

## Alliance ends 3rd year

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to be rated as the most corrupt state for the third straight year by Berlin-based Transparency International.

The first three years of the coalition government have witnessed severe lawlessness, bomb blasts and grenade attacks, killings and extortion reach a horrifying height.

Citing the upward trend in some economic indicators, the finance minister claims the economy is on a sound footing but people in the middle income bracket are feeling the heat of higher inflation and cost of living as prices of essentials keep spiralling out of their easy reach.

The essential price index has gone up to 4.84 percent from 1.40 in 2001, according to latest statistics of the Consumers Association of Bangladesh.

It is true that foreign exchange reserves have reached a new high and remittance and export earnings are also on the rise. But it is also equally true that the country has lured no major foreign investment in the past three years.

The rate of jobless people, especially youths, continued shooting up on the closure of many old and big industries without creation of new employment. The shutdown rendered thousands of workers without job. There has been no instance of setting up any major industry, either.

Corruption, which had its roots grown during the Awami League (AL) regime, continues to pose the biggest barrier to attracting foreign investment. It has now taken on an all-pervading proportion, as the coalition could not make things any better despite having seen graft leave its preceding regime bruised and battered.

For the first time, the country has seen a foreign ambassador directly raising corruption charges against a minister. More than three dozens of parliamentary sub-committees were constituted on corruption, but their reports were far from reflecting what was really going on.

And despite all the hullabaloo over constitution of an independent

## Verdict

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inside Dhaka Central Jail, the judge granted the petition for deposition of Saifuddin.

Court summoned Saifuddin for appearing before it on September 29, but a bed-ridden Saifuddin, the then deputy superintendent of police and the second investigation officer (IO), failed to turn up.

The court also issued a warrant of arrest against Saifuddin and formed a three-member commission to assess the 84-year-old's health condition, asking it to submit a report by yesterday on if he is fit for deposition.

The commission members after visiting Saifuddin's house on October 5 reported to court that the witness in question is physically and mentally unfit for a judicial statement. They also urged court to consider the arrest warrant against Saifuddin as not served.

The PP and defence lawyer Mukul submitted the report and made a brief submission about Saifuddin's inability for deposition after Judge Motiur Rahman took his seat at 10:53am yesterday.

The PP appealed to court to fix a date for the verdict, while Mukul told court they do not have any reservations about court's fixing a fresh date for verdict. Mukul also told court to summon the case diary of Saifuddin and take it into consideration before taking a decision in the interest of fair trial and justice.

The PP said he would submit the case diary to court by yesterday afternoon.

"Finally, we have got a date for verdict, now I am happy," said ruling BNP lawyer KM Obaidur Rahman, an accused in the case who earlier expressed grievance about the deferral and termed it a conspiracy, yesterday immediately after the judge left court.

Except for accused Nurul Islam Monzoor, who is out on bail, four other accused on bail and three in jail were present in the dock yesterday. Monzoor's counsel told court that his client is sick.

## Govt limps

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Although the government has made a number of minor reshuffles in the cabinet and changed the portfolios in some important ministries like home, commerce, environment and information, the situation did not improve, the insiders said.

Lack of coordination between the ministers and state ministers is seriously affecting activities in housing and public works, education and communications ministries.

Some top-ranking leaders of BNP admitted that discords between ministers and ministry high officials have made the administration sluggish. Top bureaucrats were transferred from one ministry to another several times in the wake of such conflicts, but to no avail.

Despite repeated demand from the party and bureaucracy, the Ministry of Establishment is yet to get a cabinet minister as its premier herself holds the portfolio. Moreover, the ministry has long been running with acting secretaries.

There are allegations that the ministry runs at the dictate of some officials at the Prime Minister's Office, including two assistant private secretaries to the PM and some mid-ranking leaders representing an alternative power centre within the party.

Sources said such political interference in administration victimised a large number of officials in their promotion, posting and appointment.

BNP sources said ministers and state ministers are busy trying to undermine each other's position. It appears several state ministers are more powerful than their seniors because of their strong connection with the particular alternative power centre.

Some of the party's top ranking leaders associated with BNP since its inception are being seriously ignored

anticorruption commission, it remains elusive as ever, although the law minister has been promising its institution for the last three years.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia on coming to office declared a war against terrorism but her government's anticorruption measures have done little to curb the rising crime and raging violence.

Ironically, the coalition saw its accession to office marred by country-wide grisly attacks on minority Hindus, accusing them of voting for the Awami League in the general elections. The swoop left many dead, wounded and ravaged and forced scores of others to flee across the border abandoning their property for fear of life.

Deadly grenade attacks have been a new addition to the long list of incidents of violence in a country dogged by unbridled crime, although the perpetrators remain out of the reach of the law-enforcers. The scenario is so bleak that even the investigators failed to find clues to the frequent bomb and grenade attacks.

Desperate to control the crime waves, the government introduced a number of well-trained crime-busting forces, formed speedy trial tribunals and introduced stringent laws, but the measures hardly succeeded to arrest the law and order downside.

Worse, the government localised custodial deaths of about 50 people during 'Operation Clean Heart' by indemnifying the joint forces that ran the special anticorruption operations. The introduction of elite crime-busting forces such as Rapid Action Team, Rapid Action Battalion, Cobra and Cheetah have gone a long way to increasing incidents of such deaths.

The series of crackdown on criminals appear to have yielded no result. Moreover, deaths of suspects in 'heart attack' or 'crossfire' embarrassed the government and sent a chill through people.

Human rights remain another front where the four-party alliance has utterly failed to deliver. Instead, allegations of gross infringement of human rights galore. To this day, the government has not lived up to its promise to constitute an independent human-rights commission, which it blames on the difference of opinions among the policymakers.

The foot-dragging has drawn broadsides from the civil society.

Perhaps, the most shocking example of lawlessness is Bangla Bhai, a self-styled operations commander of the government-backed outfit Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh. The government's so-called elite forces were surprisingly inactive when it came to bringing him to justice despite a prime ministerial directive for his arrest and the fact he took the law into his own hand and sentenced many to death in the northwest.

The BNP-Jamaat-e-Islami government's first three years also witnessed increasing repression of opposition activists across the country. In its ploy to tame the opposition, the government launched a crackdown on opposition activists first in April this year and then in late last month and arrested thousands of innocent people, apart from opposition adherents, without charges.

The blanket arrests meant to foil opposition's political programmes forced the rights groups to move the High Court, which asked the government not to abuse relevant section of the DMP Ordinance in making arrests.

The government's promise to free the administration from political influence has turned out to be hollow, as all the appointments -- from those of judges of the High Court down to the chief of Gram Sarkar -- are now decided on political grounds.

The appointment of a former MP of the ruling BNP and relatives of party high-ups as HC judges has appalled the public. Its axing 15 judges recruited during the AL regime also raised eyebrows.

Eminent jurist Dr Kamal Hossain while putting to words his frustration about the appointments said somebody who cannot write even one sentence correctly in English has been appointed to the HC. The appointments forced the HC lawyers to decide not to say "My Lord" in courts of those judges.

The government's excuses for the delay in separating the judiciary from the executive wing of the state at best induce laughter. "It is imminent" is the ready answer one gets from the law minister when asked about the status of the separation although the Office of

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## Khulna

**FROM PAGE 12**  
However, both the editor and the outlaw escaped arrest scaling the boundary wall at the back of the residence sensing presence of Rab members.

Rab refused to disclose the name of the PBCP outlaw for whose capture the raid was conducted breaking into the two-storeyed strongly fenced palatial building of the industrialist editor of Daikik Tathya.

According to an employee of Rom's firm, members of Rab also stormed into his newspaper office after ransacking most of the rooms of his residence. They seized a passport and a telephone index that belonged to the editor. A briefcase was also taken away by Rab members after the raid which lasted nearly two hours.

The caretaker of the house, however, denied the allegation of Rab and described the man accompanying the editor to his residence before the raid as his cousin.

Sheikh Nazrul Islam shifted his family in Dhaka early this year fearing arrest as police suspected him as the mastermind of at least three sensational murders.

Attorney General quoting his ministry tells court "it is uncertain".

The government's move to make the administration dynamic has fallen flat on its face after it created rancour among all the administrative tiers by attempting to free it from "Awami Leaguers".

It made no fewer than 300 officials OSDs (officers on special duty) and forced as many to retirement. Even rules were changed to appoint officers loyal to the ruling parties. More than three dozen secretaries were given an unprecedented extension to their contract.

Emerging from the meeting, Saifur told reporters, "Problems with law and order and corruption cannot be eradicated overnight. The government is working relentlessly to check corruption and terrorism and improve law and order. Besides, it has undertaken effective measures to ensure good governance in the country."

"Problems with law and order and corruption have always existed and as long as society exists these problems will be there," Saifur added. "Bomb blasts and corruption are happening not only in Bangladesh but in many other countries in the world."

Natsios, accompanied by US Ambassador Harry K Thomas, led a four-member USAID team to the meeting with Saifur where they also discussed good governance and terrorism.

Sources said the investigation into the August 21 grenade attack on an Awami League (AL) rally and the recent spates of bomb and grenade

attacks were also discussed in the meeting.

"No democratically elected government would ever want to embarrass itself by doing such a thing," said Saifur on the recent spate of bomb and grenade attacks. "This is perhaps an act done out of envy of our economic success," he added.

"Good governance, corruption and terrorism are related to economic development of a country and we discussed these issues at the meeting," Saifur told reporters.

Natsios, who arrived Friday on a four-day visit, will review the development programmes being supported by the USAID. He will also see the country's efforts on key development issues like food security, poverty alleviation, population growth, market economy and governance.

## Howard

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booming economy overshadowed criticism of his staunch support for the US-led war in Iraq.

Senior officials of the opposition Labour Party conceded that Howard's Liberal-National coalition had retained control of the 150-member House of Representatives in Saturday's vote.

## Jt census spots

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adding, from now on censuses will be taken regularly.

The United Nations sponsored seven-day census at the cost of Tk 23.04 lakh started on February 26. As many as 332 forest department officials, experts and NGO workers took part.

The press conference revealed forest department officials in West Bengal conducted such a survey in its side in January and found 249 tigers in the Sundarbans and 25 more in 24 Parganas.

The mangrove forest is home to 668 Royal Bengal Tigers, according to the census, which was carried out jointly to avoid double or under counting.

The survey was conducted in four ranges in Bangladesh. Khulna Range plays host to the highest 147 tigers, Satkhira Range 112, Sarankhola 97 and Chandpai Range plays host to 63 of the species.

## Adminstrator

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hindering development were also discussed," Natsios added.

He said the US is neutral and will not be a party in Bangladesh, adding, "We're in favour of democracy."

US Ambassador in Dhaka Harry K Thomas and USAID Country Director Gene V George accompanied Natsios, while AL leaders Kazi Zafarullah, Saber Hossain Chowdhury and Syed Abul Hossain were present.

The AL side told the US delegate the government is killing its political opponents sensing defeat in the next general elections.

"We've discussed the necessity of reforms of polling system in Bangladesh to ensure free and fair balloting," Saber, also Hasina's political secretary, told the reporters. He, however, did not give details about the reforms.

On the US side's concern over the August 21 carnage, he said, "They want a fair enquiry into the incident and assured us of their continuing effort to this end."

## PM asks

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support to the alliance in the national elections on October 1, 2001.

Referring to the steps for welfare of the people, she said, "We have made our economy dynamic by bringing back discipline in our socioeconomic field in the last three years."

The prime minister claimed that law and order improved, dynamism was infused in rural life, epoch-making changes took place in educational arena and massive successes were achieved in the fields of environment and communications.

She also claimed success in healthcare, empowerment of women, poverty alleviation, rural infrastructure development, ICT and tackling floods this year.

## Fighting crime

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unless these problems are eliminated economic development is not possible.

"Lack of good governance and corruption has meant that our (USAID and other development partners) assistance is not being properly utilised," the official of United States Agency for International Development noted.

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## Bar rejects judicial

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He went on, "On the government prescription, the commission chief (Justice Joydul Abedin) said BNP, Jamaat-e-Islami or any other fundamentalist group are not involved in the grenade attack. He will have to explain to the nation the basis of his giving such a certificate."

The commission chief has confused the nation by making some 'controversial remarks' in the media before making the probe report public, Bashir alleged.

Although the commission mentioned that no bullet was shot at AL President Sheikh Hasina's bullet-proof vehicle, people who saw the vehicle, including the Interpol experts, found marks of bullet on the vehicle, he said.

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## Chiefs

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August 21 grenade attack. It also accused the former general of divulging state secrets by disclosing the number of grenades possessed by the army.

The parliamentary body also criticised the former army chief for not joining the committee meeting to which he was invited to join to clarify his position about his remarks.

In an article, the former chief of staff alleged that the grenades used in the attack on an opposition rally were similar to those used by the army. He also accused the army of deliberately detaching general (ret) Mustafiz did not join the meeting as the committee turned down his demands to include in the discussion why he cannot enter the cantonment despite being a former army chief and why he is obstructed from playing golf there, obtaining treatment at the military hospital and using their banking facilities.

The committee asked the defence ministry to be alert about 'controversies' being created regarding the role of army.

It observed that the remarks are a tantamount to attacks on the armed forces and putting the forces in the dock which 'no rational citizen' can do.

Rejecting the former chief of staff's remarks, senior army officials told the meeting that the grenades used in the August 21 attack were not the same types used by the army.

"After the attack, we checked our stock at every cantonment and did not find any grenade missing," said meeting sources quoting a senior army officer.

The army bought five lakh grenades in 1984, half of which have been used during training, the meeting was told. The grenades used in the attack have specifications painted on them while those used by the army have them embossed.

Quoting the probe report of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), officials of the Directorate General of Forces Intelligence (DGFI) told the meeting that there was no similarity between the grenades used in the August 21 attack and those seized in the country's biggest arms haul in Chittagong this year.

The grenades used in the August 21 attack were similar to those hurled in an attack on the Indian parliament, meeting sources said quoting the DGFI chief.

In defence of detonating the four grenades found on the attack spot, senior explosive experts of the army told the meeting that they did it in accordance with the standard operating procedure of the forces.

"We are satisfied with the explanation of the army concerning the allegations and the committee resolved that the grenades used in the August 21 attack cannot belong to the army," committee chairman Mahbubur Rahman told reporters after the meeting.

## AL hartal

**FROM PAGE 1**  
chief Sheikh Hasina will address an assembly of the elite at Pan Pacific Sonargaon Hotel at 6:30pm to voice the opposition's protests.

Her speech is to "protest the coalition government rule spawning killings, rape, extortion, looting, corruption, price hike and lack of security and demand ouster of the government," said an AL press release.

The AL central leaders and lawmakers will stage demonstrations at 22 city points during the shutdown from 6:00am to 6:00pm. The leaders and workers of AL's front organisations will remain active on the streets, sources said.

Hasina announced the hartal from a grand rally in Dhaka on October 3. The JSD and Janata Party also called the hartal from separate rallies in the city.

As many as 7,500 police besides paramilitary Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) will be deployed to maintain law and order during the hartal hours.

## BSF dam-cut

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camp in India on Friday evening also undertook the problem.

BDR sources said the BSF authorities denied the cutting of the embankment by Indians and stepped up their patrol in the areas bordering their side. Khulna BDR sector's Colonel Ebrahim Zamil visited the area to assess the situation arising from the embankment cut.

Meanwhile, flood situation has further deteriorated in the Kaloraa, Tala, Assassuni and Sadar upazilas as surging waters from the Indian side and rains, further swelled the rivers Kabodak, Betrabati, Marichhat and Ichhamati.

A one year old, Nure Alam, died in house which collapsed in a flooded village.

## Baby girl

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we were watching television in the evening and asked her to go with him," Sajib told the reporters.

Returning home at around 10:00pm, Shafiq inquired about his daughter and learning that Sharif called for her, he went to Sharif's house nearby.

"Finding the house locked, I came back