

Crucial bills may feature in next JS session

NAZRUL ISLAM

The ensuing 22nd session of the current Jatiya Sangsad, presumed to be the concluding one, is likely to pass a number of politically important bills relating to Awami League's 1996 election pledges, parliament sources said.

The session beginning on March 29 is learnt to be a short-lived one.

Five of the bills are on the following crucial issues: Separation of the judiciary from the executive, autonomy for state run radio and television, appointment of an Ombudsman, repeal of the Vested Property Act and amendment to the Upazila Parishad Bill.

The bills now being prepared by ministries concerned will be passed hurriedly before the next general election so that AL can capitalise on its pledge made before the 1996 election, sources concerned said.

The Business Advisory Committee is expected to sit immediately for allocation of business for the session.

Following the Prime Minister's announcement for an early general election by mid-June, officials at the Parliament Secretariat, taking the ensuing session to be the concluding one, have geared up work to complete the government agendas ahead of the session.

They indicated that the session would be short-lived with "huge businesses."

Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Ministry has sent the crucial Vested Property (Hand over) Bill 2001 to the Parliament Secretariat. Once the bill is passed, the Vested Property Act will be repealed, aiming at handover of the huge property to their real owners.

Apart from these bills, the House would also transact the long pending Constitution (Fourteenth Amendment) Bill 2000, which require two-thirds majority for its passage. It seeks retention of 30 parliamentary seat reserved for women.

The Eighth Parliament will have no reserved seat for women if the bill lapses due to absence of the main opposition in the next session. The ruling Awami League alone has not enough strength in the House to pass the bill that requires constitutional amendment.

Another bill seeking setting up of a board to ease traffic congestion in the city will also be transacted. The Ministry of Communications has prepared the draft of the Greater Dhaka Transportation Coordination Board Bill 2001.

Six other pending bills to be dealt with are: Bank Company (Amendment) Bill, Public Demand Recovery (Amendment) Bill, Bangladesh Institute of Parliamentary Studies Bill, Supreme Court Judges (Leave Pension and Privileges) (Amendment) Bill, Supreme

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Down memory lane
Former students of Sakhawat Memorial Girls' School sing the inaugural song of the two-day programme marking the 90th founding anniversary of the institution in the city yesterday.

Parents blame police for death of abducted schoolboy

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The life of 11-year-old Munna, murdered by a gang of abductors, could be saved had police played their due role to rescue him, parents and relatives of the schoolboy claimed at a press conference in the city yesterday.

They appealed to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to ensure exemplary punishment to the killers.

Kamrul Hasan Munna, a meritorious student of Class-V at AK High School and College at Dhania in the city, was abducted from his aunt's marriage ceremony at Ekuiripara under Keraniganj thana on January 9.

His decomposed body packed in a sack was found in a pond in the locality on March 4.

The body bore marks of injury and veins of his hands and legs were cut. The body was recovered blind-

folded. The injuries showed that the he was tortured to death.

Munna's uncle M Shamsul Haq said at the press conference at the National Press Club that he had filed a general diary (GD) with Keraniganj thana on January 9. Later Munna's father Mohammad Mia Chan filed a case with the same thana on January 14 under the Women and Children Repression Act.

Police arrested four persons Mamun, Ibrahim, Ismail and Bablu from Ekuiripara for their alleged involvement in the incident. Mamun and Ibrahim were placed on remanded for interrogation but two others were not.

The victim's father claimed that Bablu, who masterminded the incident was, released on bail. "Bablu along with three others -- Arif, Ripon and Akhter -- came to my petrol pump and demanded of me

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Constitutional amendment must for new CHT voter list

CEC tells Regional Council team

UNB, Dhaka

The Election Commission yesterday said that constitutional amendment is a must for enlisting only permanent residents as CHT voters.

"Amendments to the Constitution and other rules are needed for a single voter list comprising only permanent residents for all elections in the hill tracts. For this, cooperation is needed from various organs of the government and people," said Chief Election Commissioner M A Syed.

The CEC made the observations about the contentious issue when a five-member delegation of the CHT Regional Council met with him at his office. CHTRC

member Goutam Chakma led the delegation including Nurul Alam, K S Mong Marma, Zafar Ahmad and M Yusuf, as other members.

The delegation placed before the Election Commission a three-point charter of demands:

- 1) Cancellation of the CHT voter list prepared in May-June 2000.
- 2) Preparing a fresh voter list with only permanent CHT residents for all elections.
- a) A voter list as per Hill District Council Act and b) Using this voter list in national and local polls and 3) Enactment of necessary laws for using the voter list comprising only permanent residents in all elections as soon as possible.

The tribal and Bengali permanent residents of the

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AL, BNP leaders agree to fight arsenic crisis unitedly

UNB, Dhaka

Leaders of both ruling and opposition parties have agreed to work together to resolve the arsenic crisis in the country.

Their positive attitude was aired while Health Minister Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim and city BNP President Sadek Hossain Khoka MP addressed the national seminar on arsenic at Jatiya Press Club yesterday.

Forum of Environmental Journalists of Bangladesh (FEJB) in collaboration with Health and Family Welfare Ministry and UNDP organised the seminar.

Two books on arsenic toxicity The State of Arsenic 2000 and Bangladesh Arsenic Chitra 2000, launched at the seminar were published by the Forum of Environmental Journalists of Bangladesh (FEJB) with

the help of UNDP and Health Ministry.

Addressing the seminar, the health minister supported BNP leader Khoka's suggestion that entire population irrespective of opinions and political identities work together to combat arsenic.

Terming arsenic a national problem the minister said, "It is not a problem of a particular party. If we can not face it unitedly, the arsenic-affected-population will become a burden to the nation."

He informed that so far over 10,000 arsenic affected patients have been detected across the country as underground water of 62 districts has been polluted with the poisonous element.

Stressing the need for identifying the cause of arsenic

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Road accidents kill 5 in two districts

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least five people were killed and 60 injured in separate road accidents in Khagrachhari and Mymensingh districts yesterday.

Of them, three were killed in Khagrachhari while the rest in Mymensingh.

UNB adds: Three people were killed and 20 others including three policemen injured in a road accident near Burir Dokan at Tabalchhari under Matiranga upazila of Khagrachhari district yesterday.

The dead were identified as Dukhu Mia, 85, of Camilla Tilla village, Yasin, 20, son of Yunus Mia of Belchhari, and Mohammad Selim, 25, of Bara Bil under Manikchhari upazila.

Police and witnesses said the incident took place at about 7 am when a passenger bus from Tabalchhari fell into a roadside ditch after its driver lost control over the steering.

The three injured constables of Tabalchhari thana Moazzem Hossain, 27, Razab Ali, 25, and Shamsul Haque, 35, -- were admitted to local Sadar Hospital.

The bodies were sent to Sadar Hospital morgue for autopsy and a case was filed with Matiranga

police.

In Mymensingh, two people were killed and 40 others injured when a tencab collided with a passenger bus at Bhaluka on Dhaka-Mymensingh highway yesterday evening.

The dead were identified as Bonya, 30, wife of Gouripur Upazila Nirbahi Officer Alamgir Hossain, and Rubel, 35, driver of the tencab.

Police and witnesses said the accident took place near Amtoli Seed Store at about 7 pm when the Mymensingh-bound taxicab carrying Banya and others collided head-on with the Dhaka-bound passenger bus.

Both the vehicles skidded off the highway after the accident, killing the two on the spot and injuring 40 others.

Six of the seriously injured were rushed to Mymensingh Medical College Hospital while 14 others to Bhaluka Upazila Health Complex.

The bodies were brought to Bhaluka thana.

After the accident, driver of the passenger bus and his helper managed to flee the scene.

Local Deputy Commissioner visited the spot.

A case was filed with Bhaluka police.



Irritating indifference... a canopy erected in front of the Karwan Bazaar kitchen market obstructs traffic movement in the area. Although a violation of law, the authorities have preferred to look the other way.

Hazari goes on whirlwind helicopter tour

UNB, Feni

Joynal Hazari, MP of the ruling party, made a whirlwind tour yesterday in a private helicopter from Dhaka to Rangamati, Parshuram and Phulgazi before landing at Feni in the afternoon.

At Rangamati, Hazari is believed to have discussed with Dipankar Talukdar MP about the hostage issue.

Two Danish and a British national kidnapped by armed tribal youths are being held hostage in deep jungles in Rangamati since February 16.

Accompanied by his second-in-command and BCL president Azharul Haq and secretary of 'Class Committee' and BCL leader Shahjahan Shaju and some other close associates, Hazari flew low and hovered over Parshuram and Phulgazi. He tried to land at a school ground but was not allowed because of SSC examination, informed sources said.

Hazari was received by senior district officials and party men at Feni. Later, a strong contingent of police escorted him to his home.

Hazari's journey in helicopter hired from South Asian Aviation Company has raised many eyebrows in the area.

BNP to go for wildcat movement if govt delays resignation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The BNP-led opposition alliance plans to take a headline from its March 21 public meeting in the capital if the government did not resign immediately to pave the way for a general election in May.

"We are now closely observing the development in regard to the government's commitment to hold the election before June 12. We will definitely go for wildcat movement if the government deviates from its words," said a top BNP leader, requesting anonymity.

He said the people would take it seriously if the prime minister refuses to resign immediately, because she herself had committed early elections while being in the holy city of Madina.

The BNP leader said confusion has already been created in the minds of the people, as the head of the government is yet to make a clear-cut announcement as to when her government will relinquish power although it has been a few days since her return from Madina.

The policy makers of the BNP and its allies, according to him, are holding regular meetings, both formal and informal, to work out a strategy lest the government should not make any clear-cut

announcement regarding its resignation before March 21.

The top BNP leader said the policy makers would sit with Leader of the Opposition in parliament Khaleda Zia immediately on her return from China and are expected to finalise the action plan within next two to three days.

He said Khaleda on behalf of the alliance would first issue an ultimatum to the government to step down within a certain period of time maybe a week or ten days.

Another senior leader said the alliance might announce a series of wildcat agitation programmes if the government did not stand down by that time.

Sources said the alliance leaders have come to an understanding to take a tough line if the government declined to give an early election. However, the leaders said, the opposition would proceed carefully so that its image is not tainted.

Non-stop hartal, en masse resignation by the opposition MPs from parliament and other such tough action programmes are on the cards, sources said.

Meanwhile, the BNP has launched a massive campaign to ensure huge participation at the March 21 joint public meeting at Paltan Maidan, sources said.

Khaleda returns home tonight

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Chairperson and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Khaleda Zia will return home from China tonight after a week-long visit at the invitation of the Communist Party of China (CPC).

She is expected to arrive at Zia International Airport at 8 pm today. BNP leaders and activists will receive her at the airport, said a party press release.

Khaleda Zia along with party leaders Abdul Matin Chowdhury, Dr Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain, M Morshed Khan and M M Rezaul Karim left for Beijing on March 8 and held meetings with President Jiang Zemin, government ministers and CPC leaders.

Sun Rises Sun Sets

Mar 16 pm 6.08

Prayer Timings

March 16

Fazr 5-20 5-50

Juma 12-15 1-20

Asr 4-30 4-45

Maghrib 6-13 6-18

Esha 7-30 8-00

Source: Islamic Foundation

BNP delegation calls on Kofi Annan

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A four-member BNP delegation led by Deputy Leader of the Opposition Prof AQM Badruddin Chowdhury called on the visiting UN Secretary General Kofi Annan at his Sonargaon Hotel suit yesterday.

The delegation discussed UN peacekeeping programmes and its role in solution of problems in developing countries. The meeting was held in a cordial atmosphere, a BNP press release said.

They also appraised Anna the prevailing political, economic and law and order situation in the country as well as the upcoming general election.

The leaders also suggested how UN can play a role in holding of the next election in a free, fair and neutral way.

BNP traditionally gives utmost importance to the UN and strongly supports its peacekeeping activities, they informed him. They also mentioned that Bangladesh actively participated in UN peacekeeping activities when BNP was in power.

He said BNP expects that the UN-initiated upcoming summit of developing countries would be an important one in alleviating poverty in countries like Bangladesh.

On a query from Anna about Bangladesh's current political situation and the ensuing election, they said more than 400 people including BNP leaders and activists

have so far been killed during Awami League rule. Thousands of opposition leaders and activists are being harassed under "false cases".

The BNP leaders alleged that human rights were violated as the government introduced Public Safety Act in the name of curbing terrorism while ruling party leaders and activists were disrupting public safety.

Terrorists belonging to a ruling party leader -- Dr Iqbal MP -- attacked a peaceful BNP procession and killed four persons including a policeman last month, they told him.

The UN Secretary General gave a patient hearing and told them that democracy could be institutionalised through election and a proper and transparent political process.

He hoped that the Election Commission as per tradition would write to UN seeking election monitors. He also emphasised the role of local polls observers in ensuring a free and fair election.

BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, party chairperson's Advisory Council members Reaz Rahman and Inam Ahmed Chowdhury, UN Under Secretary Kieran Prender Gast, Director of UN Secretary General's Executive Office Lamin Jisise and UNDP Resident Representative Jorgen Lissner were present on the occasion.

Proshika rejoinder and our reply

Proshika Computer System (PCS) has contradicted a report published in The Daily Star on March 14, under the headline "Proshika Computer System fined for tax evasion."

In a rejoinder, Proshika denied allegation of tax evasion and claimed that it did not get any such order from the customs department.

The Proshika Computer System claimed that it had paid a total of Tk 78 lakh as VAT to the national exchequer against a revenue of Tk five crore from February 1997 to February 2001. PCS has no VAT outstanding, and the question of tax evasion is an utter fabrication, it said.

Our reply

The report was made on the basis of an order issued by Ali Ahmed, Commissioner, customs excise and VAT commissioner, Dhaka North on March 13.

A copy of the order is in our hand and we stand by our report.



The Irish goalkeeper parries off a Pakistan attack during yesterday's Prime Minister Gold Cup hockey championship match at Moulana Bhasani National Stadium. Favourites Pakistan moved to the semi-finals with a 6-1 drubbing.