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## JS tidbits

By Nazmul Ashraf

A walkout by BNP lawmakers came as a blessing to Commerce and Industries Minister Tofail Ahmed in parliament, yesterday.

"I can never speak uninterrupted with the BNP MPs present in the House. They start shouting whenever I speak. I'm now very happy that they've left," Tofail said, as soon as the opposition members, angered by his statement, walked out.

A happy Tofail repeated his feelings while replying to Badruddin Chowdhury, the deputy opposition leader.

"I feel very happy, so happy that I feel grateful to them... I can now speak freely," said the minister who concluded before the BNP deputies staged a comeback.

Speaker Humayun Rasheed Chowdhury outsmarted Salahuddin Quader Chowdhury, the BNP lawmaker who played smart with the Chair in the parliament yesterday.

The Chowdhurys had a brief exchange on the length of discussion on four topics the House accepted on the day.

Against the Speaker's decision that each of the topic will be discussed for 90 minutes, the front bench opposition deputy asked for 120 minutes.

Humayun Rasheed Chowdhury told Salahuddin Quader Chowdhury, who seldom attends the session, "In that case, I would like to see you in the House until the discussions are over at around 9 at night?"

"I, too, would expect you (Speaker) on your chair until then?" said S Q Chowdhury.

"I'll be here, if not on the Chair, I can send the Deputy Speaker to the chair. But you don't have any such prerogative," a witty Speaker said smilingly. The BNP legislator, smiling back, bnp.

Education Minister ASHK Sadeque wondered how Mashur Rahman of BNP could speak for the police, as the latter like many others in his party, called policemen terrorists and extortionists the day before.

Responding to Mashur's statement that police was angry on the government for politicising the police department, Sadeque said, "The police must be stunned by your statement today, but they will thank you."

The Speaker pronounced only Khoka, the pet name of Sadek Hossain, while giving the floor to the BNP MP during a debate on law and order in the country.

Deputy food minister Dharendra Deb Nath Shambhu said, "How much can a Khoka (Bangla for kid) speak?" This sent the Treasury Bench laughing.

"Let's try, (how much I can talk)," replied Sadek Hossain. At this stage, the Speaker had to repeat, himself - Honourable member, Sadek Hossain Khoka.

"This is very nice of you, thank you, Mr Speaker," Khoka responded.

JP lawmaker, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto described how illegal firearms are smuggled in the country and how and where those are sold. Ending his lengthy statement on the matter, during the debate on law and order, a smiling Bhutto told the Speaker, "You won't understand these things."

Commenting on the Treasury Bench resolution that expressed satisfaction over the current law and order, BNP MP Major (ret) Hafizuddin Ahmed said, "It's a very very unusual joke. (In fact, it is the greatest mockery of the century."

## Bills placed

From Page 1

Corporation (Amendment) Bill, 1999. All the four bills were sent to the standing committee on the Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives to submit its report to the House by next Sunday.

The LGRD minister also introduced the Upazila Parishad (Amendment) Bill, 1999 in the parliament.

The Bill was sent to the standing committee on the LGRD Ministry to submit its report by Sunday (July 4).

Four other bills introduced and referred to the standing committees are: The Speaker and the Deputy Speaker (Remuneration and Privileges) (Amendment) Bill, 1999, the Members of Parliament (Remuneration and Allowances) (Amendment) Bill, 1999, The Negotiable Instruments (Amendment) Bill 1999 and the Members of the Bangladesh Public Service Commission (Terms and Conditions of Service) (Amendment) Bill, 1999.

## Editor: Mahfuz Anam

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Happy façade of unhappy lives

At the traffic lights, on the parking lots or in the shopping places, they are there with flowers, begging rather than selling. — Star photo: Zahedul I Khan

## Flowers that are stones

By Navine Murshid

Children selling flowers. It is a good combination, especially because both are equated with innocence and purity. This brings to mind a smiling child surrounded with flowers to sell. In the Bangladesh context, children are much better off selling flowers than begging. The argument that child labour is being used can be quashed on the ground that the 'opportunity cost' is either begging or starvation. These poor children are assets of the family rather than a burden and they will continue to be so, until they come out of the poverty trap.

Selling flowers is a trade, a means of livelihood. There is nothing degrading, demeaning or even controversial about it. Children on the streets of Dhaka who are in this business can easily earn a lot. And they probably do. But there is a problem here: they do not like what

they are doing or even if they do, they do a bad job. When we think of children selling flowers we assume they would be smiling and they would be happy. But when a flower child comes to a potential customer, his offer to sell resembles more of begging than selling. Their marketing strategy is such that they force their customers to buy either out of sympathy or out of the impulse to get rid of them as a strategy they have in common with beggars.

Now, why is that? They are in a trade. They are much better off than those who show off different disabilities in order to earn a living. They should have higher morale, more confidence and they should be proud that they are not at the mercy of others.

The culture and the norm that prevails among the poor can be blamed for such attitudes

of the children. From birth they have seen their parents beg, their fellow mates beg and grown up in an atmosphere where food is the ultimate goal of life. They live from hand to mouth. Begging is an easy way of life. It is only recently that the minimum level of consumption or the cost of living. These people are accountable for the high population growth rates that are prevalent and the add-

A sad part of life is that class differentials exist. Half of the population of Bangladesh lives below the poverty line. This means that they cannot meet the minimum calorie intake, the minimum level of consumption or the cost of living. These people are accountable for the high population growth rates that are prevalent and the add-

See page 11 Col 6



Tanvir Rahman, who topped the merit list in SSC examinations under Comilla Board receiving prize from Hamida Ali, Principal of the Vikarunnessa Noon Girls' School and College at CIRDAP auditorium in the city yesterday. — Star photo

Talents honoured  
Prothom Alo hosts reception

By Staff Correspondent

A grand reception was accorded to the most successful students in the SSC examinations yesterday.

Leading Bangla daily the Prothom Alo, in collaboration with International Office Equipment (IOE) and Institute of Information Technology (IIT), arranged the reception for top five students in the combined merit lists in Science, Humanities and Business Education groups of all the five education boards.

Held at the CIRDAP auditorium in the city, the programme was attended by a cross-section of people including parents, teachers and educationists. Each of the 56 talented students was presented with a packet of books, a bouquet and a citation.

Felicitating the students, Prof Serajul Islam Chowdhury underscored the need for self-improvement every moment to change the world. He urged them to make integrated efforts to break the shackles of backwardness and build a better world. He stressed the need for cooperation among all in achieving the cherished goal.

Prof Mozaffar Ahmed advised the top boys and girls to have moral commitment for the people and the country to grow up as a complete human being.

The others who spoke on the occasion included DG of Bangla Academy Dr Syed Anwar Hossain, Prof Mohammad Kaikobad of BUET, actor Asaduzzaman Noor, singer Tapan Chowdhury, artist Rafiqunnabi, Principal of Vikarunnessa Noon Girls' School and College Hamida Ali and Editor of the Prothom Alo Matir Rahman.

Aftabul Islam representing hosts IOE and IIT gave the vote of thanks. Popular writer Anisul Haq and Sumana Sharmin of Prothom Alo conducted the function.

Hotel boy killed  
in crossfire

By Staff Correspondent

A 12-year-old hotel boy was shot dead in a crossfire during a clash between two rival groups of miscreants in the city's Badda area yesterday afternoon.

The victim was identified as Amir Hossain, 12, son of late Sirajul Haq.

The incident took place at about 3:15 pm when Amir went to bring betel leaf for customers. He received bullet injuries in his chest.

Fatally injured Amir was sent to the Dhaka Medical College where the attending doctors declared him dead.

The body was sent to the hospital morgue for autopsy. When contacted, the duty officer of Badda Thana said no case was filed with the thana in this connection.

3 more outlaws  
surrender

From Our Correspondent

MAGURA, July 1: Three more outlaws surrendered to the Police Superintendent, Magura with arms and ammunition at his office here today.

The outlaws are Ranju Biswas, 30, and Paran Molla, 28, of USD Gonobahini and Debenchandra Pal, 40, of Gono Mukti Fouz.

The arms and ammunition included one country-made gun, one revolver, one Indian shutter gun and nine bullets.

They were arrested under Section 54 of CrPc and produced before the local court.

Army withdrawn  
from power, water  
supply stations

Army personnel deployed in the power and water supply stations have been withdrawn in view of improvement of the situation there, an ISPR source told BSS last night.

However, Army personnel will remain on duty at the main power generation and distribution stations at Siddhirganj, Ashuganj and Ghorashal, the source said.

## Sex workers

From Page 1

building was arrested in connection with the murder.

Mala, another sex worker, was murdered in the brothel last month.

Tense situation was prevailing in the brothel and many sex workers left the brothel apprehending fresh attack.

Two sex workers — Sathi and Nasima — told this correspondent that the armed miscreant fired several rounds of shots last night to create panic in the area.

A case was filed with Narayanganj police in this connection.

SNS demands  
Punish rapists,  
stop abusive  
words in JS

By DU Correspondent

The Sammilita Nari Samaj (SNS) yesterday demanded punishment to all those involved in rape and harassment of women.

Leaders of the SNS, a women's rights body, said repression on women is increasing in the country day by day and the culprits are threatening the victims because they are not punished.

Addressing a press conference at the Jatiya Press Club, they also protested alleged indecent remarks about women in the Jatiya Sangsad recently and urged the women legislators to stage walkout in case of any such incident in future. Male members are using abusive words against women in the House, they alleged.

They welcomed the new provision for direct election of female Union Parishad members and urged the government to ensuring security to the female UP members.

They also urged the government to make public the Nari and Shishu Nirjatan Protirodh Bill, 1998.

The SNS, in a memorandum to Speaker Humayun Rasheed Chowdhury on Tuesday, demanded restriction on use of indecent language about women in the Sangsad.

Among others, Farida Akhter, Advocate Sultana Akhter, Elna Khan, Shima Das Shimu, Shasunnahar, Ayesha Islam, Masuda Shefali and Natasha Ahmed were present at the press conference.

See page 11 Col 6

Debate, walkout  
over law and  
order situation

By Staff Correspondent

Amidst opposition stormy protest the Jatiya Sangsad, yesterday, expressed satisfaction over the prevailing law and order situation.

Earlier, during more than two hours of stormy debate, members from both the treasury and opposition benches blamed each other for failure to curb terrorism during their tenure. BNP walked out when the Speaker put the proposal to a vote.

Taking part in the debate, ruling party MPs alleged that law and order situation was worst during the BNP regime and it has dramatically improved under the incumbent Awami League, especially after Mohammad Nasim took over charge of the home ministry.

They alleged that ministers and leaders during the BNP regime directly patronised terrorists and trying to create lawlessness to discredit the Hasina government.

The opposition BNP members, on the other hand, said overall law and order situation has deteriorated seriously and terrorist camps, across the country have become a permanent feature since the Awami League assumed power.

They said killing, snatching, hijacking, repression on women, acid throwing and other criminal activities have become everyday incidents. The BNP MPs alleged: Currently there are two OCs in each police station — one in uniform and another in plainclothes — the local Awami League president. Similarly there are two SPs in the district headquarters.

Excepting Home Minister Mohammad Nasim and BNP MP Major (Retd) Hafizuddin Ahmed who tried to speak on the issue, specifically, all others addressed the issue from their party position.

Mohammad Nasim in his speech sought cooperation from all to curb terrorism while Major Hafiz asked the ruling party not to look at the past and take effective steps to halt terrorism.

Taking part in the debate, See page 11 Col 5

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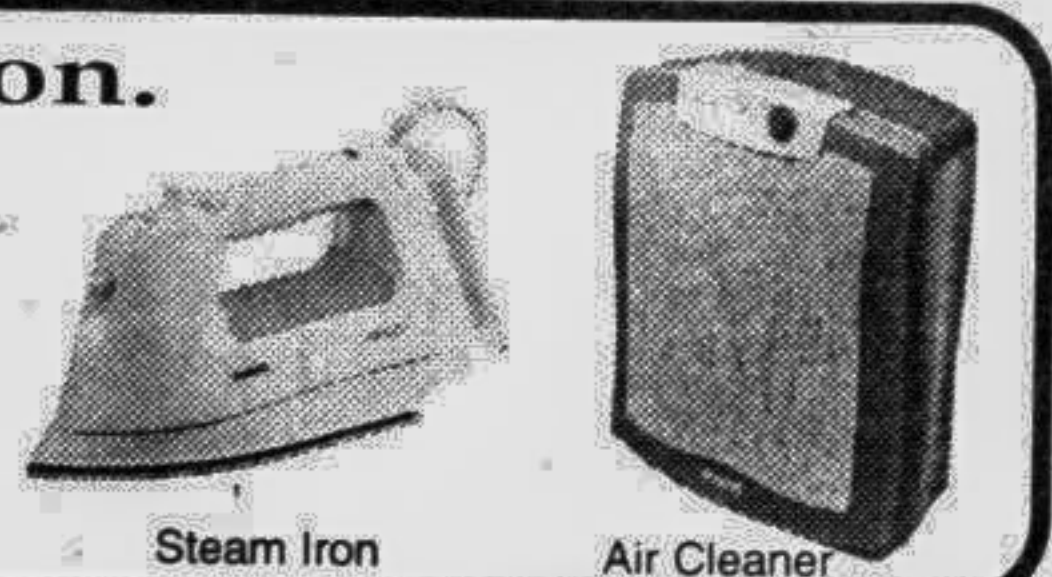
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To sign or not to sign  
Registers for 'daily allowance' of MPs

By Staff Correspondent

The Jatiya Sangsad yesterday witnessed a stormy debate over a proposed pre-condition of signing of registers by MPs for 'daily allowance' for attending parliamentary sittings or meetings of the parliamentary bodies.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina strongly supported the proposal made by Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Abdul Matin Khasru that an MP's claim for daily allowance has to be 'supported by record'. But the Opposition found the pre-condition 'insulting' for a lawmaker.

The minister made the proposal yesterday morning while seeking the Chair's permission to introduce an amendment bill — The Members of Parliament (Remuneration and Allowances) (Amendment) Act, 1999 — seeking enhancement of remuneration and allowances of MPs.

A member shall be entitled to receive a daily allowance at the rate of four hundred Taka and a conveyance allowance at the rate of one hundred Taka for each day he attends the sitting of Parliament or the meeting of committee or any other official duties in parliament and the allowances prescribed under this clause shall only be admissible where the presence of Member is supported by record," the proposed amendment said.

Monthly remuneration of an MP is Tk 6,000 now. Besides, a

legislator gets an allowance of Tk 200 and a conveyance allowance of Tk 50 for attending a sitting of the Sangsad or a parliamentary committee meeting. The amendment has proposed to raise the monthly remuneration to Tk 10,000.

Prof Shahidul Islam of BNP said the proposal for signing registers is 'inconsistent with a legislator's prestige and privileges'.

The opposition MP said, "The government is virtually trying to impose a pre-condition. It is insulting for all the members of parliament. I would request the minister to introduce the bill after discussions with leaders of both the sides."

In reply, the law minister said the Opposition should not oppose the pre-condition on moral ground. "An MP should not receive daily allowances without fulfilling his obligation by attending parliament sittings," the minister said. "The proposed provision will help disbursement of tax-payers money only to the MPs attending parliament proceedings and committee meetings."

At this stage the Prime Minister took the floor in support of her Cabinet colleague. She argued that the proposed provision would stand in the way of those who receive daily allowances without attending parliament sittings. "My conscience does not permit me to take the allowance without attending the sittings of parliament."

ment. Others' conscience should also prick them in this regard."

Speaking next, Opposition Chief Whip Khondaker Delwar Hossain reminded Sheikh Hasina that she and her party MPs had received remuneration and allowances for 18 months without attending a single sitting of the House. "When the Opposition in the Fifth Jatiya Sangsad boycotted the proceedings for 18 months, nothing stopped the Awami League MPs from receiving remuneration and allowances."

The Opposition Chief Whip said the proposed pre-condition was insulting and urged the Treasury Bench not to move the bill the way it was being done. "Why should you compel the MPs to receive remuneration and allowances as day labourers?"

The Prime Minister took the floor again. "It appears that the sense of integrity varies from person to person. MPs are elected to perform certain responsibilities in the Sangsad. How come, an MP receives remuneration without meeting the obligation," she said adding that her conscience did not permit her to do so.

Referring to the Opposition Chief Whip's point that the proposed pre-condition would pull down the status of an MP to that of a day labourer, the Premier said that the statement was insulting for poor voters, especially.

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British HC tells press  
Hasina, Blair to talk  
trade, investment

By Staff Correspondent

Expansion of bilateral trade and British investment in Bangladesh will figure prominently at the talks between Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and her British counterpart Tony Blair during her forthcoming visit to Britain.

Hasina leaves for London on July 5 on a four-day official visit. Her 43-member entourage will include some business leaders.

The two prime ministers will have an 'open agenda' but trade and investment will dominate the talks.

Earlier, during more than two hours of stormy debate, members from both the treasury and opposition benches blamed each other for failure to curb terrorism during their tenure. BNP walked out when the Speaker put the proposal to a vote.

Taking part in the debate, ruling party MPs alleged that law and order situation was worst during the BNP regime and it has dramatically improved under the incumbent Awami League, especially after Mohammad Nasim took over charge of the home ministry.

They alleged that ministers and leaders during the BNP regime directly patronised terrorists and trying to create lawlessness to discredit the Hasina government.

The opposition BNP members, on the other hand, said overall law and order situation has deteriorated seriously and terrorist camps, across the country have become a permanent feature since the Awami League assumed power.

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Excepting Home Minister Mohammad Nasim and BNP MP Major (Retd) Hafizuddin Ahmed who tried to speak on the issue, specifically, all others addressed the issue from their party position.

Mohammad Nasim in his speech sought cooperation from all to curb terrorism while Major Hafiz asked the ruling party not to look at the past and take effective steps to halt terrorism.

Taking part in the debate, See page 11 Col 5

The two countries enjoy "extremely good relations" and bilateral trade and British assistance to Bangladesh is increasing, Walker said. Bangladesh exported goods worth 253 million pounds (equivalent to Tk 1966.80 crore) to Britain and its imports amounted to 87 million pounds (equivalent to Tk 676.60 crore) during 1998, he said.

British development assistance to Bangladesh will rise by 40 to 50 per cent over the next two years, the British High Commissioner said.

"Britain is also involved in infrastructure development in Bangladesh," the HC said while talking about Britain's interest in Bangladesh. Britain was also involved in construction of many bridges including the Bangabandhu Bridge over Jamuna, he said.

During her visit, Sheikh Hasina will also address a conference on Investment Possibilities in Bangladesh, jointly organised by the Confederation of British Industry, British Trade International, Shell Oil and Cairn Energy.

The two Prime Ministers will jointly inaugurate a Bangladesh Festival at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in London on July 7. The 19-day Bangladesh festival is being organised by Arts Worldwide, a UK-based non-government organisation to promote Bangladesh's traditional and folk art and culture in the United Kingdom.

Hasina will also visit the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies, deliver an address at the Royal Institute of International Affairs at Chatham House, London, and witness a question-hour for the Prime Minister in the British Parliament.

After the official visit, Hasina will stay in London for few days.

Graham Clough, Commercial Officer of the British High Commission, was also present at the briefing.



Fazlee mango, a delicious summer fruit, being unloaded from a truck at Badamtali ghat in the city yesterday. — Star photo

Price situation  
AL satisfied,  
Opposition  
protests

By Staff Correspondent

The Jatiya Sangsad yesterday passed by voice vote a resolution expressing satisfaction over government steps in containing prices. The resolution was moved by Awami League Whip Abdus Shadid.

The move sparked a 100 minute heated debate with the ruling party, predictably, thanking the government for keeping the prices within people's capacity and the Opposition, as usual, blaming the government for an unabated price hike.

Before Commerce and Industries Minister Tofail Ahmed rounded up the discussion, two MPs from the ruling party, eight legislators from the BNP and two lawmakers of the Jatiya Party spoke on the issue. BNP MP and former planning minister Dr. Abdul Moyn Khan reported an 8.8 per cent inflation rate now, against 2 per cent in the first two years per cent in the second and 2.4 per cent in the second two years of the BNP rule. "A sick economy is bound to decrease people's capacity to purchase things," Dr Khan explained.

The BNP lawmaker also mentioned devaluation of taka against the US dollar. "Besides, prices have also increased due to a government announcement to raise salaries of government employees which (salaries) did not materialise."

Abdul Mannan of BNP said imposition of 10 per cent supplementary tax in the just-passed budget would further increase the price of items, produced locally. Because, he argued, those items would now be smuggled in from India.

Other opposition MPs -- Shahidul Islam, Abdul Kalam Azad, Siddiqi, Najjuddin Alam, Akhter, Hamid Siddiqi, Ruhul Kuddus Talukder Dulu, BNP and Mujibur Rahman and Rahimuddin Bharrasha of JP also blamed the government for the "sky-rocketing" price of essentials, forcing the common people to a sub-human life.

Refuting opposition claims, Agriculture Minister Matia Choudhury said despite deficit of essential items in the country good management by the government helped keep all prices stable. "Prices remained unchanged even after the worst flood in the country. A good management helped it."

AL MP Sultan Mohammad Mansur Ahmad alleged the past BNP government miserably failed to stabilise prices. People died of starvation and women were forced into prostitution and sold their children due to poverty, he added.

Concluding the debate, Tofail Ahmed told the House prices of all items were now lower than before. "The government can't control prices all the time in a market economy. But we keep constant vigil on the prices," he added.

In this regard, he blamed the BNP for conspiring to create an artificial crisis of certain items including salt, but the authorities' timely action had foiled it.

Defending the rise in price of fertiliser, the minister said it was done to stop smuggling to India.

Quoting official statistics, Tofail said people's purchasing capacity had risen 3.95 per cent from 2.2 per cent during the BNP regime.

All essentials are cheaper in Bangladesh than in India or Pakistan. Our economy is still sound, despite the south-east Asian economic collapse."