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Constitution changed amid AL boycott

Reserved seats for women; president, PM's portraits in govt offices, SC judges' retirement age enhancement okayed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The main opposition Awami League (AL), which vehemently opposes the Constitution (14th Amendment) Bill, 2004, boycotted the House in protest while Krishak Samik Janata League's Abdul Kader Siddiqui was the lone lawmaker to vote against the law.

The bill with eight provisions including introduction of 45 reserved seats for women in parliament and rise in the retirement age of Supreme Court judges drew fire from opposition political parties

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JP's U-turn rankles party leaders

Fazle Rabbi, GM Kader skip House

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Jatiya Party's (Ershad) surprise change of mind on the 14th constitution amendment bill after opposing it since its introduction in the House has touched off rancour among its party leaders, sources said.

Two of the party's influential lawmakers, TIM Fazle Rabbi Chowdhury and Golam Mohammad Kader, skipped parliament proceedings yesterday

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The hidden face of Bangla Bhai gang

JMJB is the same group that fought with cops in Jaipurhat last year from secret camp

JULEFKAR ALI MANIK, back from Rajshahi

The new vigilante Islamic group, Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh (JMJB), is no other than the Jama'atul Mujahedin Bangladesh (JMB) that hit headlines last year after its armed men fought with police for hours in Jaipurhat.

JMJB's self-styled spiritual leader, Moulana Abdur Rahman, claimed to The Daily Star that his organisation was established in 1998.

But an investigation reveals that the militant organisation is the same JMB that fought with police from a secret training camp in Khetlal in the northern district in August last year and fled, leaving behind many documents indicating the outfit's subversive plans.

Although police could not arrest Rahman, also JMB chief commander, back then, they arrested his

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Govt orders arrest of Bangla Bhai

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has instructed police to arrest Bangla Bhai, chief of Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh.

The decision was made on Saturday at the meeting of the cabinet committee on law and order held at the home ministry.

The high-powered body discussed at great length the flagrant violations of law and human rights by Bangla Bhai and members of his fanatic Islamist outfit, which have been drawing ever-increasing media focus and out and out protest from all democratic social and political quarters during the last few weeks.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 5

Biman probe confirms Hajj ticket scam

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Biman Bangladesh Airlines yesterday formed a committee to probe irregularities in ticket sales to Hajj pilgrims by some Biman officials and travel agencies and it detected irregularities involving Tk 13.5 lakh against a travel agency on the first day of work.

The detection of irregularities by Kazi Air International prompted the Biman management to recommend to the state minister for civil aviation and tourism for suspension of its licence as a follow-up action, according to a Biman statement issued yesterday.

The probe committee was formed after The Daily Star ran a report yesterday on the nexus between Biman officials and travel

SEE PAGE 11 COL 3

Opposition parties meet Hasina, agree on new agitation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Key leaders of opposition parties at a meeting with Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina yesterday agreed to launch a fresh round of agitation to unseat the ruling coalition for what they said was its failure to deliver.

Later in the day, the Awami League (AL) and other opposition parties announced from a rally that if all killers of lawmaker Ahsanullah Master were not caught in a week, they would shut down all factories in Bangladesh.

"The party in power is supposed to make people feel secure, but today people fear the government

and the government wants to keep people in intimidation," Hasina, also AL president, told the rally at the Central Shaheed Minar.

The meeting at AL's Dhanmondi office reviewed the latest political situation and discussed ways to initiate the antigovernment movement from a common platform. More talks will be held to form a "strong alliance of opposition parties", meeting sources said.

"We had preliminary discussions today. I seek your cooperation when we are in the process of a united movement," AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil told newsmen after the meeting.

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Awami League President Sheikh Hasina talks with Communist Party of Bangladesh General Secretary Mujahidul Islam Selim during a condolence meeting for the slain opposition lawmaker Ahsanullah Master at the Central Shaheed Minar yesterday.

AHSANULLAH MURDER Police want to verify statements before arresting Jubo Dal leader

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police prefer to wait before moving to arrest Nurul Islam Sarker, until the statements given by the three FIR-named accused linking the Jubo Dal leader to the killing of Ahsanullah Master are verified, said a CID official.

Earlier on Friday the three First Information Report-named accused in their statements said Jubo Dal leader Nurul Islam Sarker, who allegedly leads a drugs ring, masterminded the killing, revealed a source in the Criminal Investigation Department (CID).

Referring to the delay in capturing Nurul Islam Sarker, a CID official said, "We want to gather adequate information first."

Assistant Superintendent of

SEE PAGE 11 COL 6

Sonia likely to take office Wednesday

She meets President Abdul Kalam today

AGENCIES, New Delhi

Indian prime minister-elect Sonia Gandhi and her new government are likely to be sworn in Wednesday after a hectic weekend sealing deals with allies and new partners, officials in her Congress party said.

Italian-born Gandhi will meet President Abdul Kalam today armed with letters of support from several parties to stake her claim to government after ousting the ruling Hindu nationalists in India's biggest election upset last week.

Congress, which was holding its own meetings yesterday, has 145 MPs on its own and with the support of pre-election allies and the communists comfortably crosses the 272-seat mark to form a stable government.

Leftist parties, which won a pivotal 60-plus seats in the election, have pledged their support for Gandhi, but were debating yesterday whether to formally join her coalition or simply back it from outside.

LEFT EQUATION

But Congress and the communists are direct political opponents in the Indian left's two state bastions, eastern West Bengal and southern Kerala, and in the north-eastern state of Tripura.

Senior communist leaders including West Bengal's former chief minister Jyoti Basu and Communist Party of India-Marxist

SEE PAGE 11 COL 7

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Tigers show spirit again

RABEED IMAM, from St Vincent

Bangladesh were set a target of 125 to win in 25 overs in the rain-interrupted second One Day International by the West Indies in St Vincent yesterday.

West Indies were restricted to 124 runs for 7 in their innings curtailed to 25 overs due to heavy rain. Dwayne Smith top-scored with 62, with Ricardo Powell and Ramnaresh Sarwan chipping in with useful runs -- 20 and 18.

A rain-soaked outfield aided the Bangladeshi effort on the field, marked by brilliant bowling by Tapash Baisya who took 4 quick wickets late in the innings to restrict the Windies to a reachable score.

Manjurul Islam Rana, Khaled Mahmud and Mushfiqur Rahman shared the rest of the wickets to follow up their solid performances from Saturday.

Spirits were high in the Bangladeshi camp after coming desperately close to their fifth ODI victory on the same ground on Saturday, when they lost by only one wicket.

While the players were forced to stay indoors during the rain, the drama on the other day dominated the discussion of cricketers and buffs alike.

"This match won't last till lunch!" exclaimed a ground staff member sarcastically after Tino Best ripped through Bangladesh in the very first over of the first match. Some eight

SEE PAGE 11 COL 3

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