguna's Amtali upazila came under an arson attack early yesterday. The fire burnt down the shrine's hall rooms and sheds. Inset, the photo shows the shrine engulfed in flames around 12:15am.

PHOTO: SOHRAB HOSSAIN

BNP cautiously optimistic of polls

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a cut-off date for everything. Nothing can be open ended. Uncertainty surrounding this matter is creating doubts among people, which is unfortunate," he added.

Salahuddin Ahmed, another member of the party's standing committee, termed the chief adviser's remarks "inconsistent".

"Earlier, he [Yunus] said that the election would be held in December. Now he is saying the date may change depending on the undertaking of comprehensive or short reform packages. What we figure now is that constitutional reforms are a major issue, and for this, a parliament is needed."

The other reforms could be done through ordinances if all political parties agreed, and it would not take more than three months.

"We don't know why he [Yunus] is making inconsistent comments. We expect him to make it clear that the election will be held by December," he added.

At a programme on Sunday, Mirza Abbas, another standing committee member, said: "We've heard many things -- some say the election will happen, the others say it won't. We don't want to believe in anything. We want to believe that Dr Yunus will stand by his words. We hope to see an election

by December."

The BNP's suspicion deepened following a February 10 meeting between its senior leaders and Yunus. After the meeting, BNP leaders said they were assured that the election would be held in December.

However, two weeks later, Shafiqul Alam, the chief adviser's press secretary, said the election could also be held in March next year depending on political consensus.

The BNP leaders believe that the government is trying to cater to the interests of multiple political groups, which may explain the conflicting statements.

They point to the emergence of the National Citizen Party (NCP) led by Nahid Islam as a factor influencing the interim government's strategy.

Nahid recently told Reuters that holding the election in December may be difficult because of the current law and order situation.

However, he added that before polls can be held, it would be crucial to reach a consensus on the "July Charter" that the interim government plans to prepare in consultation with political parties and student activists.

"If we can reach that consensus within a month, we can call for polls immediately. But if it takes more time, the election should be deferred," Nahid added.

Following Nahid's remarks, the BNP standing committee held an emergency meeting where it discussed the possibility of a deliberate delay in the election.

"It is clear that the government is trying to play both sides. On one hand, it is trying to assure the BNP that an election would be held in December. On the other hand, it is trying to keep open the option of holding the election in June next year to satisfy the other political parties," said a senior leader wishing not to be named.

Sarjis Alam, the chief organiser of the NCP for the northern region, made a controversial statement that reinforced BNP's concerns.

Until the execution of Sheikh Hasina, no one should even talk about the election, he said.

Meanwhile, despite the uncertainty, the Election Commission is preparing for a December election.

However, logistical challenges remain.

If the election is delayed beyond December, the next feasible window might not open until October 2026 as there will be Ramadan, HSC exams and the monsoon season from February to June.

The BNP leaders argue that an election delay will only add to the political instability and distrust towards the government.

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It also argued that the Supreme Judicial Council already handles this and such a provision would weaken the EC's ability to make firm decisions.

The letter, signed by EC Senior Secretary Akhtar Ahmed, said that the formation of a separate commission for delimitation would weaken the commission's constitutional authority and disrupt the electoral process.

During a press conference yesterday at the EC Secretariat, Akhtar said, "Implementing these recommendations will undermine the EC's independence."

The EC also disagreed on transferring voter list management and national ID card distribution to a proposed National Citizen Data Commission.

This would weaken the EC's ability to conduct elections independently and violate article 119 of the constitution, which outlines the Election Commission's functions, the EC said.

The commission objected to the inclusion of a proposal to bar fugitive individuals from contesting elections, saying such restrictions should be handled through existing legal mechanisms, not electoral reforms.

The EC differed with the proposal to make candidates submit nomination papers in person instead of allowing online submissions. In this regard, the EC cited concerns over adequate logistical support and previous incidents where candidates faced obstacles in filing nominations in person.

The EC rejected the idea of appointing returning officers solely from its own officials, emphasising that appointments should be based on competence and seniority rather than rigid rules.

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