

JS manoeuvring proves

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lawmakers to submit notices in line with the rules of procedure to hold discussion on them.

AL deputies submitted 132 adjournment motions to the speaker accordingly, but Sircar rejected them all giving different reasons.

But political analysts believe the treasury bench's reluctance was the main reason for not taking up the issues, although the ruling coalition and the speaker assured them of discussion after the passage of the budget.

After assurances from them, AL deputies even agreed not to raise any point of order three days in a row before the passage of the budget.

Responding to opposition lawmakers' demand, Speaker Jamir Uddin Sircar and LGRD Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan said before prorogation that most issues were discussed on points of order.

The speaker in his valedictory speech claimed AL lawmakers were provided more time than they deserved.

He said the AL lawmakers spoke for 271 minutes on points of order, but did not mention the time the treasury bench took to counter the opposition. Parliament watchers say the treasury benchers took almost three times more to counter their opposition colleagues.

The speaker said the AL lawmakers spoke for one hour and 35 minutes on law and order and death threat to Leader of the Opposition

Sheikh Hasina, 44 minutes on foreign ministry and OIC election and one hour and 44 minutes on different issues.

Deputy Speaker Akhtar Hamid Siddiqui dismissing any scope of debate on distortion of the Liberation War history said the issue was discussed in detail in parliament.

But in fact, AL lawmaker Mohammad Nasim spoke only seven minutes on the issue on a point of order, but State Minister for Youth and Sports Fazlur Rahman spoke 22 minutes to counter him.

After the debate, the speaker and treasury bench agreed to hold half an hour's discussion on it.

But the situation took a dramatic turn when the speaker switched off the microphone of Textiles Minister Shajahan Siraj as demanded by prime minister's parliamentary affairs adviser Salauddin Quader Chowdhury.

The speaker abruptly cancelled the discussion apparently at the signal of Prime Minister Khaleda Zia after a debate on which bench would speak first broke out.

The current Jatiya Sangsad has witnessed only a general discussion on law and order.

Bomb hurled at Khulna food official's house

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

A powerful bomb exploded in front of a three-storey building at Babu Khan Road under Khulna Police Station last night.

Police said unknown miscreants threw the bomb at the building belonging to Amzad Hossain, Morrelgan upazila controller of food, at about 7:45pm. No-one was injured nor any damage done due to the explosion.

Amzad Hossain said the extremists threatened him several times in the last few months to pay toll or face dire consequence. Police collected splinters from the spot as evidence.

Meanwhile, eight people, arrested as suspects of bomb attack on a local BNP leader on Wednesday night, were released from Khulna Police Station on Thursday as police did not get any evidence of their involvement in the incident.

Sekander Zafrullah Khan Shachchu, vice-president of Khulna city BNP, was critically injured as unknown assailants hurled a powerful bomb at him near his residence at Gagan Babu Road in the city at about 8:30pm.

After the incident, Sub Inspector Shamim of Khulna Police Station, filed two separate cases as complainant.

Police said investigation is going on to detect the extremists who had earlier demanded Tk 50 lakh in toll from the BNP leader and gave him death threat for failing to pay it.

Dhukat waters

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victims and move household goods.

Saboteurs cut the dam open at Chuniapara in Dhunat's Goshalbari union.

and surging waters from the rain-fed Jamuna instantly cut a 500-metre swathe through it submerging villages and washing away houses. All villages in the upazila went under water by yesterday.

Government statistics said flood waters submerged 12,000 houses and damaged 100-kilometre road in Dhunat.

Only housepots were visible in many areas of Dhunat municipality and three of the 10 unions.

Locals failed to bury a man in Madhyadur village Thursday night as there was no dry land.

Waterborne diseases, mostly diarrhoea and dysentery, have broken out in different parts of the upazila but local administration is yet to distribute sanitary pans and install tubewells the government allocated two days ago.

Hundreds of flood-affected women thronged Dhunat upazila headquarters yesterday on false information about relief but returned disappointed.

Nazma Khatun, a mother of four from Daspara Mahalla, pleaded to reporters, "Please save our children, kindly report on us so that the government ensures supply of at least baby food and pure drinking water."

Local administration distributed 12 tonnes of rice in Goshalbari union and 10 tonnes in Bhandarbari union until yesterday. Many victims alleged the administration favoured ruling party supporters in relief distribution.

The upazila parishad could not make any list of the affected people until yesterday.

Outlaws

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took bullet in one hand while brother-in-law Liton Sheel was shot in the leg when they came to his rescue.

As locals confronted the killers they fired at least 25 bullets that left Kawsar Hossain, Kabir Ahmed, Nital Das and Alam Hawlader injured.

The band of outlaws walked away through the crowded Bazar chanting party slogans. Police and locals suspected they belong to the Zia faction of PBSP.

Assistant Superintendent of Police (Sadar circle) Farhad Ahmed confirmed the news.

Locals said the same faction shot and wounded Menon in 1992.

HUDA'S THREAT SC Bar calls general meeting

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) yesterday called a general meeting for tomorrow against the backdrop of Communications Minister Nazmul Huda's threat of legal action against SCBA President Rakanuddin Mahmud.

The general meeting was convened by the SCBA to protest the comments made by both the Law and Justice Minister Moudud Ahmed and Nazmul Huda on Thursday.

The SCBA on Wednesday called upon the chief justice (CJ) to appoint efficient judges to the High Court or stop appointing judges if competent ones are not found.

The Bar members across the political divide at a general requisition meeting adopted a resolution to that end and asked the chief justice (CJ) to take necessary steps in two weeks' time.

Huda in a statement threatened the incumbent Bar President Rakanuddin Mahmud with contempt of court charges in case of repetition of such a resolution in future.

Moudud described the resolution as unfortunate and inconsistent with the lawyers' responsibilities to uphold the image and independence of the judiciary.

Yet another hartal called in Rajshahi to press for gas supply

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Rajshahi awaits yet another hartal barely in a fortnight, as Rajshahi Raksha Sangram Parishad (RRSP) yesterday called for a dawn-to-dusk shutdown on July 31 demanding gas supply through pipeline.

The hartal call came at a press conference held at the organisation's office in the morning yesterday. While announcing a fortnight long programme, RRSP convenor Zamat Khan called upon the city dwellers also to observe a 'cooking (abstaining) strike' for an hour at every household on July 28.

Besides, the programmes include exchange of views with politicians and professionals to draw all the political parties and citizens to the movement for gas, a token hunger strike at Shaheb Bazar on July 22 and on Rajshahi Court premises on July 26 and campaign around the city between July 27 and 29.

RRSP, an organisation formed to uphold the rights of the region's citizenry, in a statement said the government in 1998 decided to set up a gas supply station in Bonpara of Natore on completion of the Nalka-Hatikumrul-Bonpara link road and supply gas to the northwestern and southern region through pipeline. But instead they are now implementing Tk 128 crore-project to ensure direct gas supply to Bogra ignoring the divisional town, the statement added.

Earlier on Thursday Rajshahi Gas Andolon Parishad, an organisation supported by local BNP leaders, professionals and social activists, enforced a dawn to dusk hartal pressing the same demand.

'Robber' killed in gunfight, cop hurt in Demra

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

An alleged robber was killed and his accomplice and a police official were injured in a gunfight between police and robbers at Majhpara in Demra on the outskirts of the capital in the early hours yesterday.

The dead was identified as Mamun, 35, and the injured robber as Yasin Arafat, both members of a gang led by notorious robber Mongal Dakat, police said.

Yasin was arrested but Mongal, Kana Ripon and other gang members managed to flee.

Police seized two pistols and seven bullets from the possession of Mamun and Yasin.

Sub-inspector Ali Ahmed Masud of Demra Police Station suffered minor bullet wounds in his chest in the nearly 30-minute encounter and was given first aid at Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH).

Acting on a tip off, three teams of Demra police cordoned off an under-construction building at Majhpara where the gang of more than 10 was preparing to commit robbery. Sensing police presence, the robbers started firing at them, prompting police to open fire.

At one stage, injured Mamun and Yasin fled to a nearby house. Police nabbed both and took them to the DMCH, where Mamun died shortly afterwards.

Locals said Mongal and his men committed a number of robberies in the area, the latest one on Thursday.

Demra police yesterday filed three cases against the gang for illegal possession of arms, attack on police and attempt to commit robbery.



PHOTO: STAR

Newly elected chairman of Pirojpur municipality Habibur Rahman Malek presents a bouquet to Awami League President Sheikh Hasina at the party's headquarters on Bangabandhu Avenue in Dhaka during a courtesy call yesterday.

Witness to Ahsanullah murder

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left the place finding none."

But the police denied the raid on Sumon's house and the duty officer of Tongi Police Station said: "We did not raid his house."

Two hours into the raid, a team of 15 Rab officials went to Sumon's house when he was taking a shower, his brother Al Mamun said. "The Rab team knocked on his bathroom and asked him to go with them for interrogation about Ahsanullah murder as he came out."

The Rab officials also picked up Sumon's cousin Lokman, 22, and Akbar Hossain Pinku, 20, both AL's youth front activists, on their way out and took the three blindfolded to a camp by pickup van.

But Sub-Inspector (SD) Karim Hossain of Tongi Police Station said a Rab team led by SI Shahjahan arrested the three in a hotel in Tongi for demanding Tk 50,000 from businessman Tajul Islam Akand, who informed Rab about the alleged extortion.

Tajul, who lodged a case with Tongi police under the Speedy Trial Act, said in the first information report that Sumon demanded money from him on June 18 and beat his employee Dukhu the next day.

Tajul said he asked Dukhu to hand the money to Sumon in the hotel on Thursday afternoon in a plan of Rab officials to arrest him along with the others.

CRIES IN CUSTODY

"Rab officials kept us in separate rooms in the camp," Lokman told reporters at Tongi Police Station. "I heard Sumon crying in another room."

A relative called the Rab office and offered money to stop the torture of Sumon, his mother said, adding: "He (the relative) also heard him crying on the phone."

Interrogation in custody over, the Rab officials took Sumon and the other two to Tongi Police Station to file a case under the Speedy Trial Act accusing them of extortion.

"We asked the Rab officials to provide him with treatment in hospital as we found him sick," Assistant Superintendent of Police (ASP) Abu Sulfyan of Gazipur told reporters at his office.

"Sumon scuffled with Rab officials during arrest and was injured," said Superintendent of Police Atikul Islam of Gazipur, quoting a report signed by Rab.

"The Rab officials brought him back to the police station after giving him first aid and left the three there," he said.

"Sumon's condition deteriorated after the Rab officials left the police station and we sent him to Tongi Health Complex where he died at 1:30am," said the Tongi Police Station duty officer.

The attending doctor, Nazrul Islam of Tongi Health Complex, said Rab SI Shahjahan brought Sumon to

the hospital and he felt better after he gave him some medicines. The police brought Sumon to the hospital in a critical condition again at 12:15am and he died after an hour.

Reporters saw the two other arrestees with hallmarks of torture in custody.

The inquest report, carried out in the health complex by Magistrate AKM Sohail yesterday, says Sumon bore marks of bruises on his body and his legs were bandaged. The police sent the body to Gazipur Sadar Hospital for an autopsy. The magistrate also recorded the statements of witnesses to the killing of Ahsanullah.

Sumon's cousin Nazma Begum alleged a local BNP leader and his two brothers threatened him to step out of the campaign for Jahid Ahsan Russell, AL candidate for Gazipur-2 by-polls and son of Ahsanullah. Sumon was tasked with printing Russell's election posters.

PROTEST AND VANDALISM

The death incensed leaders and activists of the AL and its front organisations to bring out a series of processions in Tongi all day. Angry demonstrators vandalised a truck and two buses, laid siege to Tongi Police Station and blocked Tongi-Kaliganj Road for an hour.

AL President Sheikh Hasina resented the death of Sumon and said it was part of a conspiracy to create a panicky situation to rig the Gazipur-2 by-polls.

Russell, AL candidate for Gazipur-2 by-election, alleged Rab 'killed' Sumon in its custody to terrorise the locality to unsettle the election atmosphere.

Municipal Chairman Azmat Ullah alleged it was part of a scheme to mar the trial of the killers of Ahsanullah, as Sumon was a key witness.

Assailants shot dead Ahsanullah at a roadside rally in Tongi on May 7. The criminal investigation department identified Jubo Dal leader Nurul Islam Sarker as the mastermind of Ahsanullah killing in the chargesheet, submitted on July 10, pressing charges against 29 others and naming Sumon as one of the 78 witnesses.

Rab arrested Debashish, an alleged associate of 'Pichchi' Hannan, in a clinic in Savar on the evening of June 26 and sent him to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) with leg injuries at midnight where the attending doctors declared him dead.

Shopkeeper Shajahan Ali of Mohammadpur died on July 9 in the DMCH a couple of days after he was handed over to Rab officials in Dhanmondi.

Minar Hossain in Charkuthipara in Kushtia died at Kushtia General Hospital a few hours after Rab arrested him with arms on July 10.

Biman

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included M Nurul Salam, Biman's deputy general manager for internal audit, and Aftab Uddin, commercial officer for cargo.

"From December 2003 to May 2004, Biman was deprived of Dh 426,000 (Tk 68.16 lakh) by Darwish Murad, which has been given a free hand in the handling of Biman's cargo. Of the amount, we have recovered Dh 366,900 (Tk 58.70 lakh)," Shahab said.

Operators take advantage of manual system of complex paperwork, lack of coordination and cross verification in Biman's network, he noted.

Documents obtained by The Daily Star show some of Biman's cargo bills for the same customer and bearing the same number contained different billable cargo weights. Moreover, copies of the same bill having the same number also bear different cargo operators' names.

One such bill numbered 997-8897-2520, dated May 17 last and issued to M/s Dhaka Trade International shows Darwish Murad handled a 228kg consignment in five pieces.

A copy of the same bill but dated May 18 shows M/s Tour Care Travel and Cargo handled a consignment of 2,880 kg that included the 25-piece consignment.

The May 17 bill charged Dh 4,455 and the May 18 bill Dh 54,855 from the same customer.

The authorities will also probe operations of 26 outstations of Biman's worldwide network, he mentioned.

Greece manpower

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expressed serious resentment to his local partners and questioned the consistency of the government policy.

Officials at the overseas employment ministry were also taken aback at the government handout. They said the government created the new ministry to generate overseas employment, but the Department of Shipping did not feel it necessary to consult with them before issuing such a 'sensitive handout'. The newspaper advertisement clearly mentioned the approval of the overseas employment ministry for the recruitment.

"They should have consulted us before issuing such a handout cancelling a government approved order," said a high official of the ministry, preferring anonymity. He observed the authority to send workers in the shipping sector no more lies with the Department of Shipping after the overseas employment ministry came into existence.

Later, the top officials of the two ministries talked over telephone on

the subject and agreed to cooperate each other.

An inter-ministerial meeting on Tuesday, however, decided that the recruiting agencies would have to approach the government's shipping office in Chittagong to send people to work in the overseas shipping sector.

According to the decision, the shipping ministry would provide a list of standby seamen who can go abroad for job, the meeting sources said.

There are around 4,600 registered seamen with the government's shipping office, of whom only 1,600 have job. The rest are waiting for job after getting training.

The owner of Rabbi International Mohammad Bashir told The Daily Star on Tuesday he would serve a legal notice on the Department of Shipping in a couple of days and file a damage suit.

Iraq asks

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by September 20 as planned, the defence minister said yesterday.

"We have started withdrawal procedures... and I expect our last soldier would arrive home on September 20," General Chettha Thanajaro told reporters.

Rab rounds up

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himup.

Being informed, a Rab team rushed to the spot and arrested JCD general secretary of Sir AF Rahman Hall ZA Haider and four others and took them away.

The JCD activists brought out a procession on the campus and vandalised two cars at Nilkhet intersection. They went to Dhanmondi Police Station and laid a siege for about 20 minutes, thinking that the arrestees were there.

As they came to know that their leader and activists were not at the police station, the agitating JCD men came back to the campus and laid siege to DU VC Prof SMA Faiz's residence.

The siege continued till 12:30am today.

Hasina

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Bar Association called on her.

Referring to the current flood situation, Hasina said although flood situation had worsened at many places, the government 'relief is still merely in the book'.

She said they learnt the prime minister asked her party leaders to rush to the flood-affected areas. As long as television camera is there, they stay; later they engage in looting, she alleged.

She alleged Jamaat has been 'issuing death warrant in the name of Islam,' although Islam does not allow such an act.

They are not genuine followers of Islam, she said, adding, they have disgraced Islam through their criminal activity. "They're allowing others to blame Islam, a religion of peace, equating it with terrorism."

When torture and repression are continuing on the Muslims in Iraq, Afghanistan and Palestine, Jamaat leaders Motiur Rahman Nizami, Delwar Hossain Saidee and Ali Ahsan Mohammad Muzahid kept mum, Hasina alleged.

How many statements Nizami, Saidee, Muzahid and the Islamic Oikya Jote leaders issued in favour of those tortured Muslims, she asked. "I recently spoke bluntly at the Istanbul meeting of the D-8 founding members," she said.

Referring to the killing of AL lawmaker Ahsan Ullah Master, she alleged the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) picked up and tortured to death Suman, who was an eyewitness of the case. "The government does not want to bring the killers to book," she said.

She blasted the alliance government for "politicisation, nepotism and corruption in every sphere of the administration" and said the public will live in peace and security as soon as "this oppressive government quits."

Senior AL leaders including Abdus Samad Azad, Tofail Ahmed, Motia Chowdhury and Mahiuddin Khan Alamgir were present.

Smugglers confine and torture BDR men

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sathkira

Smugglers confined and tortured two Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) men in a house in Kaikhali border area in Shyamnagar upazila on Wednesday night.

Kaikhali Union Parishad Chairman Shajahan Siraj rescued them next morning.

The BDR men from Shaikhali border outpost went to the house of smuggler Abdul Mannan of Kaikhali village, suspecting women and children were gathered there to be trafficked to India.

Local smugglers tied them down in the house and beat them up.

A tense situation is prevailing in the area.

'TV-addict kids run risk of obesity'

AFP, Paris

Spending hours glued to your television screen during childhood causes an increased risk of obesity and other health problems during later life, according to research to be published in the Lancet medical journal today.

Researchers from New Zealand concluded after a decades-long study that high levels of exposure at a young age to television, with its aggressive barrage of advertising for unhealthy food products, was correlated with increased body mass later in life, the article said.

Robert Hancox from the University of Otago and his colleagues studied around 1,000 children born in New Zealand town of Dunedin in 1972-3, who were tested over numerous intervals up until the age of 26.

"A clear association was found between extensive television viewing (more than two hours a day) among children and adolescents and increased BMI (body mass index), raised cholesterol, greater proportion of smoking, and poor cardiovascular fitness at age 26 years," the Lancet said.

The study comes amid increasing concern about the global obesity epidemic, with the UN's World Health Organisation estimating that one billion adults worldwide are overweight, and at least 300 million of them are clinically obese.