

## FFs Council, Money Laundering Prevention Bills passed in JS

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Jatiya Sangsad last night passed two bills, one of them to establish a National Freedom Fighters Council to oversee the welfare of freedom fighters and work for upholding the spirit of the liberation war.

Tabled by State Minister for the Liberation War Affairs Minister Redwan Ahmed on March 31, the House passed the Freedom Fighters Council Bill, 2002 by voice vote, while several amendment proposals moved by Bangabir Qader Siddiqui were nullified.

In line with the proposed act, the government will constitute a council supposed to administer all organisations related to the war and freedom fighters, undertake projects for preservation of the history, tradition, monuments, sculptures and memories of the war, and list and certify all freedom fighters.

With the act coming into force, all related organisations, including the

Muktijoddha Sangsad (freedom fighters' council) and the Muktijoddha Kalyan (welfare) Trust should have to be registered with the proposed body.

The liberation war affairs minister will head the council that will have eight more councillors selected from the noted freedom fighters, including brigade commanders, sector commanders, sub-sector commanders or persons engaged in the liberation war-related activities.

The prime minister will be the chief advisor to the council headquartered in Dhaka.

The other bill -- the Money Laundering Prevention Bill, 2002 moved by Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman -- was also passed by voice vote.

Aimed at preventing money laundering, the new act prescribes a maximum of seven years in imprisonment and fines for the offence of money laundering.

## Jute godown gutted in N'ganj

OUR CORRESPONDENT, N'ganj

Jute worth Tk 90 lakh was gutted in a fire at a godown in Godnil area of Narayanganj yesterday morning.

According to Fire Brigade sources, the fire originated from an electric short circuit at a jute godown of Mutual Jute Spinners at around 7 am.

Fire fighting units from Hajiganj and Mandalpara rushed to the spot and extinguished the blaze at about 10 pm.

Five people were injured while extinguishing the blaze.

## Tayebur

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city BNP Secretary Nazrul Islam Manju as member-secretary, Whip Ashraf Hossain as convener and Nurul Islam and Ali Asghar Lobi MP as joint convenors.

Speakers at the meeting called upon the police commissioner to arrest terrorists and professional killers and recover all illegal arms to ensure a peaceful atmosphere for the election.

They also called upon the candidates nominated by Tayebur Rahman not to hire terrorists to vitiate the atmosphere.

## Hannan Airport

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freedom fighter and an organiser of Liberation War.

The Mayor said the name of the saint (Shah Amanat RA) could be put in many places in Chittagong to honour him.

The then Prime Minister and Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina on March 28, 1998 laid the foundation for reconstruction and expansion of the airport.

MA Hannan had first aired the proclamation of independence by Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman through BDR wireless on March 26, 1971.

## Kilgour: JS

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rallies and demonstrations.

Canadian High Commissioner David Preston, former state minister for foreign affairs Abul Hossain Chowdhury, Political Secretary to the Leader of the Opposition Saber Hossain Chowdhury and Sheikh Hasina's Press Advisor Jawadul Karim were present at the meeting.

However, David Kilgour said, "I am not convinced by any of the reasons the leader of the opposition showed for not joining the parliament. Millions of people voted for her party and I think they should be represented in the parliament."

"In a parliamentary system, the opposition has to play a responsible role. If you decide not to join the parliament if you lose the election, then how could democracy work?" he asked.

"I am very much encouraged by the opportunities for cooperation particularly in the areas of energy, power and telecommunications," David Kilgour told the briefing.

The Canadian minister also advocated for exporting of gas, saying, "It will bring prosperity to you [Bangladesh]."

He also said there would not be any investment in hydrocarbon sector unless the gas export option is kept open.

Referring to his meeting with the state minister for energy, Kilgour said he has sought assurance from the government that the Canadian companies would be get fair and transparent treatment in gas deals.

A Canadian company, Niko, has been trying to seal a deal for extracting gas from the abandoned gas fields. "We stand fully behind the company," Canadian High Commissioner David Preston said.

## Fault finder

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"But after going through the relevant documents, we did not find any effective steps taken since September 2000 for upgrading or correcting the software," the investigators said in their report.

The DSE chief executive informed the SEC investigation team that he came to know about the fault on January 20, 2002, which the SEC found contradictory to the statement by the IT surveillance officials who claimed that they had informed the CEO on different occasions.

"The DSE surveillance officials also informed us that they had been conducting surveillance based on assumptions," the SEC investigation report said.

The matter was later placed before the SEC board meeting following which the show-cause notice was served.

When contacted, DSE CEO Md Rezaur Rahman told The Daily Star that he took over charge on December 1, 2001 and came to know about the fault in January 2002.

"My predecessor was informed about the fault and he advised the IT department to contact with the software vendors, who advised the DSE to install a new software. But it could not be put into operation as the hardware vendor said this would slow down the system," Rahman said.

The DSE Council agreed to upgrade the hardware on March 23, 2002.

The CEO also admitted that the surveillance system was faulty and the DSE used to do it by analysing trade data. He also claimed that the DSE never supplied any wrong surveillance report to the SEC.



Canadian Secretary of State David Kilgour called on Awami League Chief and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Sheikh Hasina at Suda Sadhan yesterday.

## Dhaka can play pivotal role

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Bangladesh, adding that one such company, Niko, has already sent a representative to explore the possibilities.

The Canadian secretary of state, who left Dhaka on his way back home yesterday after a three-day official visit, praised Bangladesh, saying that it has become a model for democracy and development partnership.

"It must stretch out its hands in partnership. We have already been impressed by the entrepreneurial vigour of your private sector and the creativity of the NGOs."

Kilgour said that the Canadian government was satisfied with Bangladesh's development performance in various social sectors and lauded the role of the government and the NGOs in this regard.

Through the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), Canada has the largest development programme in

Bangladesh, Kilgour said, adding that his government has contributed 52 million Canadian dollars annually in development assistance to Bangladesh over the past few years.

Since its independence, Bangladesh has received some two billion Canadian dollars from the Canadian government, he said.

As to why Bangladesh figures at the top of Canada's aid recipients' list for over three decades now, Kilgour, a member of Parliament for Edmonton who was the secretary of state for Latin America and Africa for nearly five years, said, "Bangladesh is a country born in considerable difficulty. It has so large a population. But it has now made considerable progress and has even earned a name in international peacekeeping."

He believes that Bangladesh has immense potential in information and communication technology and in the energy sector.

There is tremendous scope for Canadian companies to set up training institutions in the field of software development, he said.

Entrepreneurs here can make huge profit by entering into partnerships with Canadian companies, he observed, adding that representatives of three IT companies were on his entourage.

On his country's visa and immigration regime, Kilgour said, "It is open and there is no specific quota for any country. The world quota is 300,000, he said. Qualified Bangladeshis can always apply for immigration as per rules."

In this regard he praised the Bangladeshis immigrants in Canada. "They are excellent, hardworking and dedicated."

He said that his government would try to provide zero-tariff access to all products from Bangladesh with the exception of milk, chicken and eggs.

## Manhunt on for masterminds

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in him a bike to ride.

Shihab was taken straight to the election campaign office of Julekha Akhter Mridha, where he was served with noodles. The gangsters pressed the boy for his family telephone number.

The boy got angry with the gang for the presence of the strangers at the election camp and for not giving him the promised bike. The gang hushed the boy.

"I'll tell my father everything to have you punished," the abductors quoted Shihab during the investigation as saying.

When one of the abductors tried to grab the boy by the throat, Shihab reacted. And Raju strangled the boy, holding him from behind.

Four of the six people arrested in connection with the abduction and killing of the schoolboy were placed on a seven-day remand yesterday.

The two women -- Julekha Akhter Mridha and her daughter Kankon Akhter Kanok -- were sent to the Dhaka Central Jail, as police did not seek remand prayer for them.

The DB proposed before the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court, Dhaka at 3.00pm with a prayer for a seven-day remand for the four arrested -- Monir Hossain Liton, Abu Sayeed, Rashedul Islam Rashed and Fazlul Haq.

The defence lawyers for the accused sought bail and cancellation of the remand prayer for Rashed and Fazlul Haq and bail for Julekha and Kankon.

The prosecution opposed the bail petition and prayed for remand. After hearing both sides, Magistrate Mohammad Shahidul Islam placed the four on a seven-day remand, rejecting the bail petition.

Meantime, a five-member committee headed by the head of the Forensic Department of the Dhaka Medical College Hospital carried out the autopsy yesterday.

The body will be handed over to the victim's family members for burial after being X-rayed today.

The first janaza of Shihab will be held at the Baitul Mukarram Mosque after Asr prayers today. The second janaza will also be held today at the Eastern Housing Jame Mosque before sending the body to Jatrapur in Bagerhat.

"We are investigating the case very sincerely and hope it would be a model for the investigations of this kind," one of the investigators said.

Asked why DB investigators arrested Julekha, a leader of Gono Forum and her daughter, they replied that a murder took place in her election campaign office and gave false statements about the accused to the investigators. "The two will be accused as abettors."

Shihab was killed within two hours of his abduction, when the things turned worst with the boy having recognised one of the culprits.

Although the boy met with his accident fate 53 days ago, the incident was revealed on Monday when the detectives recovered the decomposed pieces of the body from Bashabo and North Goran areas in the city.

Home Minister Atif Hossain Chowdhury visited Shihab's family and assured the family members of the arrest of the culprits involved in the killing.

The family members demanded exemplary punishment to the killers.

## Graft case

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Tayeb Sikder-were dropped from the charge sheet as allegations against them could not be proved.

The IO got approval from the prime minister's office on March 27 for submission of the charge sheet, sources said.

In the charge sheet, 11 people were shown as prosecution witnesses.

Meanwhile, the accused were granted ad-interim bail by the High Court on December 12. The court granted bail till submission of police report.

## PSA scrapped

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30 days. Moreover, unlike the PSA, which had little room for granting bail, the proposed law has provisions for bail in accordance with the CrPC.

The introduction of the PSA drew flak from different quarters as it left very limited scope for granting bail to the accused. The AL government was blamed for politically abusing the stringent law that provided for speedy trial of criminals in special courts.

Despite challenging the law in the High Court while in opposition, the BNP which now heads the coalition government continued using the PSA and filed about 400 cases under the law. It has already filed a writ with the High Court calling it extra-constitutional and the hearing in the case is ongoing.

Parliament sources indicated that an official gazette on the abolition of the PSA might be published before the court resumes hearing the writ this noon.

Last night, the Jatiya Sangsad passed by voice votes the bill seeking repeal of the PSA amid continued abstention by the main opposition Awami League (AL) lawmakers. The BNP-led coalition MPs supported the bill while opposition lawmakers belonging to the Ershad-led Jatiya Party (JP), Anwar Hossain Monju of his faction of JP and Krishak Sramik Janata League's lone MP Abdul Quader Siddiqui abstained from voting.

Meanwhile, the offences coming under the purview of the proposed law include terrorism, mugging, kidnapping, illegal toll collection, vandalism, obstruction to tender, and obstruction to works of government officers and employees and their relatives, hindrance to normal traffic movements and trespassing.

The provision in the proposed law regarding traffic movement says hindrance to normal movement of traffic on road, river and air space or diversion of the transports from normal routes against the will of the drivers, masters or pilots or damage to the transports will be considered as offences under this law.

For speedy trials of cases filed under the proposed law, one or more courts would be set up in every district and metropolis. And, first class magistrates will conduct trials.

The proposed law provides for jail terms ranging from two to five years. Besides, there are provisions for punishment for bringing false charges. It also allows a magistrate to record a witness's account right on the spot. Moreover, audio- and video-tapes will be accepted as evidences.

Earlier, in its previous stint in office the BNP had enacted a law titled Anti-Terrorism Act (ATA) and kept it in force for two years (1992-94).

Both the PSA and ATA drew flak from various sections of society while human rights organisations dubbed them as "black laws".

Lawyers and opposition politicians, however, fear that the proposed law may be used to clamp down on opposition political activities rather than to contain terrorism.

Giving rationale behind the framing of the proposed law, Law Minister Moudud Ahmed said currently the process of justice is being

delayed while it is important that the offenders are handed down punishment quickly.

"So, for the sake of speedy trial, the home ministry had first proposed such a law," Moudud added.

Awami League leader and former law minister Abdul Matin Khasru told The Daily Star yesterday that the government was going to pass the new "anti-human rights law" to persecute the opposition activists.

"It will be a black law. The Awami League taking the public in its side will build up resistance against this law," said Khasru.

Other Awami League leaders observed that the provision regarding the movement of traffic could specifically be applied to restrict different political activities like general strikes, sit-in demonstrations and road barricades.

Legal expert Dr MA Zahir said, "It's just like a old wine in new bottle, which may be politically motivated," he told The Daily Star last night.

Dr Zahir also did not find any convincing logic behind the decision to keep the proposed law in force for two years. "Laws are generally enacted forever."

Lawyer Shahdeen Malik said to the BBC Radio last night, "The ingredients, for which we had proposed the Public Safety Act, are very much there in the proposed one, too."

He dubbed the move as a political stunt because "many problems cannot be solved merely by making laws".

Earlier, in the parliament last night, the pro-Ershad JP legislators opposed the bill's provision for keeping the PSA cases alive as they apprehended that the government would abuse its authority for political ends.

Refuting the JP contention, the law minister told the parliament that 4,152 cases implicating 32,743 people were filed under the PSA until the present government took over. More than 26,000 of the accused belong to the BNP and they had been politically victimised by the previous government, he claimed.

Defending the government's authority on deciding the fate of the PSA cases, the law minister argued the government needed to continue with certain cases to try some 6,000 hardcore criminals accused in the P S A .

No responsible government can spare such listed criminals including killers, terrorists and extortionists."

JP lawmakers KM Quader, Golam Habib Dulal and Hafizuddin Ahmed, while opposing the provision for selectively withdrawing the PSA cases, observed that no government could rise above partisan interests in scrutinising such charges of political nature. They all suggested soliciting public opinion before scrapping the PSA.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia and most of the front-ranking ministers were present as the controversial law was repealed amid cheers by the treasury bench. "It's a historic day for the nation, for this is for the first time a government has repealed a black law," the law minister commented.

## 10 elephants killed

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mine the behavioural status of the elephant before declaring it rogue and allowing anyone to kill it in 1996.

This year round, the department did not carry out any investigation as such but acted on the administration's report of 1996, condemning it to death immediately after the Ramgarh incident.

Nor did it respond to a proposal for a joint investigation by experts and forest officials, as suggested by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

Two forest officials who had just returned home after attending a training course on elephants at the Bandipur National Park of Tamil Nadu in India are available to carry out such a study.

The officials attended an elephant camp at Bandipur where an elephant was tamed even though it killed 17 people. The Indian forest department did not condemn the elephant to death, though.

According to Dr Mohammad Ali Reza Khan who had carried out an extensive study on Bangladeshi elephants in the 1980s on behalf of the World Wide Fund (WWF) for Nature, an elephant never forgets any traumatic experience and remain hostile to its tormentors ever after.

Dr Khan has suggested that the Ramgarh elephant be put to sleep with the help of a tranquilliser gun, transported to its habitat and set free among the herd.

The rejoinder did not mention anything of such scientific method to tame the wild elephants going rogue.

## All for leadership

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On the other hand, two top JCD leaders have so far taken admission in the university. They are President of DU unit Manir Hossain and Central Vice-president Shafiq Bari Babu. Both of them are doing diploma in health economics.

Babu told The Daily Star yesterday that he was studying health economics to build up his career. "First I am a student and then a political worker. So I have to study for a better future."

Mihr Kanti Ghosal, a BCL central member, however, said he got admitted to the Institute of Health Economics to continue study following the long delay in the formation of the new BCL committee. "As Sheikh Hasina said that only students will be accommodated in the BCL leadership, many BCL leaders like me have taken readmission in the university," he added.

## Demand for council

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rejected the committee and held demonstrations in Dhaka and elsewhere in the country demanding its dissolution.

The JCD leaders and workers who talked to this correspondent said they believe that JCD played an important role in BNP politics in the past and in the October 1 general election. Activities of the student body should be revived with "only promising faces, who must be students".

They said JCD suffered a lot due to internal feuds since the organisation was founded on January 1, 1978. Taking in of non-students and "identified terrorists" in different units was the main cause for the internal feuds, they said.

"BCL will come with a new face after its council. We hope BNP policymakers will take right decisions to bring changes in JCD leadership with dedicated, sincere

and non-terrorist student activists," Manir Hossain, its DU unit president said.

Shafiq Bari Babu, vice-president of the central committee, said a new committee should be formed without any further delay to reactivate the student body.

"A new committee comprising dedicated and student activists is now needed to face BCL, which will come up stronger after its council," he added.

He said inactivity has gripped JCD due to non-holding of a council and moratorium on activities of the central committee.

Selimuzzaman Selim, another vice-president of JCD's central committee said the leadership crisis has created a vacuum in the organisation, which can be filled up with a new leadership. This has also a demoralising effect on the rank and file, he said.

## New terrorism law

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Steps have already taken to keep round-the-clock vigilance on the terrorists. Paramilitary BDR troops and riot police men will simultaneously launch joint raids in different parts of the city.

And if necessary, the army, which would be kept ready during the raids, would be called in to join in the operation.

Sources said the law-enforcing agency and intelligence agencies have already sent names of terrorists and their godfathers to the ministry.

They said the secret agencies are also probing into possible foreign funding behind terrorist groups in the country. The law-enforcing agencies have almost completed identification of the deans of terrorists.

The agencies, according to the sources, identified some slums in the city as the major source of terrorism, extortion, snatching, drugs and illegal arms. They have recommended eviction of all slums, particularly the BNP Bazar slum at Agargaon and the slums at Bashantek and Tejgaon.

The cabinet committee on law and order earlier recommended increase in logistics, workforce, facilities and allowances for the law-enforcing agencies.

Besides, the government has decided to terminate the corrupt police personnel and those having any political allegiance. As a step, the government is now collecting secret reports on police officials and constables.

The government has also decided to recruit at least 5,000

police men each year.

Under the nationwide crackdown plan, cabinet committee sources said responsibilities would be given to the lawmakers and ministers to look into the law and order in their respective constituencies.

## Rajshahi mayor

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of him and was given the ticket. Kabir was however compensated at the last moment as he was nominated for the Rajshahi-5 constituency, which he won.

"Now, Kabir Hossain and his people are trying to teach Minu a lesson by fielding a candidate against him," said a Rajshahi city BNP leader on condition of anonymity.

However, Alauddin Ahmed, joint secretary of city BNP and also a ward commissioner candidate, was confident that the plan by the anti-Minu group would not work.

"They had employed the same trick and pitted a rebel candidate against Minu in the mayoral polls of 1994. But neither the BNP nor the voters had accepted Enamul Hoque, an advocate and the then rebel candidate, who bagged about 600 votes only," he said.

Ahmed also predicted a similar fate for Quamrul Munir.

But another BNP leader said the Awami League (AL) voters are likely to cast their votes for Munir and this may upset the equation that tips Minu as the favourite. Besides, although the AL is boycotting the elections, its local leaders are not willing to miss out on having a feel of the polls and will try to play their own games, sources said.