

## Lawmakers' good bills

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being placed before the House.  
"What can we do if the speaker does not want the bills to be tabled. We have done our part by scrutinising and submitting reports recommending that the House permit the bills to be placed," Justice Mozammel Haque, chairman of the parliamentary standing committee on private members' bills and resolutions, told The Daily Star yesterday.

The committee at yesterday's meeting decided to meet the law minister to discuss the issue.  
Irked by the law minister's instructions, the parliamentary standing committee on September 4 met the speaker to resolve the crisis. But the speaker refused to allow the bills to be tabled, upholding the ministry's say.

Since then, the parliamentary body has not convened a meeting until yesterday when it met after a recess of six months to discuss a new bill.

Sources said the committee members at the meeting expressed frustration over the stalemate.

"There is no need to hold meetings at the expense of public money when the speaker does not allow the private members' bills in parliament," committee member and Jatya Party lawmaker TIM Fazle Rabbi Chowdhury told the meeting.

Echoing the view, Awami League (AL) lawmaker and committee member KM Jahangir said it is meaningless to keep the committee since the speaker does not accept its [committee's] recommendations. "At first, the bills should be allowed to be placed. It should be left to the discretion of the House whether a bill should be passed or not," he argued.

BNP lawmaker Abu Yousuf Khalilur Rahman at the meeting proposed to meet the law minister, meeting sources said.

The committee chairman said they have decided to meet the law minister to discuss particularly the Code of Criminal Procedure Act (amendment) bill. The other issues including the fate of the other bills will be discussed in general, he added.

Instead of giving his (speaker's) nod to place the bills in parliament, Speaker Jamir Uddin Sircar in a letter on October 27, 2003 sought the law minister's recommendations on private members' bills.

After the law, justice and parliamentary affairs ministry consented to the bills, the speaker had asked the Parliament Secretariat to send the bills back to the law ministry for further scrutiny, delaying the process of tabling the bills in parliament.

Although the speaker later gave go-ahead to 11 bills, the law minister's letter on February 3 stopped the process.

### LAWMAKERS' VIEWS

BNP lawmaker Abdul Mannan and JP deputy GM Quader have piloted two bills regarding amendment to article 70 of the constitution that prevents the lawmakers from floor-crossing and forces them not to speak against the party decisions.

The article also discourages the lawmakers from criticising the party's decision in parliament, even

if he or she considers the party stance wrong. A lawmaker loses membership if the party expels them for going against its decision.

Both Mannan and Quader have proposed to amend article 70 to ensure individual freedom of the lawmakers in the greater interest of parliamentary democracy.

They proposed that a Member of Parliament, elected as a candidate from a political party, shall vacate his seat if he voluntarily resigns from the party or votes in a motion of no-confidence in the cabinet against his party.

A lawmaker's seat should not fall vacant in case of being expelled from the party that nominated him for election, said both the lawmakers.

BNP lawmakers Mannan, Rustam Ali Farazi and Jamaat-Islami lawmaker Shah Mohammad Ruhul Quddus have moved three separate bills proposing tightening the relevant rules so that the lawmakers and political parties cannot boycott parliament at will.

The existing constitutional provision says a lawmaker will lose their seat in parliament if they remain absent from the House proceedings for 90 consecutive days. The three lawmakers have proposed cutting the time to 60 days.

Another BNP lawmaker Ali Newaz Mahmud Khaiyam however has proposed to make it 30 days.

Abdul Mannan has piloted another bill seeking amendment to the constitutional provisions regarding the election and removal of the speaker and the deputy speaker.

The existing provision says the speaker and the deputy speaker are elected through simple majority and they can be removed also by simple majority. But Mannan proposed that two-thirds majority should be required in both cases.

He has moved another bill for constitutional amendment in order to deter the judges of the Supreme Court from feeling 'embarrassed'. In the bill, he asked for constitutional provisions for strengthening the oath of the judges.

GM Quader has submitted another bill where he proposed fixing the tenure of the chief justice at five years from the date he assumes office. The existing provision says the chief justice can remain in office until he is 67 years old.

Another bill by Farazi seeks a constitutional provision barring the candidates from contesting the parliamentary election from more than two constituencies. Although there is no specific constitutional provision on this, an ordinance promulgated during the Ershad regime barred a person from contesting from more than five seats.

Mannan has submitted to the committee another bill seeking amendment to article 76 that deals with the parliamentary standing committees.

## Body to probe

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staff for their suspected involvement in dubious transactions.

Sources said a special superintendent of police at the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) heads the home ministry probe committee while a BB representative and a Rapid Action Battalion official are the members.

"We'll decide our action after getting report of the committee," State Minister for Home Affairs Lutfozzaman Babar told The Daily Star yesterday.

The government is determined to take drastic action to root out militancy from the country, he said, referring to the process of formulating an anti-terrorist act.

"We're ready to take action as soon as we get any information regarding the militants' financial sources and network," said the minister.

He also said: "We made the CID special superintendent as head of the committee as he has received training in dealing with money laundering cases."

Following the arrest of militant kingpin Abdul Rahman and seizure of some banking documents from his suspected hideout on March 2, five BB teams probed three branches of Islami Bank, and one each of Rupali and Janata Bank.

The seized documents are related to Rupali Bank's Pallabi Branch in Dhaka, Janata Bank's Brahmanbaria Branch and Islami Bank's Lal Dighirparh Branch in Sylhet.

The probe teams found some lapses in banking norms and suspicious transactions with three Islami Bank branches in Sylhet, Gazipur and Savar, said sources.

The three branches of Islami Bank violated some of the regulations specified in the Anti-Money Laundering Act, specially the section called 'Know Your Customer (KYC)'.  
Despite the fact that there were some "dubious" transactions in its Sylhet branch, the Islami Bank did

not report it to the central bank as demanded by law, the sources added.

One Sabir Ahmed opened the account with the Lal Dighirparh Branch, but it was operated by Saidur Rahman, former Habiganj district ameer of Jamaat-e-Islami. The account with Rupali Bank's Pallabi Branch is in the name of Saidur.

The BB on Tuesday served a show-cause notice to the chief executive of Islami Bank on the alleged irregularities in the dubious accounts and asked him to reply within 10 days.

Sources said the probe report sent to the home ministry does not have any recommendation – it only shows the findings. The account holders, account numbers and others who had done transactions with those accounts have been mentioned in the report.

## Tk 50 lakh

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factory officials told police they had kept the amount in a vault in the accounts section in order to give salaries to the workers.

The police however found signs of foul play. "The factory authorities claim the robbers had entered the factory by cutting the steel grill. But it is impossible for a man to enter through that small hole," said a police officer seeking anonymity.

"The vault from where the amount was claimed to have been stolen had no signs of breaking in. We discovered that only a small portion of its inner part was damaged. And it is quite impossible to keep such a large amount of money in that small vault," he added.

Kabir Ahmed Chowdhury, executive director of the factory, dismissed police suspicion. The two guards are undergoing treatment at Chittagong Medical College Hospital.

## Victims of blast

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"We think that such politically motivated and false statement by the head of the government can seriously obstruct the whole investigation process," journalist-writer Shahriar Kabir read out from the statement.

JMB chief Abdur Rahman admitted that he started the countrywide grenade and bomb attacks with approval from the Jamaat-e-Islami after a meeting with it, Kabir said at the press conference organised by Ekatturer Ghatok Dala Nirmul Committee at the Dhaka Reporters' Unity auditorium.

The statement demanded immediate arrest of the Jamaat leaders at central, district and thana levels, alliance ministers, Rajshahi City Corporation mayor, MPs and bureaucrats named by top militants as their patrons.

If they are not arrested, they will not only interfere in the investigation but will also do everything like destroying evidences for their safety.

At the press conference, Prof Muntassir Mamoon who was arrested in connection with the bomb blasts at four cinema halls in Mymensingh in 2002, journalist Enamul Haq Chowdhury and Principal Motiur Rahman, accused of the case, and student leader Abu Abbas Bhuiyan, recently released on bail in Prof Humayun Azad attack case, narrated their sufferings of inhuman torture by law enforcers.

Poet Shamsur Rahman spoke of the horrifying days following an attack on his life in 1999 while Rehana Khatun, wife of late Rajshahi University professor Mohammad Yunus, narrated the terrible loneliness and insecurity she has been going through since her husband's murder. Latifa Karim, wife of Dhaka University professor Humayun Azad, was also present at the press conference.

The AL chief said the 14-party opposition combine will continue its movement to force the government to accept the reform proposals. People now want an end to the coalition government's misrule and they are waiting for a change, she added.

"The BNP-Jamaat government has completed all sorts of election engineering to rig the next general elections. That is why it does not want to implement the opposition's reform proposals."

The victims presented a six-point demand, including immediate arrest of the militant patrons, ban on the political activities of Jamaat and all other militant outfits, and action against the directors of madrasas used for recruiting and training the militants.

They also demanded immediate confiscation of all bank accounts of the militant organisations, stopping of Shariah-based banking of the Islami Bank, and action against the officials and Islamic NGOs involved in supplying funds for the militants.

The demands also include compensation for the families of those killed in militant attacks, arrested and tortured at different times on charges of militant attacks.

The statement also demanded the prime minister's apology to the AL for blaming it for the attacks actually carried out by Islamist militants.  
It suggested formation of a regional consortium involving Bangladesh, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India and Myanmar to outroot the regional militant network.

President of the advisory committee of Ekatturer Ghatok Dalal Nirmul Committee Prof Kabir Chowdhury and Supreme Court Bar Association President Mahbubey Alam also addressed the press conference.

## Bangabandhu

**FROM PAGE 1**  
Bangladesh emerged on the world map with the lifelong struggle, gallant leadership of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. He was born in 1920 in Tungipara of Gopalganj.

The main opposition Awami League (AL), its front organisations, and different socio-cultural groups have taken up various programmes to observe the day as "National Children's Day" – an idea introduced by the previous AL government.

The ruling four-party government, however, has dropped the programmes since it came to power.

The AL, on the occasion, will hoist the national and party flags at its offices across the country.

The AL leaders and workers will pay tributes to Bangabandhu by placing wreaths on his portrait at the Bangabandhu Memorial Museum in Dhanmondi in the city. AL will hold a milad mahfil, discussion meetings and cultural programmes in the afternoon today.

An AL delegation from the city will visit Tungipara and lay wreaths on the grave of Bangabandhu there.

Leader of the Opposition and AL chief Sheikh Hasina in a message said Bangabandhu became the father of the nation through his kindness to people, strong political wisdom and sacrifice.

She recalled the brutal killing of Bangabandhu in 1975 and said the defeated forces in 1971 had killed Bangabandhu at a time when he was beginning to free the country from its economic dependencies.

Describing the BNP-Jamaat's role as "anarchic" the opposition leader called people to unite in the movement to oust this government.

Meanwhile, Sheikh Russell Shishu Sangsad will hold a discussion tomorrow in front of the Bangabandhu Museum to mark Bangabandhu's birth anniversary.

## Accept in principle

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prime minister said if they (AL) return to power in the next elections, they will not abolish Rab.

"Many people think if Awami League comes to power again, it will abolish Rab. But we will not do so. Rather, Rab will be given a special assignment to capture corrupt people," said Hasina, who was so long highly critical of the elite force for 'extra-judicial killings' in 'violation' of human rights and rule of law.

On the proposed government-opposition discussion, Hasina said, "Agenda for the discussion must be clear first. The two sides will then discuss what part of proposed reforms could be accepted or where it could be changed."

The leader of the opposition mentioned that they placed the reform proposals in parliament but the leader of the House proposed formation of a committee to discuss it without saying whether they (govt) would accept the proposals or not.

The prime minister's proposal also did not specify if the committee would be a parliamentary one or comprise political leaders, showing the government is not sincere about it, Hasina said.

The prime minister is talking about dialogue for reforms and at the same time she is turning down reform proposals one after another, "the AL chief said. "We have demanded that the armed forces are to be under the control of the caretaker government chief during his tenure but the prime minister at a recent rally said they would be under the president."

The AL chief said the 14-party opposition combine will continue its movement to force the government to accept the reform proposals. People now want an end to the coalition government's misrule and they are waiting for a change, she added.

"The BNP-Jamaat government has completed all sorts of election engineering to rig the next general elections. That is why it does not want to implement the opposition's reform proposals."

## Mobile operators

**FROM PAGE 20**  
Aktel has installed 23 base stations, CityCell five and Banglalink three such stations along the border, the regulator said.

"These base stations are too close to the border and they emit signals inside the Indian territory," says the BTRC letter.

"It makes communicating from India with anyone in Bangladesh very easy, hindering the anti-smuggling and anti-terrorist operations," the regulator claimed.

The BTRC in the letter summoned all operators yesterday and demanded decommision of their respective network infrastructures within eight kilometres of the border.

The operators have, however, strongly opposed the "utterly impractical" directive.

Meeting sources said officials of the cellphone operators slammed the decision, implementation of which would disconnect all subscribers within and beyond the municipal areas of Rajshahi, Dinajpur, Thakurgaon, Panchagarh, Chapainawabganj, Meherpur, Satkhira, Comilla, Brahmanbaria and Feni.

Besides questioning the merit of the BTRC order, the operators are apprehending of being sued as promoters of aggrieved subscribers soon after withdrawing the network coverage.

Mobile phone dealers in these areas will also file lawsuit against the operators for jeopardising their investments and livelihood by suddenly suspending the network.

"It is impossible for us to withstand the massive legal and sociopolitical backlash, let alone sustaining huge financial loss," an operator's representative commented at the meeting.

The BTRC, however, granted three weeks' time to GrameenPhone and two weeks to others to come up with a solution, which would totally prevent

Chief Whip Khandaker Delwar Hossain's telephonic contact with Deputy Leader of the Opposition Abdul Hamid on Tuesday for talks was a 'drama', Hasina said. The government is virtually trying to avoid a fruitful discussion on reforms.

Turning to militancy, she said the militant kingpins are getting cordial treatment in custody while opposition leaders and journalists were arrested and tortured for exposing misdeeds of the militants.

On power shortage, she said the alliance government could not increase power generation by a single megawatt in the last four years. She blasted it for fertiliser and diesel crises and price hike of essentials.

The former prime minister accused government leaders, their family members, lawmakers and other ruling alliance men of gobbling up public money through corruption, leaving the people in utmost misery.

In reply to a question, she said her son (Sajib Wajed Joy) would obviously return to his motherland. But she did not specify when.

AL leaders Kazi Zafirullah, MP, and Abdus Sobhan Golap accompanied Hasina, who is likely to return home on March 30, party sources said.

During Hasina's stay abroad, Zillur Rahman will be the acting president of the party.

Party leaders who saw her off at the airport included Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury, Abdur Razzak, Tofail Ahmed, Suranjit Sengupta, Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir, Abdus Shaheed, Mohammad Nasim, Obaidul Kader, Sabur Hossain Chowdhury, Abdur Rahman, Mostafa Jalal Mohiuddin, Syed Abul Hossain and Mofazzal Hossain Chowdhury Maya.

their networks' signal emission to India.

However, the mobile operators are sceptic about the outcome of BTRC's ultimatum.

"It is impossible to entirely obstruct a mobile network's signal towards a specific direction due to inherent properties of technology and the regulator must understand it," an operator's representative told The Daily Star.

## US Peace Corps

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retaliation for recent capture of the militant leaders

Meanwhile, the peace-corps personnel left Bangladesh yesterday.

He, however, said the US Peace Corps many times in the past had squeezed or expanded its programme not only in Bangladesh but also in many other countries on the basis of their policy.

Foreign Secretary Hemayetuddin said they were surprised to hear that the US Peace Corps had suspended its programme in Bangladesh. "Such a decision is unfortunate and ill-advised."

He said no foreign national has so far been targeted by militants and the government has provided adequate security measures for the citizens of other countries.

Asked to comment on the foreign secretary's reaction, a spokesman for the US Embassy in Dhaka said, "I agree that it's unfortunate that the Peace Corps had to suspend operations in Bangladesh due to concerns about security of the volunteers."

The Peace Corps programme, starting in Bangladesh in 1998, was once suspended for some time in late 2001.

## Security to dominate

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Terming Khaleda Zia's state visit to India 'highly important,' he said the prime minister would discuss the entire gamut of bilateral issues with her Indian counterpart Dr Manmohan Singh.

Apart from the security issue, trade imbalance, removal of non-tariff and para-tariff barriers to Bangladeshi products and sharing of water of common rivers including Teesta, will come up for discussion during the Khaleda-Manmohan talks in New Delhi on March 21, Morshed Khan said.

"Our relations with India is very important economically, geographically and strategically too," the foreign minister said adding that the prime minister wants strong relationship with India for the benefit of the people of the two countries as well as for economic development.

Dhaka will also try to explore new areas of cooperation during the visit, he said.

Mentioning the nearly \$2 billion trade deficit of Dhaka with New Delhi, Morshed Khan said India should remove tariff, non-tariff and para-tariff barriers to bridge the huge gap and to have an equitable share of trade between the two neighbours.

## HC commutes

**FROM PAGE 20**  
Third Special Court for Prevention of Women and Children Repression, here awarded death penalty to five teenagers—Shahidul Islam Shipon, Ripon Kumar Roy, Sanjit Sarkar, Shankar Rajbanshi and Shariful Islam alias Badal—for killing Rubayed Ahmed Bappi, a student of Armanitola Government High School.

Of them, four are now in jail while Badal is still at large.

Bappi's maternal cousin Shahidul Islam Shipon and his four cohorts abducted him from their Becharam Dewari residence in old part of the city on August 5, 2002.

They then demanded a ransom of Tk 20 lakh for his release. As Bappi's family refused to oblige, they took Bappi to Demra, smothered him there and dumped the body into the river Sitalakha.

Police recovered Bappi's decomposed body floating on the river near Kutubpur nine days into his abduction.

Later, Bappi's father Alfu Mia filed a case with Kotwali Police Station.

A division bench comprising Justice Sikder Mokbul Haque and Justice Nirmalaendu Dhar confirmed the death sentence of Shaiful Islam Shipon and Sanjit as they were found involved in abducting and killing Bappi.

Commuting the death sentence to life imprisonment, the court said Sankar Rajbanshi, Ripon Kumar Roy and Shariful Islam Badal were found involved only in the killing. The allegation against them of kidnapping Bappi was not proved beyond any doubt, it added.

## Opposition

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power by any means.

"They don't want the presence of army as they want to snatch ballot boxes and cast false votes in the election," she told a public meeting at Malifa Habibur Rahman High School ground.

Terming the opposition's demand for reforms illogical, the prime minister said three elections were held free and fair under the caretaker government.

She said if army is there, election will be peaceful, free and fair and people will be able to cast their votes peacefully.

Criticising opposition's politics of hartal and chaos, Khaleda, also chairperson of the ruling BNP, said despite their various attempts, including long march, the opposition could not mobilise public support for their movement.

She said the opposition could not be happy over the capture of the militants and their leaders. They wanted to create unrest in the country by using militants and bombers.

They (opposition) believe in arson and killing innocent people in buses and trains in the name of hartal and movement, the prime minister said.

She urged people to vote for the BNP-led alliance to continue the ongoing development programme across the country.

Earlier, the prime minister inaugurated the construction work of 16.11-kilometer Kazirhat-Satbaria flood-control embankment involving Tk 24.54 crore. The

embankment will cover both Bera and Sujanagar upazilas in Pabna and will help produce additional 12500 metric tons of crops.

At Sujanagar, the prime minister inaugurated the upgraded 50-bed upazila hospital and laid foundation stones of Sujanagar auditorium-cum-community center and academic bhaban of Selim Reza Habib Degree College.

## 2 muggers

**FROM PAGE 20**  
collector of Brac, near Kalamia Bazar around 1:30pm yesterday. Riding a bicycle he had a bag with Tk 14,000 in it. The muggers snatched his bag and tried to run away. Hearing Partha's cry for help locals came forward and captured two of the muggers, the third mugger managed to escape.

The mob gave the two muggers a severe beating. They died on the spot.

Police recovered the bag with the money and sent the two bodies to Chittagong Medical College Hospital (CMCH) morgue for autopsy.

## 14-party

**FROM PAGE 20**  
The participants chanted slogans, criticising the government and demanding its resignation for failing to ensure proper supply of water and electricity.

Additional law enforcers were deployed on the road from Maghbazar to Kanwan Bazar to prevent the opposition procession from going towards the Wasa Bhaban.

As the opposition workers started marching towards the Wasa office, the law enforcers put up barricade and intercepted them at the Bangla Motor intersection. They staged a demonstration there.

Tension ran high when the police intercepted the demonstration. A number of 14-party leaders exchanged heated words with the law enforcers for failing their scheduled programme.

Top police officials and senior opposition leaders brought the situation under control. Later, the opposition alliance held a brief rally there, demanding immediate resolution of the water crisis in the capital.

Addressing the rally, the opposition leaders said under the coalition rule, the city dwellers have been facing severe crises of power, water and gas.

The alliance leaders demanded that the government take appropriate measures to solve the prevailing crises.  
Meanwhile, the police barricades caused immense sufferings to the commuters, creating traffic snarls for two hours on the busy road. Shops and business establishments in the area kept their shutters down.

## 7 JMB Shura men

**FROM PAGE 1**  
alias Omar alias Bangla Bhai, Rahman's brother Ataur Rahman Sunny alias Sajid, Rahman's son-in-law Abdul Awal Sarker alias Adil alias Asif alias Arafat, Salahuddin alias Salehin, Mahmud alias Hafez Mahmud alias Rakib Hasan alias Russell and Khaled Saifullah alias Amjad alias Faruk Hossain.

The accused were involved in an ill attempt to unsettle the government and establish Shariah rule by force, says the first information report (FIR).

"Jam'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh is determined to oust the government and establish Shariah law by force. To attain the goals, they have been stockpiling firearms and ammunition, staging blasts, killing and injuring the common people, and damaging public property.

"They have been engaged in conspiracy to dislodge the government and destroy the state structure by creating public hatred towards the existing laws and the government through leaflets and other means," reads the FIR.

It said JMB chief Abdur Rahman met the other six and Shakil alias Mollah Omar at the house of Abdul Hamid in Kherujajani Syed village of Muktagachha at around 2:00pm in June last year. Shakil alias Mollah Omar died during a Rab operation in Comilla on March 13.

Discussing the government's banning their outfit, the militant leaders observed that they would have to strike throughout the country on a specific day to make the government take notice of their military might, and thus gave the indication that they were intent on ousting the government, said the FIR.

"JMB's objective to establish Shariah law can be fulfilled by stirring up public hatred of the government. And such hatred can be caused by creating anarchy, raising attacks at key installations including court buildings simultaneously," the FIR quoted from the observations made at the meeting.

The decision of the meeting is part

of the conspiracy, it said, adding that the militants reached their primary goal by carrying out near-simultaneous bomb attacks and distributing leaflets in 63 districts on August 17 last year.

JMB units across the country later started implementing various other programmes in line with its central decision.

The JMB has committed sedition by perpetrating countrywide blasts with an aim to cause hatred in public minds and incite them to oust a legal government said the FIR.

The case was filed under sections 120-B, 121, 121-A, 122 and 124 of Penal Code. If found guilty, the accused might face capital punishment under the sections.

Mahmudul Alam alias Bachchu Mia of Kherujajani Syed village in Muktagachha has been made witness.

No charge was brought against Shakil alias Mollah Omar of Delduar, Tangail as he died in Rab action on Monday.

The complainant said filing of the case in the light of the information gathered so far was delayed for completing the formalities on getting permission of the authorities concerned.

After the JMB supremo's capture in Sylhet, LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan had told reporters that he would be tried under the existing laws and the charges against him are very effective.