

# Senate okays US detainee interrogation bill

AP, Washington

Republicans succeeded this week in pushing through a key piece of President Bush's anti-terror agenda, passing along party lines legislation that would endorse the military programme to detain and interrogate terrorists.

The administration's allies fell short, however, in their efforts to authorize the terrorism surveillance programme championed by Bush. That bill would have to be finished after lawmakers return for a lame-duck session following the November elections.

Both chambers this week approved legislation that sets up "military commissions" to prosecute terrorists. It also would prohibit the severe abuse of detainees, like mutilation and rape, but grant the president leeway to decide which other interrogation techniques are permissible.

The Senate's 65-34 vote on Thursday followed a House vote of 253-168 on a nearly identical measure a day earlier. To avoid having to reconcile differences between the two bills, which were described as minor, the House planned to vote Friday on the Senate bill and send that version to the president to sign.

"The Senate sent a strong signal to the terrorists that we will continue using every element of national power to pursue our enemies and to prevent attacks on America," Bush said in a statement Thursday night.

The White House failed to help

bridge differences between the Senate and the House on the eavesdropping programme. The House, on a 232-191 vote Thursday, approved a bill to grant legal status to the warrantless wiretapping programme with new restrictions. The Senate bill was different enough that efforts to reach a compromise on the two measures was unlikely before the elections.

Most Democrats opposed the detainee bill, contending that Republicans were pushing through a sloppy measure to sell voters, but not because it made sense. GOP policies on national security "may have been tough, but they certainly weren't smart," said Senate Minority Leader Harry Reid.

"I'm convinced that future generations will view passage of this bill as a grave error," added Reid, D-Nev.

Added Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif., "We are being asked to consider legislation that will determine how our troops and personnel, foreign troops and personnel, as well as innocent bystanders will be treated when captured during conflict."

But Republicans said passage of the bill would withstand court scrutiny and the test of time.

"In this new era of threats, where the stark and sober reality is that America must confront international terrorists committed to the destruction of our way of life, this bill is absolutely necessary," said Sen Saxby Chambliss, R-Ga.

The overall bill would prohibit war crimes and define such atrocities as rape and torture but otherwise would allow the president to interpret the Geneva Conventions, the treaty that sets standards for the treatment of war prisoners.

Under the bill, a terrorist held at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, could be tried by a military commission so long as he was afforded certain rights, such as the ability to confront evidence given to the jury and having access to defence counsel.

Those subject to commission trials would be any person "who has engaged in hostilities or who has purposefully and materially supported hostilities against the United States or its co-belligerents." Proponents say this definition would not apply to US citizens.

The bill would eliminate some rights common in military and civilian courts. For example, the commission would be allowed to consider hearsay evidence so long as a judge determined it was reliable. Hearsay is barred from civilian courts.

The legislation also says the president can "interpret the meaning and application" of international standards for prisoner treatment, a provision intended to allow him to authorize aggressive interrogation methods that might otherwise be seen as illegal by international courts.

# Three small power projects

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on advance down payment of Tk 56 crore to Harbin. This down payment was done last year in violation of the government's own rules.

Deputy Minister for Chittagong Hill Tracts Affairs Moni Swapan Dewan will inaugurate the Barakal hydroelectric power plant on the 5th of next month.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia will inaugurate the two-unit 250MW Barapukuria plant on the October 10.

The Barapukuria plant started generating power from January this year. However, due to poor and inappropriate machinery, the plant kept on tripping from the beginning. The two units of this plant cannot continue operation for long and earlier this month, both the units tripped.

The government awarded this power project to the Chinese consortium of CMC, SEC and SEEC under a Chinese Supplier's Credit of about \$188.1 million in July 2001, with a total project cost of \$220 million. The price is at least \$70 million more than any other power projects of similar size.

As per World Bank (WB) analysis, the capital cost of the Barapukuria plant's per unit power would be \$973 per kilowatt (KW) against other contemporary plants like AES Haripur (\$500), Khulna (\$551), Siddhirganj (\$538), and Chandpur (\$330) which are gas powered.

The first unit of the Barapukuria plant was supposed to be commissioned in October 2005 and the second one in January this year.

However, the first unit came on line in January, and started showing signs of under-performance. The second unit came into operation a few months later. But the plant could hardly reach optimal production as it kept on tripping. Since the plant is unable to function properly and consume the allocated amount of coal, its site is now piled with more than 1.20 lakh tonnes of coal.

According to the power plant sources, the installed machinery is not appropriate for the type of coal produced by the over-priced Barapukuria coal mine. Plant operators say that the coal contains more water and iron than initially perceived by the Chinese developers. As a result, the plant runs into trouble frequently.

Both the units of this plant went off-line two weeks ago. It is now functioning partially. Sources said the prime minister is unlikely to deliver any public speech at the inauguration ceremony of the plant.

Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman is set to inaugurate the 90MW Fenchuganj power plant now being developed by Harbin -- the same company responsible for the junk-like 80MW Tongi power plant. The Tongi plant tripped over 80 times since its inception in March, 2005. Harbin has been also accused of bid price manipulation in other bids of the PDB.

Harbin won the sixth bid for the Fenchuganj power project when a Japanese co-bidder withdrew from the tender upon receiving zero response from PDB on its allegation of bid manipulation. Harbin was technically disqualified in the

same project's third bid.

After Harbin was awarded the tender in 2005, the government suddenly decided to give the company a down payment of Tk 56 crore or 10 percent of the project's cost. Yet, in 2002 the government put a total restriction on making such down payments -- identifying it as a corrupt system.

The development of the Fenchuganj project site began six months ago.

The 500KW mini hydroelectric power project in Rangamati, to be inaugurated by Moni Swapan Dewan on October 5, is something totally new in the country's power sector.

Sources said the mini plant has been installed by the PDB itself at an approximate cost of Tk 70 lakh to bring power to remote areas that has no electricity. The power generator was brought from Nepal and it will provide power to about 200 households.

"This plant was launched during the World Cup football in June-July," said a PDB official adding, "This is a model of how we can resolve lack of power supply in hilly areas having lakes and no distribution lines. The cost is very low and this can open a new horizon of economic activities here."

The official said the PDB has also installed solar panels in that area.

However, the government is yet to fix any tariff for the mini hydroelectric power plant. This would create a problem with the PDB's accounts unless resolved quickly.

# Ice starts melting

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its 31-point reforms demand but it will not budge an inch from its disapproval of Justice KM Hasan taking over as the caretaker government chief and Justice MA Aziz continuing as the chief election commissioner (CEC).

The opposition will not drop their objections to three other election commissioners as well.

"I called Awami League General Secretary Abdul Jalil at 10:30am today [yesterday] after my party chief Prime Minister Khaleda Zia said that a secretaries-general level dialogue can take place," Bhuiyan told newsmen at his official residence.

"I formally invite you for a dialogue on the proposed electoral reforms to resolve the issue. Let us sit down and break off the stand-off and hold a free and fair election," Jalil quoted Bhuiyan as saying.

"I told him (Bhuiyan) I've got your proposal and will make my decision known tomorrow [today] after consulting with my party leaders and 14-party alliance," Jalil, also the co-ordinator of 14-party, told reporters at his Gulshan residence at 3:00pm.

Bhuiyan said he has received a positive response from Jalil. The discussion will be on every relevant issue. The time and date would be set after Jalil's reply today. "I hope they will respond positively and will come to the negotiating table with an open mind," he added.

BNP leaders Nazrul Islam Khan, Barkatullah Bulu, Abdus Salam and Ahmed Musa, among others, were present at that time.

After talking to the LGRD minister over phone, Jalil rushed to AL President Sheikh Hasina and informed her about the developments.

Hasina instantly told Jalil that a discussion could be held. "You discuss it with the senior leaders of the party and the 14-party alliance," an AL insider quoted the leader of the opposition as saying.

Earlier on Thursday night, the talks issue came up when Khaleda Zia met Mannan Bhuiyan and Health and Family Welfare Minister Khandakar Mosharraf Hossain to discuss the power crisis. At the meeting, the prime minister directed Bhuiyan to proceed with the initiative for negotiations.

The AL presidium members held an emergency meeting with party chief Sheikh Hasina at her Sudha Sadan residence at about 7:30pm last night. Later, the 14-party leaders met at the AL president's Dhanmondi office at around 8:45pm.

Both the meetings unanimously decided that Jalil go for the dialogue and place all of its 31-point reform proposals.

They observed that the government has finally agreed to hold discussion over the electoral reforms in the face of opposition's street agitations in last several months. AL Joint General Secretary Obaidul Quader told The Daily Star last night.

Senior opposition leaders Amir Hossain Amu, Abdur Razzak, Tofail Ahmed, Suranjit Sengupta, Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim, Obaidul Quader, Hasanul Haque Inu, Bimal Biswas, Nurul Islam, among others, were present at the 14-party meeting.

## AL'S STANCE

In addition to sticking to its objections regarding Justice Hasan, Aziz and three election commissioners, the AL will keep calling for updating the voter roll with photographs and using transparent ballot boxes.

It will also demand redefinition of the law enforcement agencies and scrapping of the magistracy power

they [law enforcers and members of the armed forces] have been given by the previous caretaker government.

Jurisdiction of the armed forces and the law enforcement agencies during the election period as per the public representation order of 1972 and the Election Act of 1992 will have to be reinstated.

## BACKGROUND

The AL formally brought the reform proposals to light on July 15 last year. The following day, Bhuiyan said the reform agenda was aimed at hindering the country's electoral process.

Sheikh Hasina placed the reform proposals in parliament on February 12.

In response, Khaleda on February 28 proposed forming a committee with representatives from both the ruling and opposition alliances to discuss the proposals.

After exchange of letters between Bhuiyan and Jalil from March 20 to May 14, the initiative for a dialogue reached deadlock centring the inclusion of Jamaat-e-Islami and Islami Oikya Jote leaders in the proposed committee.

The AL kept asking for the proposed talks to confine between the two but the ruling party did not agree to any talks without its coalition partners.

AL Joint General Secretary Obaidul Quader at a rally at Mukhtang in June first proposed for a secretaries-general level dialogue to clear the roadblocks resulting from inclusion of Jamaat and IOJ.

The BNP secretary general made the first phone call to Jalil on August 20. Then on September 13, the prime minister at a rally in Brahmanbaria spoke of a dialogue between the secretaries-general of the two parties.

## PRESSURE FROM DIFFERENT QUARTERS

Both the parties have been under pressure from different quarters at home and abroad for the last several months.

In recent weeks, the pressure build up with European Union (EU), National Democratic Institute (NDI), local election observers, civil society members, business community and diplomats repeatedly stressing the need for an immediate dialogue.

Lately, a delegation of business leaders took massive initiatives to bring Bhuiyan and Jalil to a negotiating table.

## RMG workers'

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said workers are struggling to survive as the prices of essentials have risen sharply in the month of Ramadan.

They said a greater movement would be launched if the accord is not implemented within 72 hours. Repression on the workers has been intensified, they alleged.

Leaders of Bangladesh Jatiya Sramik Jote said the government has given priority to the interests of owners in the recently passed labour laws.

Making two-hour overtime work compulsory, banning strike in the first three years of new factories and sacking workers at will by owners are some of the issues that serve the interests of the owners, said Hasanul Huq Inu, president of Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal.

Biplobi Garments Sramik Sanghati urged the owners to fix minimum wage at Tk 3,000 for the garment workers.

## Prospects for free

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formal complaints on their behalf to the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians of the Inter-Parliamentary Union," he said.

Referring to the attacks on two women leaders -- Motia Chowdhury and Advocate Shaira Khatun injured in police attack on September 12 -- the Lord said, "It may be that we can also get the material for a complaint to the UN Rapporteur on Violence against Women."

Eminent jurist Dr Kamal Hossain, who also addressed the seminar in the House of Lords, said, "The current regime of BNP-Jamaat is blatantly involved in engineering every election mechanism to ensure victory at the next election."

Referring to the curtailment in police training period, Dr Kamal said, "Recently appointed police officers, most of whom were activists of the youth wing of the ruling BNP and of their coalition partner Jamaat-e-Islami, were responsible for carrying out assaults on opposition leaders."

Kamal also questioned the rise of the number of voters in the voter list prepared by the regime from 70 million to 93 million within the last five years.

He said, "Free and fair election is not a matter of choice. The government has to uphold the rule of law in order to ensure free and fair elections."

The seminar was also attended by representatives of Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, Survival International, International Crisis Group, International Bangladesh Foundation, Christian Solidarity Worldwide, Commonwealth Secretariat, Bangladesh High Commission to UK, Hudson Institute USA and The Times Newspaper.

## FDI in power sector

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to \$279 million against a total FDI flow of \$845 million. It grew by 178 percent to \$128 million in 2004. The telecommunications sector was the highest FDI recipient in both these years.

Foreign investment in this sector, which was only \$1 million in 2001, rose to \$49 million in 2002 and \$46 million in 2003.

It shot up in the recent years mainly because of huge profit making by the private operators and the sector saw a sharp increase in its customer base in the last two years.

At the same time, profit repatriation also rose significantly in the last two years. It was \$418 million in 2005 and \$338 million in 2004. A major portion of this remitted amount was from the telecom sector.

In recent years, the service sector including trade and commerce too has experienced faster rise. Foreign investment in this sector rose by 95 percent to \$151 million in 2005 while 52 percent to \$90 million in 2004.

The central bank high officials said that in future they will encourage more FDI inflow in manufacturing sector as growth in this sector is accompanied by employment generation and export promotion.

But BB statistics show that foreign investment in this sector increased moderately by 13 percent to \$122 million in 2002 and 0.81 percent to \$123 million in 2003. It however went down by 5 percent to \$117 million in 2004 before rising by 76 percent to \$207 million the following year.

# US House approves

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Tehran insists the programme is only for producing fuel for nuclear power stations.

In a fresh show of defiance, Iran said yesterday there was no reason to suspend its nuclear activities, maintaining a tough line despite talks with the European Union aimed at persuading Tehran to halt uranium enrichment.

"Iran does not see any reason to suspend nuclear activities," state television quoted Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki as saying, a day after another key round of talks between Iran and the European Union ended in Berlin.

Mottaki's comments appeared to refer to uranium enrichment, a sensitive nuclear process that the West wants Iran to suspend as proof that it is not seeking nuclear weapons.

A suspension at least of temporary nature is a key demand of the European Union and United States. Enriched uranium can be used both to make nuclear fuel and, in highly enriched form, the explosive core of an atomic bomb.

But Mottaki said Western countries "have found out that threatening language and a referral to the United Nations Security Council is not efficient and there is no way for them now but to negotiate."

Iran insists that its nuclear programme is solely for peaceful energy needs, vehemently rejecting US allegations that it is seeking to manufacture nuclear weapons.

Washington is leading a push for UN sanctions against Iran if it fails to halt uranium enrichment and agree a deal proposed by the five permanent UN Security Council members plus Germany that offers Tehran incentives and negotiations.

Mottaki's comments represented Tehran's most explicit signal yet since the talks between its top nuclear negotiator Ali Larjani and EU foreign policy chief Javier Solana that it does not intend to suspend enrichment.

The talks that ended Thursday in Berlin failed to produce an accord but both men said they were positive and constructive, with Solana hailing what he described as progress.

Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad had vowed in a speech Thursday that Iran "would not bend" over its nuclear programme and also questioned the

## Rahman, Bangla

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relatives of the condemned accused to meet them in the next few days.

Earlier on Thursday, Khaled Saifullah, a Majlish-e-Shura (the highest policymaking body) member of banned Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB), submitted his appeal through the authorities of Rangpur jail.

On May 29, a trial court in Jhalakathi handed down death sentences to the seven JMB leaders for killing two judges of the district court and on August 31, the High Court (HC) upheld the verdict. Of the convicts, Anur Rahman is still at large while the rest are behind bars.

None of the militant leaders appointed any lawyer during their trial in the lower court and the HC saying that they are against the existing worldly judicial system and their move was to establish Islamic Shariah laws.

Itefakher Mamun, who committed the murders through blasting bombs, has already filed jail appeal.

The other two -- Ataur Rahman Sunny and Abdul Awalare yet to file any leave to appeal petition.

value of suspending uranium enrichment.

There have been conflicting reports over whether Iran made any offer in the EU talks to suspend enrichment for a limited time, with some Iranian officials denying assertions by EU diplomats that it had done so.

The Washington Times reported Tuesday that Iran was close to agreeing a secret deal that would have it suspend uranium enrichment for 90 days in order for additional talks to take place.

"Why are they insisting that we stop it (enrichment) even for one day? Why should we pretend to stop it even for one day?" Ahmadinejad asked the cheering crowd in his speech.

The United States, which has backed the EU talks while also showing increasing impatience with Tehran, warned that time was running out for Solana to convince Iran to suspend its uranium enrichment activities.

State Department spokesman Sean McCormack confirmed that a new deadline for Iran to halt enrichment agreed last week among the permanent five UN Security Council members and Germany was looming and would not be changed.

"The timeline that was agreed in New York stays, and we are getting short now in terms of that time." The deadline has not been officially revealed but European diplomats involved in the negotiations said it was sometime next week.

Iran defied a previous UN deadline of August 31 to halt uranium enrichment but was given more time to see if the talks between Larjani and Solana were successful.

Meanwhile, Mottaki was also quoted as vowing that should the standoff intensify "Iran will not use oil as a political weapon and there is no need to do so either."

## Power minister

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The inaction and wrong actions of the four-party alliance government have now led the country to a daily load-shedding of nearly 2,000 megawatts (MW). The country's daily demand for power is 5,200MW while it can only generate between 3,000MW and 3,500MW.

## Kumari Puja

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Special devotional songs, dance, aratri will be performed at different puja mandaps on the occasion of the Kumari Puja.

As part of security measures, police, ansars, Rapid Action Battalion and Bangladesh Rifles will patrol the Ramkrishna Mission and adjacent streets during the Kumari puja, sources said.

Devotees will also celebrate Sandhi Puja from 11:04 pm to 11:52pm today at all the puja mandaps across the country.

The Hindus yesterday celebrated the Mahasaptami puja across the country amid fanfare while traditional Durga Puja mela (fair) has taken place around different mandaps.

Leaders of different political, social and cultural organisations and Dhaka City Mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka yesterday visited different puja mandaps at Jagannath Hall, Dhakeswari National Temple, Tantibazar, Shankhari Bazar and Banglabazar areas and exchanged greetings with the devotees.

On behalf of main opposition Awami League (AL) chief Sheikh Hasina, AL leaders Abdur Razzak, Obaidul Kader and Alamgir Kumuk distributed clothes among the distressed people at Sutrapur Joykali Mandir yesterday, said a press release of Shree Shree Ramshita Mandir Committee.

# Musharraf had a crush on a Bangalee girl

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf had a crush, in his teens, on a girl from erstwhile East Pakistan living in Karachi and even opted for an army unit based there so that he could spend time with her.

It was Musharraf's second romance in less than a year immediately after his parents shifted to a new neighbourhood on Garden Road in Karachi.

"On Garden Road, I fell straight into my next romance. She was a beautiful Bengali girl from East Pakistan. This crush was somewhat less frivolous than my first," Musharraf writes in his autobiography "In The Line Of Fire: A Memoir".

His first "puppy love" was a girl who was his next-door neighbour in another locality of Karachi.

The affair with the Bengali girl, whom Musharraf does not name, continued until he became a second lieutenant in the Pakistan Army. He even opted for the 36th Light Anti-aircraft Regiment, as all its training courses were held in Karachi.

"Why my fixation on Karachi? The reason was not my family -- it was that my Bengali girlfriend was there," he said.

However, Musharraf ran short of luck, as it was decided by the army that no one could go directly to the anti-aircraft regiment without undertaking basic artillery training.

"Worse, my romance came to an abrupt end when the girl's family returned to East Pakistan," he wrote.

"She is happily married now and lives in Bangladesh," Musharraf said adding that he had a hunch his mother suspected all along that he was in a relationship because he slipped in his studies.

About his first romance, Musharraf said, "I had been an above average student, usually among the first four in my class. That year (when he was 15), my grades dropped dramatically. The cause: my first romance."

"I was too shy to initiate a romance, let alone woo a girl," he added.

The first romance, which he terms "puppy love", was with a girl who was a year older than him and lived next door to his Karachi home.

Musharraf makes no bones in admitting he used his maternal grandmother as a courier without her knowledge.

"I used to tell Nani Amma [grandmother] that she should visit the neighbours .... before she went, I would hide a letter in her burqa (veil) and pass a message to the girl explaining where to find it."

"Poor Nani Amma would go to the girl's house as an unwitting courier with a romantic letter in her pocket."

The girl was very beautiful and the "infatuation" lasted until Musharraf's parents moved to the house on Garden Road.

After these 'affairs', Musharraf settled for an arranged marriage. "On the day I was supposed to go to Sheeba's [his wife] house and meet her family, I arrived in a shirt and trousers wearing open-toed sandals..."

"...Sheeba was appalled that a fashion disaster had come for her hand...yet for some reasons, she didn't reject me... Sheeba was extremely beautiful, and I fell for her immediately," he said.

## British minister

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Minister M Saifur Rahman.

He will also meet the governor of Bangladesh Bank and visit Bracon-run primary schools. Timms will attend a symposium to be organised by Muslim Aid Bangladesh.

# More attacks

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belonging to Desco. Police managed to bring the situation under control around 3:00pm. Later, the demonstrators submitted a memorandum to the Desco authorities.

Meanwhile, extra police force was deployed at different power stations in the city after the last three days' violent demonstrations by city residents.

Police sources said they arrested about 30 people from different places in the city in the last two days for their alleged involvement with violent demonstrations. Police also filed cases against about 22,100 unidentified residents of Pallabi, Mirpur, Jatrabari, Lalbagh, Kotwali and Keraniganj areas in the city on Wednesday and Thursday for their alleged involvement with the violence that had engulfed the city for two days.

Pallabi police filed a case against about 4,000 persons, Mirpur police station filed a case against about 2,500 to 3,000 persons, Jatrabari police filed two separate cases against about 4,000 to 5,000 persons, Kotwali police filed two separate cases against about 900 to 1,100 persons, Keraniganj police filed a case against 6,000 to 7,000 persons, and Lalbagh police filed a case against about 2,000 persons.

The cases were filed in connection with attacks on state properties, assaults on police, arson, disruption of vehicular traffic and interrupting government activities.

Anwarul Kabir Talukdar, who was removed from the post of state minister for power yesterday, said before losing his job that the attacks on power stations were pre-planned.

He assured that supply of electricity will improve across the country within the next 15 days.

Earlier, while talking to the Daily Star, some demonstrators said they came out of their homes and onto the streets protesting repeated load shedding even in the month of Ramadan. They alleged that they are not getting electricity even during iftars and sehns.