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## Dy speaker says speaker violates constitution

SHAKHAWAT LITON

Deputy Speaker Akhtar Hamid Siddiqui has alleged that Speaker Jamir Uddin Sircar is breaching the constitution and rules of procedure in running the House.

The speaker, however, refuted the allegation saying he did everything as per the constitution of the country and the rules of procedure of the Jatiya Sangsad, sources at the speaker's office at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhabansaid.

Earlier, the main opposition Awami League (AL) also raised similar allegations.

The deputy speaker claimed that the speaker let a member of the panel of chairmen, Abdul Alim,

preside over the sitting on November 18 during the 10th session of parliament. But he (deputy speaker) was not asked to preside over the sitting although he was in his Sangsad Bhaban chamber.

Siddiqui questioned the legality of the speaker's action and lodged a protest in writing with Sircar on that day.

The deputy speaker also sent copies of his letter to the Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Moudud Ahmed and Haris Chowdhury, political secretary to the prime minister.

According to Article 74(3) of the constitution, the deputy speaker will act as the speaker to preside over the sitting of the House. And if both the speaker and the deputy speaker are absent, a member from the panel of chairmen will act as speaker.

Terming the speaker's action unprecedented, the deputy speaker alleged in the letter that the House was not being run as per the constitution and the rules of procedure. Responding to the allegation in writing, the speaker yesterday claimed that there was nothing wrong with allowing a member of the panel of chairmen to run the House, sources said.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 4

## Six Spanish troops killed in Iraq

AP, Baghdad

Attackers ambushed a convoy of Spanish military intelligence officers on a highway south of Baghdad yesterday, killing at least six agents and wounding one, a Spanish defence ministry official said.

The official, reached by telephone in Madrid, said a coalition helicopter that reached the scene of the attack, 30 miles south of Baghdad, evacuated six bodies and one wounded person to a medical center. The official spoke on customary condition of anonymity.

Spanish officials earlier had said eight agents were in the convoy. The ministry official said he had no information about the whereabouts

SEE PAGE 11 COL 5

## Hasina to visit Banshkhali victims' house on Dec 2

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leader of the Opposition and Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina visits Banshkhali in Chittagong December 2 to condole the recent gruesome killing of 11 people of a Hindu minority family.

Hasina is scheduled to visit the residence of Tejendra Lal Shil at Shilpara village of the coastal upazila and address a public rally at Kalipur High School ground to protest the killing. She will return to the capital the same day.

Central leaders and party lawmakers will accompany the opposition leader during the visit.

Eleven people of a family in Shilpara were burnt to death when unidentified armed men torched a

SEE PAGE 11 COL 8

## Man with 'Mosad links' held at ZIA

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A man was arrested at Zia International Airport (ZIA) yesterday morning on his way to Tel Aviv for his alleged Mosad connection.

A leader of Bangladesh chapter of 'Ilaq', a Haifa-based organisation, Salauddin Shoit Chowdhury was carrying compact disks (CD) and papers containing write-ups on some sensitive issues including 'minority repression and the al Qaeda network in Bangladesh', police said.

Shoit was managing director of the planned Inqilab Television until he was sacked last year.

Members of different law enforcement agencies and ZIA immigration officials apprehended him at the immigration counter minutes before he was to leave for Bangkok by the Biman flight, BG-084, at 10:30am.

He introduced himself as the editor of the 'Blitz', an entertainment magazine published from Dhaka, and said he was going to Bangkok, a top police officer said yesterday on condition of anonymity.

Searching his luggage, we found a number of CD-formatted write-ups and papers that clearly proved

SEE PAGE 11 COL 6



PHOTO: STAR

Continuous encroachment on Gulshan Lake, one of the few open water-bodies still left in the city, threatens its existence. The bamboo fence on the foreground testifies to fresh occupation on the western bank near plot No. 5F on Road No. 104. And a newly thrown up tin-shed in the upper right corner stands in a prelude to large-scale construction. The structures thrive in a parody of a prime ministerial directive to protect lakes and water-bodies from grabbers.

## City still to break out of holiday mood

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The capital is still reeling under holiday hangover despite reopening of government and private offices yesterday after a three-day Eid-ul-Fitr holiday followed by weekend.

The capital looked deserted, as most of the shops and business centres remained closed. The menacing traffic jam is absent and rickshaws, minibuses and other vehicles are far less than normal.

Attendance was thin in the Bangladesh Secretariat yesterday due to absence of employees and no visitor showed up.

However, most high officials attended office though some ministers skipped.

Sources at the Secretariat said there was virtually no work at the office and officials and employees were engaged in exchanging Eid greetings and gossiping. Many of them left earlier, they added.

Attendance in offices in Motijheel commercial area, the business hub of the country, was also thin. Trading resumed at the Dhaka Stock Exchange but the number of brokers was fewer than normal.

The post-Eid cleanliness drive of Dhaka City Corporation apparently went better this year.

The holidaymakers have started returning to the capital in trains, buses and launches. Many returns along with family members were seen walking with their luggage due to shortage of vehicles.

In many cases, the passengers had to pay extra fare, especially for rickshaws, presumably to compensate for the least number of passengers.

## Notice

Star City is not coming out today and tomorrow due to unavoidable reasons. We deeply regret inconvenience to our valued readers.

## Default loans fall another 4 percent

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

The on-going reforms have resulted in further decline of default loans by 4 percent or Tk 2,714 crore during the first nine months of this year.

Bangladesh Bank (BB) sources said writing-off of bad loans and checking of new loan disbursement have yielded the result by improving portfolio health.

Because of the improvement, the amount of classified loans now

accounts for 24 percent of the total portfolio, an improvement from 28 percent nine months ago on December 31.

The nationalised commercial banks (NCBs) could reduce their classified portfolio by 2.73 percent on September 30 to 31 percent, the private commercial banks (PCBs) reduced it 2.65 percent to 14 percent, foreign commercial banks (FCBs) 0.61 percent to 2 percent and

SEE PAGE 11 COL 2

## Human pressure spells Hakaluki doom

PINAKI ROY back from Hakaluki

Hakaluki haor, the country's biggest wetland spanning a 45,000-acre area of Sylhet and Moulvibazar, and once rich in fauna and flora, is fast becoming a wasteland due to unchecked human habitation.

Apart from being a sanctuary for local wildlife, the wetland, locally called haor, also provided sustenance for local people who used it as a seasonal fishing ground.

But over the last three decades, some 100 villages have sprung up around the haor, whose flora and fauna are now all but gone due to mindless exploitation of its resources. Villagers have cut down hundreds of trees that once lined the banks of the wetland and poachers regularly net the birds that go there



Human encroachment has left a thin strip of swamp forest in Hakaluki haor, left, private duck farming, centre, poses a threat to bio-diversity and land recovered from the haor during dry season, right, is used for cultivation.



PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ

A trader sits in his shop of colourful wool on a pavement at Gullistan in Dhaka in the cold yesterday morning. Business was dull after the Eid-ul-Fitr holiday.

## Trade unionism at EPZs likely in Jan

RAFIQ HASAN

Dhaka may allow trade union (TU) activities in the export processing zones (EPZs) in the wake of Washington's threat to drop the generalised system of preference (GSP) to its export items from January if the activities were not allowed.

State Minister for Labour and Employment Amanullah Aman said this, adding that a high-powered inter-ministerial committee headed by him finalises recommendations to this end today. The recommendations will be sent to Prime Minister Khaleda Zia for consideration by mid-December.

"There is no restriction on the formation of trade unions in the EPZs from the government's side," Aman said.

"The workers can form trade unions at any time."

The issue of allowing trade unions at two EPZs, that employ 1,30,000 workers in around 180 industrial units, is over a decade old.

Bangladesh sat on the issue because the GSP has a comparatively low economic value in total export basket. Under the GSP, Bangladesh exports to the US fetch some \$40 million annually, but total export from one-fifth of country's total export earnings.

Restriction on trade unionism under a 1980 law is one of the many incentives investors enjoy at the EPZs. The two EPZs boast mainly South Korean and Japanese investments, apart from local investment to the tune of \$600 million. The investors are threatening the EPZ authorities with withdrawal of investment if trade unions are allowed.

The US is the largest importer of Bangladesh products, accounting for 44 percent of its total export. Although most US imports from Bangladesh fall outside the GSP, its cancellation may affect overall trade with Bangladesh.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 5

## BCS test questions 'leaked' again

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The questions of the 24th Bangladesh Civil Service (BCS) examinations slated for tomorrow have reportedly been leaked.

Some BCS examinees called The Daily Star last night to say that they received either the leaked questions or questions papers.

They asked whether the Public Service Commission (PSC), that runs the exams, decided to postpone the written test because of the reported leak. Some 47,000 examinees are likely to sit for the

test. An examinee, who received a set of question papers of Bangla at 9:00 last night, gave details of the questions including essay, amplification, idioms, précis and short questions.

At 10:30, another examinee said he would get the question papers of all the five compulsory subjects sometimes during the night. "I'll have to pay Tk 15,000 for the five subjects," he said, without giving his name. He also said he was waiting for a call from an examinee who also had tuition at the same coaching centre.

Many BCS examinees thronged the Dhaka University campus to get the question papers. "I have not got my hands on the question papers as yet, but I know they (those who have the leaked questions) would contact the interested examinees," said another examinee, who has been staying on the DU campus since two days before Eid.

Some examinees phoned The Daily Star to seek advice on whether to prepare for the examinations as they were certain about the questions leak. "I know for sure many

SEE PAGE 11 COL 4

## B Chy plans raft of roundtables in December

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Former president AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury will discuss his ideas of governance with the civil society and businesspeople throughout December, sources close to him said yesterday.

The discussions, that will try to find solutions to the problems 'besieging the nation', will give Chowdhury, the founding secretary general of Bangladesh Nationalist Party, thoughts to hold meetings with different political parties later, they said.

"He will convey his ideas to political parties so that they adopt those," said a source, adding Chowdhury would announce the programmes on Monday.

He returned home last night after a six-day stay in Bangkok where he

SEE PAGE 11 COL 1

## Outlaws shoot social worker dead

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

A gang allegedly from outlawed Purbo Banglar Communist Party (PBCP) gunned down a local social worker of Rahruli union in Khulna on Friday.

Three armed youths shot Komoruddin Gazi, 70, near Katipara Bazar in the afternoon when he was returning home on his bicycle, police said quoting locals.

The assailants fled the scene raising slogans in favour of the PBCP. They also ran their motorbike over Gazi's body, police added.

The gang was giving death threat to Gazi for the last few days, said Abdul Malek Mian, officer-in-charge of Paikachha Police Station.

No case was lodged and police failed to nab any of the assailants till filing of this report at 6:00pm yesterday.

## Student, maid 'commit suicide'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A college student and a domestic help allegedly committed suicide at Motijheel and Pallabi Friday night.

Sonia Islam Joya, 18, hanged herself from ceiling fan by her scarf at her grandfather's house at Garampanir Goli, Fakirer Pool in Motijheel after her grandmother rebuked her.

Nasrin Akhter, Joya's aunt, said they found her hanging from the fan yesterday morning.

Joya was a second-year intermediate student of Arambagh School and College.

At Pallabi, Fahima, 18, was found hanging from the ceiling fan in the kitchen yesterday morning.

Pallabi police recovered her body from the first floor house of Fariquzzaman.

Police suspect Fahima hanged herself after driver Nazmul -- a tenant of the ground floor -- turned down her marriage proposal. The two had an affair for long, they said. Nazmul is absconding since the incident.

PHOTO: SYED ZAKIR HOSSAIN