

# Do you really believe

**FROM PAGE 1**  
We have filled our pages with pictures of long queues of ordinary people in police stations being sent to court for sentencing. We have published stories of anxious parents, relatives and friends desperately looking for their children or near and dear ones.

And yet you say that no innocent people were arrested or even harassed. We have published stories about jails bursting at their seams from overcrowding. We have also reported how police were taking bribes and releasing people from police stations. We have reported on how thousands of people have lived on one or two pieces of bread for 24 to 48 hours at a stretch and yet you said that nobody has been harassed.

Have you not seen the picture of destitute woman Saleha, with unstoppable tears rolling down the cheeks of her struggle-marked face, wailing her heart out on the premises of a magistrate's court for her son

Alauddin, who was picked up from Shahidnagar in Mohammedpur thana? Please look at her eyes, see her poverty-wrecked face and ask yourself, 'Could her young son have anything to do with politics?'

Have you not read the story of Hazera Bibi who has been running from one police station to another, from one court to another in search of her only son Monoo for the last three days? Her cries have reverberated throughout the court premises with-out any result.

Monoo was picked up by the police three days ago and since then Hazera Bibi has been running from one police station to another, from one court room to another carrying a loaf of bread and some water to feed her son. Please examine Hazera Bibi, portrait of a mother devastated by her son's arrest, and question your heart, 'Could such a poor widow's son really have been a political activist of the opposition?'

Honourable Prime Minister, we are forced to conclude that either newspaper reports are not brought to your attention or that you do not attach any credence to them. Either way, shutting yourself from independent media is the surest way for your isolation with all its disastrous consequences as testified repeatedly by history.

May we be so bold as to remind you that you used to find our reports extremely credible when you were in the opposition. So what happened? At the risk of offending you we have to say, you have changed -- from being the opposition leader you have become the Prime Minister. We have remained where we were, doing our national and professional duty as we did BEFORE -- telling the truth as best we can, as fast as fast as we can and as objectively as we can.

You have also said in your parliamentary party meeting that we would "shudder" if we knew the details of the opposition conspiracy to topple your government. Honourable Prime Minister, however much we may

shudder in fear, we want to know the truth. We have a right to know how devious, vicious, anti-national and unpatriotic our opposition truly is. Just as we have a right to know, so also you have an obligation to inform people. You are democratically elected and have constitutionally formed government. To conspire to "topple" such a government is punishable by law, which most of the independent media, especially The Daily Star, has unequivocally said over and over again. Therefore, you must inform public about it.

However, we are forced to point out that this is not the first time you have said about the opposition's conspiracy. This has been your recurrent theme for many months now. But in spite of demands from us -- the independent media and civic society leaders -- you have never divulged anything about the nature, extent and depth of such conspiracy. We once again urge you to do so and fast.

However, there is another conspiracy about which you need to share your 'evidence' with people. There is not a single Bangladeshi who would not consider the "biggest arms cache ever" as the most serious threat to our security and stability. There is also no question that those who are responsible for bringing these arms into our soil are enemies of our country in every sense of the term. And yet, what has your government done about unearthing that conspiracy?

The high-powered committee, headed by the home secretary, has not made any breakthrough to the best of our knowledge. Is that the best we could do in getting to the bottom of our most serious threat to stability?

We are not aware of any attempt to seek international assistance in the matter yet. Arms smugglers, by the very nature of their crime, have international linkages. So it is only natural that international co-operation is a necessary precondition for getting to the bottom of such crimes. Given the fight against international terrorism and the fact that Bangladesh has pledged complete co-operation in the matter, such collaboration is almost a natural first step. And yet nothing has been done in that regard.

In fact, an inexplicable silence has been forced on the matter with the authorities sharing nothing with the public. After inordinate delay in the initial investigation, the case has now been shifted to the CID, whose record in solving crimes is less said the better. Then again, can the CID really handle crimes of international nature? So both in the case of innocent public being harassed in the name of foiling opposition conspiracy and in investigating the biggest threat to our security, the question to ask is : Who is the government fooling?

# FBCCI offers

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will not go for programmes on streets and highways. Political parties will also not have trade unions as their fronts.

According to the proposals, political parties will not patronise any professional bodies, organisations of teachers and students and trade bodies to check politicisation of every sphere of national life.

Members of parliament (MPs) will only be loyal to their own parties on the formation of government, no-confidence vote in the House, budget proposals and amendment to the constitution, the FBCCI said.

The government has to abolish the public secrecy laws and enact laws to ensure people's right to know government information for transparency and accountability, it said.

It called for making provisions for one parliament seat for women in each district and direct election to that seat. It suggested formation of a constitution court to deal with cases concerning the constitution.

The FBCCI recommended formation of a national committee for selecting the chief justice and heads and members of various constitutional bodies like the Public Service Commission and Election Commission, Bangladesh Bank governor and Securities and Exchange Commission chairman.

It suggested formation of separate and independent regulatory

bodies like commission for human rights and consumers rights. The government should put priority on weekly holiday on Sunday and annual holidays should not exceed 20 days, it said.

The proposals called for making provisions for compensation due to hartal and other political programmes.

The FBCCI stressed constitution of a national committee, comprising three members each from the BNP and Awami League and one each from other political parties that have representation in parliament, to resolve political problems and differences.

The committee will continue meeting till preparation of a position paper to reach consensus on key national issues.

FBCCI proposals also called for organising a convention for reconciliation and national unity aiming at reaching comprehensive political settlement of national conflicts.

Headed by chief adviser of a caretaker government, others to attend will include political leaders from all parties, Speaker, former chief justice, cabinet secretary and representatives from professional associations nominated by the president.

The government must implement the recommendations of the convention to change the political trend of the country.

# IMF to give loans

**FROM PAGE 1**  
for the first few years." Finance Minister Saifur Rahman said yesterday on his return to Dhaka from a weeklong visit to the IMF and the World Bank head offices in Washington.

"There are fears that our export earning will drop," he added. "In this situation, the IMF has agreed to provide us a fund through a special window."

Speaking at Zia International Airport on his arrival early yesterday morning, Saifur said, "The IMF has asked us to modernise our ports and make them more efficient in the post-MFA regime. Otherwise, we will lose our market as we will fail to deliver goods to our clients."

Discussing the TIM in its board meeting on April 2, the directors of the Fund reiterated that a successful conclusion of the Doha Round will bring significant benefits to the world economy.

"The transition to a more liberal trade environment, however, also involves economic adjustments, which for several developing countries may raise added policy challenges," Acting Managing Director of the IMF Anne Krueger told the board, stressing the importance on continuation of trade liberalisation.

Some directors felt that the IMF's readiness to make its existing instruments available for supporting trade liberalisation should give sufficient confidence to members. Most directors saw considerable merit in a more tailored approach to address the balance of payments impact of trade adjustment resulting from the Doha Round.

The directors supported the establishment of the TIM to help members mitigate short-term balance of payments pressures stemming from trade liberalisation.

Under the TIM, the IMF should stand ready to discuss with qualifying countries facing such balance of payments shortfalls, new arrangements in the upper credit tranches, the Extended Fund Facility, or the Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility.

# 50 hurt as JCD men swoop on Sust sit-in

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

The activists of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) swooped on the general students of Shahjalal University of Science & Technology (Sust) on the campus yesterday, leaving at least 50 injured.

Of the injured, 15 were admitted to Sylhet M A G Osmany Medical College Hospital while the rest given first aid.

Campus sources said about 40 JCD men attacked the students who were staging a sit-in in front of the administrative building to press their nine-point demand.

The demands include punitive action against some JCD cadres who had helped a fellow cadre in sexual abuse of a student.

The JCD activists beat up the general students, fired blank shots and ransacked some rooms of the building. They also beat up the photojournalists of three local dailies as they went to the campus to snap the incident.

Police went to the campus and brought the situation under control at about 6:00pm.

The general students held a protest rally in Madina Market area in the city at 7:00pm, demanding punishment to the attackers.

# Constitution

**FROM PAGE 12**  
Union Parishad Forum (NUPF) co-organised the roundtable at the conference room of Narayanganj Pourashabha as part of their efforts to garner public opinion in favour of their demands.

They also submitted memoranda to the district administrators across the country to press home their 11-point demand including rescindment of the amendment.

The roundtable observed that the government should dispose of cases related to local government through the special trial tribunal as these prove to be the stumbling blocks to holding elections to corporation, Pourashabha and Union Parishad.

Tongi Pourashabha Chairman Azmatullah Khan, also president of the MAB, said if the government wants to strengthen the local government, elected representatives must rule it. If the government goes ahead with the amendment, the move to decentralise the local government will be disrupted, as the amendment will limit the local government more, Azmatullah noted.

Among others, Abul Kalam Azad MP delivered welcome speech while Narayanganj Pourashabha Chairman Selina Hayat Ivy, former MP Afzal Hossain and National Union Parishad Forum President Golam Sarwar also spoke.

# Most distant

**FROM PAGE 1**  
from Canterbury University's Mount John observatory, near the Southern Alps mountain chain in New Zealand's South Island.

It was also independently located by United States and Polish astronomers working from an observatory in Chile and the find will be published in the international Astrophysical Journal next month.

One of the project's astronomers, Victoria University reader in astrophysics Denis Sullivan, said the planet was found using a gravitational micro-lensing technique which measures the way in which gravity bends light.

"This is the first time a planet has been found using this technique," he said.

"The real strength (of the technique) is the ability to hopefully find other Earth-like planets, which is difficult to do using other techniques."

He said that although the new planet was gaseous and could not support life, he believed it was possible there were earth-like planets waiting to be discovered.

# Cabinet okays

**FROM PAGE 1**  
The government has already withdrawn the bill from parliament placed there on March 17 and will place it in tomorrow's session incorporating the retirement age provisions adopted later.

The bill, approved by the cabinet at a meeting with prime minister Khaleda Zia in the chair, will be sent to the president for his approval as the bill involves new spending.

"After the formalities for financial allocation and the president's approval, the bill will be placed in parliament on April 28," Law Minister Moudud Ahmed said.

He said six of the nine changes were discussed in the parliamentary standing committee on the law ministry and the bill would be sent to the same committee after placing in parliament for scrutiny of the new changes.

The constitutional amendment bill is expected to be passed in the second week of next month when the Jatiya Sangsad meets again.

The bill also proposes to automatically dissolve all elected local bodies on completion of the five-year tenure to clear way for regular elections every five years and quickly swear-in lawmakers-elect.

# MPs default

**FROM PAGE 1**  
(Tk 1,64,374), Prof Shahidul Islam, committee on cultural affairs ministry (Tk 2,945), Abdul Alim, committee on expatriates welfare and overseas employment ministry (Tk 2,09,244), Helaluzzaman Talukdar, committee on mass education ministry (Tk 346), Mushfiqur Rahman, committee on finance ministry, (Tk 193), Abdul Mannan, committee on agriculture ministry (Tk 20,400), Barrister Ziaur Rahman Khan, committee on foreign ministry (Tk 28,867), MA Matin, committee on water resources ministry (Tk 2,024), Abdus Sobhan, committee on public assurances (Tk 5,035), Mozahar Hossain, committee on women and child affairs ministry (Tk 46,315) and Major (ret'd) Abdul Mannan, committee on home ministry (former) Tk 22,531.

The defaulter list includes some prominent lawmakers like Abdus Samad Azad (AL, Tk 2,14,405), Anwar Hossain Manju (JP, Tk 23,670), Abdul Jalil (AL, Tk 244), Mohammad Nasim (AL, Tk 3000), Zillur Rahman (AL, Tk 1,445), Abdur Razzak (AL, Tk 13,868), MA Hashem (BNP, Tk 22,270), M Naser Rahman (BNP, Tk 20,400), Syed Shahidul Haque Jamal (whip-BNP, Tk 1,501), Mufti Fazul Haque Amini (Islamic Oikya Jote, Tk 34,206), Ashraf Hossain (whip-BNP, Tk 2,56,702) and Abdus Shahid (opposition chief whip, Tk 32,882).

The 18 defaulting lawmakers of the 7th parliament who became ministers in Khaleda's cabinet are LGRD Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan (Tk 13,457), Health Minister Dr Khandakar Mosharrar Hossain (Tk 46,110), Women and Child Affairs Minister Khurshid Jahan Haque (Tk 13,109), Relief and Disaster Management Minister Chowdhury Kamal Ibne Yousof (Tk 23,596), State Minister for Youth

and Sports Fazlur Rahman (Tk 2,08,198), Deputy Speaker Akhtar Hamid Siddiqui (Tk 2,75,169), State Minister for Finance Shah Mohammad Abul Hussain (Tk 2,79,028), State Minister for Labor and Employment Amanullah Aman (Tk 9,06,678), Science, Information and Communication Technology Minister Dr Abdul Momen Khan (Tk 65,284), Shipping Minister Akbar Hossain (Tk 3,22,564), State Minister for Education Ehsanul Hoque Milon (Tk 1,16,144), State Minister for Water Resources Goutam Chakraborty (Tk 52,271), State Minister for Housing Alamgir Kabir (Tk 21,271), State Minister for Environment Zafrul Islam Chowdhury (Tk 1,28,075), State Minister for Fisheries and Livestock Ukli Abdus Sattar (Tk 2,34,464) and State Minister for Land Rulul Quddus Talukdar Dulu (Tk 13,394).

Defaulting lawmakers from the 7th parliament also include Jatiya Party Chairman HM Ershad (Tk 26,944), Rawshan Ershad (JP, Tk 32,133), KM Obaidur Rahman (BNP, Tk 2,91,999) and Delwar Hossain Saidee (Jamaat, Tk 5,505). The breakdown of the total number of defaulting lawmakers and the total amount of defaulted bills is as follows:

Twelve lawmakers from the first parliament (Tk 78,442), 29 from the second (Tk 258,979), 57 from the third (Tk 13,11,880), 111 from the fourth (Tk 1,01,25,686), 203 from the fifth (Tk 3,60,24,653), 200 from the seventh (Tk 3,10,30,972) and 159 from the present parliament (Tk 72,65,162).

# Tobacco top

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Foundation, the seminar was addressed by Prof Mizanur Rahman, director general of the health services, and Dr Md Monwar Hossain and Dr Md Habibullah Talukdar, president and secretary general of the foundation.

The foundation has established a medicine bank for poor cancer patients. It has also raised patients' welfare fund to benefit them.

"We tell you we will show good faith and free them if you sympathise with our cause, show solidarity with us and publicly reject the policy of your prime minister by staging a big protest in your capital to protest against the war."

"We grant you five days after which we will kill them without any hesitation or any other warning," said the group's statement, showed by Arabyia.

The tape showed three unshaven men eating a meal and wearing Arab robes.

# Janatar mancha

**FROM PAGE 12**  
the accused.

The other accused are former home secretary and incumbent election commissioner Shafiur Rahman, former students relationship officer in the education ministry Abu Alam Shahid Khan, former joint secretary in the women's affairs ministry Sirajuddin Ahmed, former assistant secretary in the establishment ministry Rabiul Alam Mohammad Obaidul Mukhtar Chowdhury, former director of Narcotics Control Department Syed Bazul Karim, former deputy inspector general of police Prokritt Ranjan Chanda (PR Chanda) and former president of the Secretariat Karmachari Sanjukta Parishad Syed Mohiuddin.

Mohammad Saifur Rahman, then officer-in-charge (OC) of Ramna Police Station, filed the sedition case with the Court of Chief Metropolitan Magistrate, Dhaka on April 8, 2002, accusing Alamgir and six others.

Criminal Investigation Department (CID) pressed charges against Alamgir and seven others on December 26, 2002, showing 15 people as prosecution witnesses.

The name of PR Chanda was not in the FIR (first information report) but the investigation officer included

# Police juggernaut

**FROM PAGE 1**  
yesterday in the frenzy of arrests of suspected opposition workers who were rounded up in their thousands over the past week or so.

At 10:00am, AL central and city leaders and parliament members streamed in towards the Zero Point penetrating police barriers and positioned themselves on the road-side in front of the General Post Office (GPO).

But police continued to harass them and at one stage an argument broke out between Sylhet Mayor Braddudin Ahmed Kamran and the police guarding the barricades before other AL leaders came to Kamran's aid.

At 11:15am, the leaders said a prayer to salvage the nation "from the government's misrule". The gathering ended after addresses by senior AL leaders including Matia Chowdhury, Suranjit Sen Gupta, Tofail Ahmed, Amir Hossain Amu, Sheikh Selim, Obaidul Kader, Abdul Mannan Khan and Mukul Bose.

The leaders compared the current situation to the days of 1971 and said the government is so stricken by "Awami League panic" that it has turned the nation into a virtual prison.

At around noon, four bombs were thrown from a car as it drove past AL's headquarters on Bangabandhu Avenue. There were no reports of injuries in the explo-

sions.

AL leaders including AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil, Saber Hossain Chowdhury, Asaduzzaman Noor and Mohammad Hanif also gathered around a heavily guarded Shagla Chattar in Motijheel where police again barred mid-level party workers from assembling.

"We have had to take recourse to hartals again due to the government's repression on our alternative forms of protest. Our movement will continue until the government resigns," said Abdul Jalil.

At Dhanmondhi Road no. 27, several AL MPs braved police to bring out a procession at around 11:30am.

Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD) also observed the third and final day of their simultaneous "mass no-confidence" programme by holding a rally amid police harassment in front of their Motijheel office yesterday.

Police prevented JSD leaders from standing on the road-island in front of their office and showed them towards the footpath where the leaders later held the rally.

Protesting the mass arrests by police to foil the no-confidence programme, JSD President Hasanul Haq Inu said: "Suppression of constitutional and democratic practices will only encourage unconstitutional and undemocratic activities."

and Sports Fazlur Rahman (Tk 2,08,198), Deputy Speaker Akhtar Hamid Siddiqui (Tk 2,75,169), State Minister for Finance Shah Mohammad Abul Hussain (Tk 2,79,028), State Minister for Labor and Employment Amanullah Aman (Tk 9,06,678), Science, Information and Communication Technology Minister Dr Abdul Momen Khan (Tk 65,284), Shipping Minister Akbar Hossain (Tk 3,22,564), State Minister for Education Ehsanul Hoque Milon (Tk 1,16,144), State Minister for Water Resources Goutam Chakraborty (Tk 52,271), State Minister for Housing Alamgir Kabir (Tk 21,271), State Minister for Environment Zafrul Islam Chowdhury (Tk 1,28,075), State Minister for Fisheries and Livestock Ukli Abdus Sattar (Tk 2,34,464) and State Minister for Land Rulul Quddus Talukdar Dulu (Tk 13,394).

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# Iraq group

**FROM PAGE 12**  
"The group gave Italians five days to hold the protests or it will kill the hostages."

Footage on Italian television indicated the three were those shown on April 13, when kidnappers demanded the withdrawal of Italian troops from Iraq. Another Italian originally held with them was later killed.

"We tell you we will show good faith and free them if you sympathise with our cause, show solidarity with us and publicly reject the policy of your prime minister by staging a big protest in your capital to protest against the war."

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# WB, IMF happy

**FROM PAGE 12**  
the gas and power sector," the finance minister told the donors.

The World Bank has decided to give Bangladesh \$1 billion in aid on being satisfied with Bangladesh's economic performance, Saifur informed the press.

"But they have stressed proper use of this money. If this money is left idle in the banks, it will not make the World Bank happy," he added.

"The projects against which they will give the money should be quickly implemented. Proper implementation and quick decision will help us get more aid in the future," he noted.

# Rabbani laid to rest

UNB, Dhaka

Commodore Golam Rabbani, managing director of Korean Export Processing Zone (KEPZ) and former chairman of Chittagong Port Authority, was laid to rest at Banani Military Graveyard in the city yesterday.

His namaz-e-janaza was held at 10:00am at Bangladesh Army Stadium. Ministers, chiefs of the three services, MPs, high military and civil officials and relatives of the deceased attended his janaza.

Brig. General M Sharifuddin, military secretary to the prime minister, placed a wreath on the coffin on behalf of Prime Minister Khaleda Zia.

Later, Naval Chief Rear Admiral Shah Iqbal Mujtaba, on behalf of the Bangladesh Navy, and representatives from other organisations placed wreaths on the coffin.

Earlier on Sunday, his body was flown in here from Bangkok by Thai Airways.

Rabbani was shot by unidentified assailants while he along with five others was going to KEPZ site at Anwara in Chittagong in a microbus on April 11. He was admitted to Chittagong Medical College Hospital and later shifted to the Combined Military Hospital in Dhaka.

Rabbani was sent to Barmungrad Hospital in Bangkok for treatment on April 14 where he died on April 24.

# Jalil still sticks

**FROM PAGE 1**  
false allegations against the AL and said, "I challenge the PM to produce evidence of her allegations, including hatching conspiracy against the government."

Khaleda Zia's remarks only show she has a nervous breakdown and is sensing conspiracy all around her, Jalil added.

She always shivers hearing about AL conspiracy, which is non-existent, the AL leader remarked.

"The prime minister has committed the crime of lying. So, she has to resign," Jalil said.

He also said the government has resorted to repression on the opposition fearing public support and participation in the movement for its ouster.

Jalil demanded immediate release of all victims of 'mass arrests' in the past week.

AL presidium members and senior AL MPs and leaders were present at the briefing.

# Bribes rule

**FROM PAGE 1**  
at that my son is in jail, it is a relief for me that I've found him," he said.

Our court correspondent adds: Although a release order was sent to the central jail three days back, a man arrested from Motijheel was not freed until yesterday.

Siddique, a garment worker and son of the late Abdul Maleq of Nandail in Mymensingh, was arrested in Motijheel on April 22 and taken to the chief metropolitan magistrate's court, Dhaka the next day.

He was sentenced with a fine of Tk 50 or a three-day imprisonment in default.

Hira Khan, brother of the victim, paid the fine and the court sent a release order to the central jail on April 24.

But he was yet to be released.

# Mass arrests

**FROM PAGE 1**  
the official said.

Most people arrested under Dhaka Metropolitan Police Act and section 54 of Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC) were sentenced without their appearance in court, let alone scope for self-defence.

Allegations are rife that many innocent people were held on arrival in Dhaka from other districts.

The blanket arrests also gave the police a chance to make a windfall in bribes. Many victims reported paying the law-enforcers a large sum for freedom.

At the lower judiciary, run by the executive, hoards of arrestees are undergoing another round of mindless ordeal. A huge pile of cases has lengthened the court procedure, leaving people waiting in cramped lock-ups in intense heat and without food and water.

Different human rights groups, professional bodies and political parties protested the mass arrests and termed the police action unconstitutional.

# Sher-e-Bangla

**FROM PAGE 12**  
"His contributions toward welfare of common people is a glorious chapter of the history," the president said.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia said patriotism of Sher-e-Bangla will remain as a source of inspiration for the people of Bangladesh forever.

She said the philosophy of politics of the late leader was the welfare of the downtrodden.

# Bulgarian president

**FROM PAGE 12**  
Meanwhile, an explosion leveled part of a building in Baghdad yesterday as American troops searched it for suspected production of "chemical munitions," a US general said. Two soldiers were killed and five wounded in the blast, and a cheering mob of Iraqis looted their wrecked Humvees, stripping away weapons and equipment.

Brig. Gen. Mark Kimmitt did not say what sort of chemical munitions were believed to be produced at the site.