

## Perks shoot up

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With the passage of The Speaker and Deputy Speaker (Remuneration and Privileges) (Amendment) Bill, 2003, both the speaker and deputy speaker will get sumptuary allowance of Tk 6,000 a month from now on. Previously, the speaker used to get Tk 5,000 and the deputy speaker Tk 3,000.

The speaker will also get an enhanced discretionary grant of Tk 3 lakh now from Tk 2 lakh. The speaker's daily allowance also got a significant rise from Tk 250 to Tk 750.

With the passage of the Ministers, Ministers of State and Deputy Ministers (Remuneration and Privileges) (Amendment) Bill, 2003, ministers will get a monthly house rent of Tk 25,000, up by Tk 7,500 from the previous amount of Tk 17,500.

State and deputy ministers will get Tk 20,000 a month each in house rent now. Earlier, they used to get Tk 15,000 each a month.

The ministers will get daily allowance of Tk 750 each now instead of Tk 225 while the state and deputy ministers will get Tk 600 instead of Tk 200.

The bill also enables the ministers to draw an annual discretionary grant of Tk 3 lakh each, a 50 per cent rise from Tk 2 lakh that they used to get earlier.

Similarly, the state ministers and deputy ministers will now get enhanced discretionary grants of

Tk 2 lakh and Tk 1.5 lakh respectively. Earlier they used to get Tk 1 lakh each.

Moreover, in addition to an official car, maintained at government expense, each of the ministers, state ministers and deputy ministers will also get a Jeep for essential official business, particularly while on official tour outside Dhaka.

In case the attached departments, directorates or corporations of the ministries and divisions concerned cannot provide the additional transport to them, the finance ministry will allocate necessary funds for procurement of the transports.

The amounts of sumptuary allowances for the ministers, state ministers and deputy ministers have now been raised to Tk 6,000, Tk 4,000 and Tk 3,000 from Tk 3,000, Tk 2,000, and Tk 1,500.

Earlier, Local Government and Rural Development and Cooperatives Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, who is also in charge of Cabinet Division in parliament, proposed passage of the bills on perks rise to the prime minister and the ministers.

Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Moudud Ahmed proposed passage of the bill seeking perks rise to the speaker and the deputy speaker.

## Flood situation

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recorded rise, 35 points recorded fall, 2 stations remained unchanged and 11 points are flowing above danger level yesterday.

Our Nilphamari correspondent reported that as floodwater started receding, diarrhoea and other water borne diseases broke out in the affected areas of the district.

Seven-year old Lucky Akhtar died from diarrhoea at Jharsinghshor village under Dimla upazila, sources at the district health department control room said yesterday.

Fourteen diarrhoea patients are being treated at six upazila health complexes and 200 others have released after treatment.

Our Sirajganj correspondent reported that flood and erosion in six upazilas of the district have taken a serious turn due to rain and onrush of water from the upstream. Water levels in Jamuna, Korotoa, Boral and Gianian river rose yesterday, inundating more

than 30 villages.

Sources at the district relief and rehabilitation office said about three and a half lakh people in Sirajganj Sadar, Belkuchi, Kazipru, Chowhali, Shahzadpur and Ullapara upazilas have been affected by flood.

Our Pabna correspondent reported that the people of 11 unions under six upazilas are marooned by water.

Due to the river erosion hundreds of families from the riverside Khanpura union have shifted to the safer places.

Flood situation in low lying areas of Sonatola, Sariakandi and Dhunat upazila of Bogra district remained unchanged till last Tuesday evening.

Water Development Board (WDB) sources said, that the water level of the Jamuna reduced to 24 centimeter but was still flowing above the 26 centimeters of danger level of Sariakandi.

The water of Bangali is flowing 4 centimeter above the danger level at Sariakandi point. On the other hand the water of the Korotoa is flowing 2.69 cm below of danger level.

It is reported that there is an acute shortage of food, pure drinking water and daily essentials in the flood affected areas. The peoples are selling their domestic animals at low prices.

## Army men

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47.30 crore was disbursed as credit and the remaining amount kept in a current account.

The audit report also stated that when relevant documents were sought about non-payment of the money to the government treasury, the people concerned said it was not possible to present the documents without permission of the higher authorities.

The army personnel concerned declined to make any comment on the financial irregularity when the auditing authorities raised the primary objection; rather, a request was made to withdraw the objection.

As the auditors got no response from the army unit concerned on this particular audit objection, the issue was identified as a financial irregularity and a note was sent out to the secretary of the defence ministry on December 4, 2001.

But as no response for resolution of the audit objection was made from the ministry as well, a demi-official letter was sent to the defence secretary on March 5 last year requesting him to respond to the issue within four weeks.

But no response came till date, the CAG's audit report said adding that the Tk 187.35 crore along with the interests should be deposited with the government coffer immediately.

The audit report of FY 2000-2001 on the defence sector, which was tabled in the House yesterday, also gave brief accounts of some other financial irregularities in various institutions under the defence ministry.

## Criminal case

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leader of Juba Mahila League, filed the case accusing the police personnel and ansars of assaulting her and some other women while they were in a procession at the Zero Point (Noor Hossain Square) at about 10:00am on June 17.

The procession was brought out by Juba Mahila League protesting the murder of SR Palash, general secretary of Bangladesh Chhtrala League Dhaka city (North) unit by a gang of miscreants on June 16.

After hearing, Magistrate Emdadul Haq took the case into cognizance and asked the DMP commissioner to submit a report in this regard by August 23.

## Outlaws give death threat to Rupsha OC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Purbo Banglar Communist Party (PBCP) has given death threat to Sirajul Islam, officer-in-charge of Rupsha Police Station, over cell and land phones several times on Sunday and Monday.

The OC filed an FIR naming six armed cadres of PBCP as accused in the killing of SI Shamsul Huq and Havildar Abu Bakar Siddique on July 3.

He has also filed a general diary as complainant after receiving death threat.

Meanwhile, 15 people have been shown arrested in the murder case. The arrestees include PBCP cadres Humayun, Zakir and Jahangir. They were taken on a three-day remain yesterday.

When asked, OC Sirajul Islam said that he had received death threat nine times over phones for naming 26 PBCP armed cadres in the FIR.

## Police inspector closed for illegal dealings with accused

UNB, Bagerhat

Police Inspector in the district court Mohammad Mozharul Islam has been closed to the police lines for underhand dealings with accused in criminal cases.

Superintendent of Police Mesbahuddin said Mozharul was suspended and closed to the police lines Monday night as he was found to have been maintaining illegal connection with accused persons and providing them opportunity to meet relatives.

## Irregularities

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mittee meeting minutes, contractors ledger, advance register, bill register, bill voucher or report could be shown by project director Saiful Islam during the audit despite repeated reminders, said the audit reports.

Besides, an unutilised amount of Tk 2.96 crore from the government portion under the DUTP in fiscal 2000-01 and unutilised Tk 1.98 crore against machinery procurement under Dhaka City Corporation Road Maintenance and Improvement Project in fiscal 1999-2000 from the government portion were not deposited in the treasury, said the reports.

There were also irregularities in the Urban Primary Healthcare Project of the LGRD Ministry during the fiscal 1999-2000 and the Rural Development Project-9 implemented during 1998-99 with EU and Dutch supports, the reports added.

There were also irregularities in the North-West Road Development Network Project of the Communications, Primary Education Development Project Phase-2 of Education Ministry and Secondary Education Development Project of the same ministry implemented in 2000-01, and Greater Dhaka Telecommunication Improvement Project Phase-2 of Telecommunications Ministry and BUET-Dutch Cooperation in the field of Water Resources Engineering Phase-2 of Education Ministry implemented during 1999-2000, according to the audit reports tabled yesterday in the House.

## Woman injured in acid attack in Mymensingh

UNB, Mymensingh

A woman sustained serious burn injuries in an acid attack at Majhihati village in Sadar upazila yesterday.

Family sources said Motalab threw acid on his aunt Nurjahan, 35, following a quarrel with her over fishing in a pond.

The victim was rushed to Mymensingh Medical College Hospital in a critical condition.

## Mizan killing

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members were also present in the courtroom.

"I am satisfied with the verdict, but I want its quick execution," said the aggrieved mother, Aroja Khatun.

"We need security as we apprehend attacks on our family," said Mizan's sister Sumi.

Earlier, supporters of the slain Juba Dal leader brought out a procession in the court area demanding death penalty to his killers.

Gunmen sprayed bullets on Mizan twice within half an hour at Rampura in the early morning of May 29, 2002. Raja and Hanif, who were taking fatally injured Mizan to hospital, were also shot and wounded in the second attack.

A gang of about 15 led by Kala Palash went to Mizan's residence, posing as morning walkers. They shot him in the chest as soon as he opened the door.

Aroja Khatun filed a murder case with the Khilgaon Police Station, accusing six including Palash.



PHOTO: PID

Outgoing US Ambassador Mary Ann Peters, right, pays a courtesy visit to Prime Minister Khaleda Zia at the Prime Minister's Office yesterday. (Story on Page 2)

## Twin sisters die after surgery

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The hospital had earlier in the afternoon triggered hope the 29-year-old sisters would survive the operation when it announced that neurosurgeons had successfully separated the twins' heads.

But hospital spokesman Prem Kumar Nair returned shortly afterwards to announce the Ladan had succumbed to massive blood loss at 2:30 pm local time.

Iranian expatriates in Singapore and locals who had gathered at the hospital then pinned their hopes on Laleh, but she died shortly after 4 pm.

A team of 24 doctors and about 100 medical staff, led by Singapore neurosurgeon Keith Goh, began the world-first operation to separate the twins at 10:00am on Sunday, knowing that one or both of the sisters might die.

German doctors refused Ladan and Laleh's plea in 1996 to operate, warning the operation would most likely kill one or both of them, or leave them in a vegetative state.

Since similar operations began 50 years ago, four in five attempts at separation have resulted in severe complications for one or both of the twins.

The Bijani sisters faced a greater risk as they grew older, with all previous operations to separate conjoined twins taking place when the patients were babies.

Goh, who led a team in 2001 that

successfully separated Nepalese babies in a 97-hour operation, said last month he was initially reluctant to lead the surgical team but the twins' determination won him over.

"We gave them the risks very bluntly," Goh said.

"We tried very hard to change their minds because it would be the easiest thing to... but we couldn't."

Ladan, generally recognised as the stronger willed and more feisty of the sisters, dominated a press conference last month while speaking in English, a language she only began learning two years ago.

"We don't have any fear about the surgery," Ladan said then when asked about the possibility the operation could kill her and Laleh.

"We feel happy, excited and a little bit nervous, especially me."

Laleh said she and her sister realised the dangers of the surgery but were focused only on a successful outcome.

"We believe God will help us. We go to the gym every day to do exercises and we think positively. Mentally we must think positively," Laleh said.

Although Raffles Hospital officials had remained publicly optimistic throughout the surgery, an ultimately fatal series of complications and failures plagued the operation.

Doctors encountered a six-hour delay on the first day of surgery

while removing a strip of bone that connected the women's heads, when they realised their skulls were thicker and more dense than initially believed.

"It (the procedure) was longer than originally expected because the bones were thick and compact, especially in areas where the two skull bones fused," the hospital said in a statement on Monday morning.

Further complications arose on Monday when surgeons discovered the sisters' brains were more closely linked than previously thought.

"Because they have been fused together for the past 29 years, their brains are very adherent to each other," spokesman Nair told a press conference at 11:00 pm local time on Monday, 37 hours after the operation began.

"The section to separate them is thus taking a long time because the neurosurgeons have to cut through the tissue very carefully, literally millimetre by millimetre."

The team was also unable to control the twins' blood supply.

"We have found that the blood pressure and the pressures in the brain between the two of them tends to fluctuate during the process of the surgery and that is something the team has to take into consideration while they are doing the dissection," Nair said on Monday night.

## Two held in cop-criminal shoot-out in Jhenidah

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jhenidah

Two criminals were arrested after a shoot-out with police at village Kabirpur in Saikupa Upazila of the district on Monday night.

Police recovered one LG and four bullets from their possession.

Acting on a tip-off, Saikupa police raided the house of criminal Khalilur Rahman at the village at about 8:30pm where a gang of criminals were holding a meeting.

Sensing presence of the police, the gang opened fire on them. Police returned fire, leaving two of the gang -- Mizanur Rahman Miza and Jinnah -- injured. Police nabbed the two with the arms and ammunition while the rest managed to flee.

Police took the injured criminals to Saikupa health complex. A case was filed.

## Shazneen case

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examined on that day.

In his deposition, Maksudur Rahman told the court that he was a magistrate in the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court, Dhaka, in July 1998.

The witness also told the court that he recorded the confessional statement of Minu at his chamber at about 1:00pm on July 1, 1998 under Section 164 of the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC).

Minu gave the statement willingly and of her own accord, the witness said.

Meanwhile, the prosecution lawyers submitted a petition to the court seeking recall of Atiqur Rahman alias Masum, a prosecution witness in the case and paternal uncle of Shazneen, to exhibit some documents of Masum's telephonic conversation with Hasan on the night of the incident. Masum was present in the court yesterday.

Earlier, he gave his deposition on March 12 and was cross-examined.

The court granted the petition and fixed July 10 for the appearance of the witness.

All the six accused Shahid, Hasan, Shaniram, Badal, Minu and Parvin were produced in the court yesterday.

Shazneen Tasnim Rahman, 15, the youngest daughter of Latifur Rahman, chairman of Transcom Ltd., was raped and murdered at their Gulshan residence on April 23, 1998.

Special Public Prosecutor ABM Sharfuddin Khan Mukul, Mahbub Ahmed and Arfan Uddin Khan appeared for the state and Mosharraf Hossain Kajol and MA Kamrul Hasan Khan Aslam for the accused.

## Anti-graft body

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ommendations for the nine-member selection committee: one minister instead of the proposed two, two judges of the Supreme Court nominated by the chief justice, comptroller and auditor-general, chairman of the Public Service Commission, a nominee from civil society by the prime minister and another nominee by the leader of the opposition; and these seven members will select a newspaper editor and a civil society member.

He defined the civil society as consisting of senior educationists, lawyers, former secretaries, economists, physicians and retired chiefs of armed forces.

The former secretary said the selection committee would prepare the panel of six through voting and the president would pick three out of them for appointment to the anti-corruption commission.

He also suggested that the status of the commission chairman should be equal to that of an Appellate Division judge and the two members should have the same status as High Court judges.

The commission should submit its annual report to the Jatiya Sangsad to ensure transparency, he emphasised.

Barrister Amir-ul-Islam suggested that the members to be selected for the commission should have independent public stature.

The selection body should accommodate nominees by the prime minister and the leader of the opposition to make it more acceptable, he felt.

Former adviser of the caretaker government and ex-inspector general of police (IGP) ASM Shahjahan appreciated the government for its move to set up an independent commission when corruption has spread its roots deep in society.

He said the chairman of the commission could be the immediate-past retired judge of the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court.

"The proposed bill should be discussed in detail in parliament. More importantly, the opposition should participate actively in the discussion," Shahjahan added. The commission should play a much

bigger role in reforming different institutions, he said.

Former chief justice Mostafa Kamal commenting on the issue said, "I don't think any institution in practice in Bangladesh ever worked independently at any time. Institutional independence is not enough. The persons working at an institution must be independent in their mental and psychological make-up."

An independent institution and a slavish mind do not go together, he said. "An independent person takes responsibility, and in the context of Bangladesh, he must be strong enough in mind to face pressure from all quarters -- government or non-government."

"Persons in authority and outside don't like independent persons," he said of his lifelong experience.

The Transparency International had voiced in an organised fashion the need for formation of such a commission for long.

In 2001, Transparency International Bangladesh Chapter had proposed setting-up of a constitutional council that would appoint the members of the independent anti-corruption commission. The council should consist of the president, prime minister, leader of the opposition, speaker and chief justice, it suggested.

It had an alternative suggestion that the president, chief justice and three other eminent persons of society could form the appointment committee.

## AL refutes

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arrested two AL leaders of Chapainawabganj in the early hours yesterday in connection with the removal of the portrait of the prime minister.

Joint Secretary of district Sramik League Shahjalal Shaheen and General Secretary of Rickshaw Samabaya Samity Shukuruddin were taken into custody with regard to a case filed against seven people.

They were accused of pulling down the prime minister's portrait during the visit of Awami League President Sheikh Hasina on Monday.

## Sudanese plane crash

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Residents of Port Sudan, fearing for their loved ones, rushed to the airport and gathered in nearby areas waiting for news. Residents of Khartoum made frantic checks to see if family or friends might have been on board.

A Sudan Airways employee told Reuters 104 passengers and 11 crew were killed. Identification efforts began shortly after the crash, but it was unclear how many bodies had been identified.

The names on the passenger manifest, which included 17 children, were read out on Sudanese television. Sudan Airways spokesman Mohamed Osman said seven foreigners had been on the flight, but gave no details on their nationalities.

Sudanese TV said the bodies of the victims were laid to rest in a mass grave in Port Sudan, about 700 km northeast of the capital. Local government officials issued a decree calling for the immediate burial of the dead.

Minister of State for Aviation Mohamed Hassan al-Bahi said on state radio that a committee had been formed to investigate the crash. Sudanese TV said the team was made up of civil aviation authority, Sudan Airways and security officials.

A year ago, a Sudan Airways cargo plane crashed into a residential area of the Central African Republic's capital Bangui, killing 23 people, mostly passengers and crew.

Another of the carrier's cargo

planes crashed on approach to the airport in the Kenyan capital Nairobi in December 1990.

In 1986, 60 people died when a Sudan Airways passenger plane was hit by a guerrilla SAM-7 missile, shortly after take off from Malakal in southern Sudan, where the government has been fighting a 20-year-old civil war with rebels.

Port Sudan is the country's only major port, and is the main oil export terminal for the nascent oil producer.

Sudan Airways employees said the 737 was the only aircraft owned by the airline. All other planes in its fleet were leased.

## Headmaster

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school went to the residence of Abdus Sobhan in the school compound in the morning. Sobhan asked the victim to bring a glass of water from the nearby room. As she went there, the teacher followed her, locked the door and raped the girl.

On return, the victim informed her mother, Kohinor Begum, of the incident. Kohinor filed a rape case with Zianagar Police Station against the rapist headmaster.

The case was transferred to the Speedy Trial Tribunal on May 10, 2003.

Judge Abdul Quddus Mia, after examining 12 witnesses and hearing of arguments of both the parties, found Abdus Sobhan guilty and gave the verdict.

## Husband to die

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page verdict in the crowded courtroom in presence of the lone accused amid beefed up security.

The judge was apparently charged with emotion when he handed down the verdict of capital punishment, but Faruq looked composed in the dock.

Faruq murdered his wife Kamrunnahr Lila before their son Swapnil, who was then two and a half years old by slitting her throat with a sharp knife at their fifth floor residence at House No. 6, Road No. 11, Nikunja-2 in Badda on July 21, 2002.

Sheikh Moniruzaman Mintu, brother of the victim, filed a case with the Badda Police Station on the same day accusing his brother-in-law Faruq. Police submitted the charge sheet on November 4, 2002 and the charge against Faruq was framed on March 20, 2003.

Lila and Faruq had fallen in love and got married on March 26, 1994.

"The thought of uncertainty looming on the fate of the boy could not refrain him from killing his (boy's) mother," the judge said in a choked voice. "So, there was no scope for any leniency towards the accused."

Faruq tried to hide the evidences of the crime. He also alleged that Lila's brother killed his sister to grab his (Faruq's) property.

The judge mentioned that there was no eyewitness to the crime excepting the two and a half years old Swapnil, but circumstantial evidences proved beyond doubt that Faruq killed his wife.

Twenty-four prosecution witnesses, out of 27, were cross-examined and the verdict was delivered in 87 working days.

Special Public Prosecutor Mohammad Mayeen Uddin moved for the state and Advocate Nazrul Islam for the accused.

Lila's elder brother Lutfar Rahman broke into tears hearing the judgement.

He expressed satisfaction over the verdict and demanded its immediate execution.

Lutfar also expressed his gratitude to the government for setting up the speedy trial tribunal that "ensures trial in the shortest possible time".

Special Public Prosecutor Mohammad Mayeen Uddin said the landmark judgement would help prevent recurrence of such crimes.