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FIFTH, SEVENTH PARLIAMENTS Make 427 MPs pay their unpaid phone bills

HC directs BTTB to take action against them as per law

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court (HC) yesterday directed Bangladesh Telegraph and Telephone Board (BTTB) to realise within six months arrear telephone bills totalling around Tk 6 crore from 427 members of the fifth and the seventh parliaments.

If the MPs fail to pay the arrears, the authorities should take action against them as per law. However high and mighty they may be, no one is above the law of the land, the HC said in its verdict.

Many of these MPs owe the BTTB more than Tk 1 lakh each in arrear bills and many others a few thousand taka each.

Lawmakers of the seventh

parliament left arrears totalling Tk 3.09 crore and those of the fifth Tk 3.75 crore until March 2001.

The HC verdict came as a result of a May 2001 writ petition filed by Bangladesh Legal Aid Services Trust (BLAST).

Soon after the petition, the HC had issued a rule on the BTTB and other related authorities to show cause as to why they should not be directed to take proper steps to recover arrear telephone bills from the MPs in accordance with law.

The court had also directed the authorities to certify and submit a list of the defaulting members of the fifth and seventh parliaments mentioning the year-wise dues from each within four weeks of the date of

receipt of the notice.

These directives followed lengthy hearings.

The HC yesterday gave its verdict along with an eight-point observation.

These observations are: Bangladesh is a sovereign democratic republic and governed by the government of laws and not of men.

The people of Bangladesh are the owners of the state, and all functionaries and members of all services must serve their cause and only in their interest.

The law is not a respecter of persons, it does not discriminate between the ordinary citizens and functionaries of the state, however high and mighty they may be.

The privileges of the functionaries of the state are allowed not because they occupy exalted and high positions but allowed so that they can perform their functions better in the interests of the people.

The government is an agent and trustee for and on their behalf.

The MPs are bound by the laws enacted by themselves just like any common citizens of this country.

Telephone bills owed to the BTTB is a debt to the country and the authorities concerned are obliged to realise their dues from the defaulting MPs, past and present, just like any other defaulting subscribers of telephones in this

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Iron rods for construction are piled up occupying almost half of a busy street in Dilkhusha in the capital.

PHOTO: STAR

Provision of district ministers illegal

HC issues rule

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court (HC) yesterday declared the government's provision of ministers in-charge of districts illegal and unconstitutional.

The verdict came following long sessions of hearing over the last year of the rule of a writ petition filed on May 17, 2003 by Anwar Hossain Monju, lawmaker and chairman of a Jatiya Party faction.

The writ challenged the constitutional validity of the government notification dated November 12, 2001 that empowered ministers and others with charges of different districts to take care of development

work and law and order.

The Cabinet Division issued the gazette notification appointing 62 cabinet ministers, advisers to ministries, chief whip, state ministers, whips and deputy ministers to discharge additional responsibilities and charges in 62 districts to look after overall development and law and order situation.

On May 18, 2003, an HC division bench of Justice Abdur Rashid and Justice Siddiqui Rahman Miah served a notice on the government asking it to explain why delegating ministers, state ministers, deputy ministers, chief whip and whips charge of 62 districts would not be

declared illegal. The court gave the government two weeks' time to clarify.

An HC division bench comprising Justice ABM Khairul Huq and Justice ATM Fazle Kabir delivered the verdict yesterday, declaring the government provision illegal.

During the hearing of the case, counsels for the petitioner pointed out that there was no such provision in the constitution. The law of the land does not permit a minister to be in charge of any district and even the government's rules of business do not bear any such

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REFORMS TALKS 4-party to send names today

UNB, Dhaka

The ruling four-party alliance will send reply to the opposition's latest letter on dialogue today, nominating their leaders to discuss the much-talked-about electoral reforms.

Top leaders of the coalition took the decision at a meeting at the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) yesterday with Prime Minister and BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia in the chair.

After the meeting, which lasted about two hours from 1:20pm, BNP Secretary General and LGRD Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan told reporters they want discussion for resolving the problems.

"We want discussion. We want to go with an open mind for discussion," he said at the post-meeting

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KANSAT KILLINGS

AL walks out of JS as obituary denied

Another walkout from Business Advisory Committee as BNP refuses discussions on 'burning' issues

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League (AL) yesterday walked out of the House protesting the Speaker's refusal to include the names of the people killed in police firing during the Kansat movement in an obituary reference adopted at the beginning of the session.

The main opposition staged another stormy walkout 50 minutes ago from the Business Advisory Committee (Bac) meeting on setting

business and session duration, protesting the ruling BNP's refusal to hold any discussion on what it said were several burning issues in the session.

The treasury bench chief whip blasted the AL for the walkouts, which he termed damaging to the parliamentary democracy.

At the Bac meeting, with Speaker Jamiruddin Sircar in the chair, the AL demanded to set the duration of current session at 15 workdays. But

the ruling alliance members did not agree with the AL proposal and the Bac decided the current session's duration would for seven workdays until May 9.

AL lawmaker Suranjit Sengupta said Prime Minister Khaleda Zia opposed to a 15-workday session, saying massive development activities are taking place in the country, so the MPs are busy and they should stay in their respective areas.

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Outlaw killed in 'crossfire'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

A regional leader of outlawed Purbo Banglar Communist Party (PBCP-Communist War) was killed in 'crossfire' during a shootout between Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) and his accomplices at Alamdanga upazila in Chuadanga early yesterday.

The dead was identified as Shuklal, 40 of Bhogalkandi village in the same upazila.

According to Rab, a team of Rab-6 arrested him from his hideout at Elenga of Gangni upazila in Meherpur on Wednesday evening.

During interrogation at the Rab Chuadanga camp, Shuklal gave information about his accomplices and hidden firearms.

Following his confession, a Rab team took him to Bhogalkandi village to nab his accomplices and retrieve firearms. When the Rab team reached the village Eidgah at about 4:30am, PBCP outlaws opened fire on them prompting the law enforcers to retaliate, Rab said.

Shuklal tried to escape during the shootout and got caught in 'crossfire'. He died on the spot.

Two Rab personnel were also injured in the gunfight.

One shutter gun and two bullets were recovered from the scene.

According to Chuadanga police Shuklal was accused in eight cases, including three for murder, filed with different police stations of Chuadanga and Meherpur.

PROTEST AGAINST SHIBIR

JCD men attack JU students, 25 hurt

JU CORRESPONDENT

At least 25 students of Jahangirnagar University (JU) were injured as Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) cadres attacked students demonstrating against the Islami Chhatra Shibir (ICS) cadres' living on campus.

The incident took place in front of Meer Musharraf Hossain (MMH) Hall on Wednesday night.

Of the injured, 12 were admitted to Enam Medical College and Hospital in a critical condition while the others were given first aid at the JU medical centre.

The critically injured are Dhruvo, Anupom, Tamim, Anik, Mahfuz, Ripon, Prince, Shob, Moni, Anwar, Tania and Iva.

Students yesterday under the banner of 'Jahangirnagar against Jamaat-Shibir' gave a three-day ultimatum to the university authorities to expel the ICS activists. They also demanded punishment to the Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) cadres who launched the attack on the demonstrators.

A procession was brought out on the campus yesterday while separate processions were also brought out in the five girls' dormitories demanding their expulsion and punishment.

On Wednesday, around 70 JCD cadres led by its General Secretary Shuvo and Organising Secretary Atik of MMH Hall launched the hour-long attack on the students' demonstration around 9:30pm.

The incident occurred while the proctor and the dormitory authorities including its provost were present.

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Bolts zap 3 to death

STAR REPORT

Three people were killed by lightning in Rangpur and Gaibandha while a boy was killed crushed under a collapsed house during a nor'wester on Wednesday night.

A man and a five-year-old boy were killed when a nor'wester lashed four upazilas of Gaibandha leaving 75 people injured, our Gaibandha correspondent reports.

Amirullah, 40, was struck by lightning at Naldanga while Sumon, 5, of Nijpara in Sadullapur upazila was crushed under a house as it collapsed.

The storm left at least 1500 dwellings razed, uprooted trees and damaged huge areas of standing crops in Gaibandha Sadar, Sadullapur, Palashbari and Shaghata upazilas. Power supply was cut off for 16 hours in parts of the storm affected areas.

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JUDGES KILLING CASE Cross-examination of witnesses begins

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

Cross-examination of witnesses in the Jhalakathi judges killing case started yesterday in presence of the seven accused including the Majlish-e-Shura member Khalid Saifullah.

A Jhalakathi court framed charges against Khalid yesterday while charges against the other six were framed on April 23.

Seven accused in the case are now in custody while Arif is the only absconding charge-sheeted accused.

The date for the examination of witnesses was fixed for Wednesday but it was postponed for a day following the arrest of Khalid Saifullah, Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) Majlish-e-Shura member.

The prosecution and defence

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Truckloads of sand filling up a portion of the river Turag at Amin Bazar on the outskirts of the city yesterday as traders try to make space for huge quantities of sand brought by barges.

PHOTO: STAR

Mahmud for price hike of diesel, kerosene too

Asks RMG plants to use gas-fired, not diesel-run, power generators

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Energy Adviser Mahmudur Rahman yesterday categorically said the government must raise the prices of all petroleum products, including diesel and kerosene, or subsidise them by direct budget allocations, if it wants to redress the liquidity crisis of Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation (BPC).

On another occasion, at a roundtable on Trade with European Union: General Guidelines for Exporters', he advised the readymade garment (RMG) units to

go for gas-run power generators instead of diesel-run ones to face power blackouts.

After a meeting with Agrani Bank and Janata Bank, Mahmud remarked to reporters, "I've read in newspaper reports that economists and political leaders have advised the government against raising diesel and kerosene prices. But, they haven't a clue about the petroleum sector. Diesel and kerosene account for 90 per cent of the country's total fuel consumption."

On some economists' and lawmakers' suggestion for raising

octane and petrol prices only, he said it would be meaningless, as these two products make up only 10 per cent of the country's total oil consumption. Such a step, while keeping the prices of diesel and kerosene will fail to bail BPC out of its troubles, the energy adviser argued.

Mahmud said the economists [in their pre-budget dialogue with the finance minister] should have clearly told whether the oil prices should be increased or not, adding their advice will not help the

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Sadequee due back in NY court today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Ehsanul Islam Sadequee, accused of making false statements linked to an ongoing federal terrorism investigation, is due back in the Federal Court in New York today.

The hearing on the bail petition of Sadequee, a 19-year-old US citizen of Bangladeshi origin, is expected to be held in the court during his appearance. Defence Attorney Douglas Morris said on Saturday he hoped to prepare a bail application for Sadequee, said an AP report.

Sadequee was arrested by intelligence personnel of Bangladesh government on April 17 while returning his Baridhara home in the capital with his wife and extradited to the US in a plane on April 20. He was produced before the Federal Court on April 23.

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All 7 JMB Shura men had links to Jamaat, Shibir

SHAMIM ASHRAF

All seven Majlish-e-Shura members of Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh, who terrorised the country with suicide blasts, had once been involved with ruling coalition partner Jamaat-e-Islami or its student wing Islami Chhatra Shibir (ICS).

JMB supreme Abdur Rahman who had been spearheading the deadly militant campaign joined Islamic Chhatra Shangha (now Islami Chhatra Shibir) when he was a student.

Son of an infamous collaborator of the Pakistan army during the Liberation War, Rahman graduated from an Ahle Hadith madrasa in

Jamalpur. As his father Abdullah Ibn Fazal of Charshi village in the district was a leading Jamaat leader, he was sent to Madina University in Saudi Arabia for higher education at the party's expense. After a stint fighting against the former Soviet army in Afghanistan, he returned to Bangladesh and formed JMB.

According to sources, Rahman was also a Rokon [member] of Jamaat-e-Islami.

Siddiqui Islam alias Bangla Bhai, Rahman's closest aide and operations commander of Jagrata Muslim Janata, Bangladesh (JMJB), too had a past with Chhatra Shibir.

"I used to support Bangladesh

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