

Inefficient committees

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It also pointed out that the ruling coalition has failed to nominate a deputy leader of the House since its inauguration in October 2001.

The Parliament Watch prepared on the 11th, 12th, 13th and 14th sessions of parliament held in last year is likely to be released on March 1, a TIB source said.

QUORUM CRISIS
The four sessions of parliament last year witnessed severe quorum (presence of at least 60 lawmakers in the House) crisis almost every day. Of the total 43 working days of the House in 2004, only three began on time.

The report said, in the 11th session, which had 43 working days, a total of 30 hours and 51 minutes or Tk 2.77 crore was wasted due to quorum crises, as Tk 15,000 is spent a minute to run the House.

Tk 1.73 crore or 19 hours and 15 minutes was squandered on quorum crisis in the 12th session comprising 25 working days.

The crisis ate away Tk 13.95 lakh or 1 hour and 33 minutes in the 13th session having only four working days and Tk 36.30 lakh or 4 hours and 2 minutes in the

14th session that had 11 working days.

The TIB recommended initiating certain steps to end quorum crisis including forming a parliamentary body to monitor attendance of lawmakers, regular presence of the prime minister and introducing award for the highest attendance in the House.

INEFFECTIVE JS BODIES
Quoting the rules of procedure of the JS, the TIB report said, despite an

Islamist militancy

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Some of the grassroots-level leaders complained against price hike of essentials, including rice, for causing suffering for people and urged the party high command to control the essentials market.

BNP Senior Joint Secretary General Tarique Rahman told the convention that the government has rooted out terrorism, which he said was a residue of the previous regime.

Tarique said, "Now people are living in peace," adding, "We will have to keep an eye on the law and order so that development activities run well."

11 Iraqis, 2 GIs killed

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Another Iraqi, a Shia politician, was killed late Tuesday, police said.

In the key northern oil city of Kirkuk, a police officer was killed and another wounded when an unknown person opened fire on them in a restaurant at breakfast time, said a police spokesman.

Salman Abderahman was hit by nine bullets and his colleague was slightly wounded, he said, adding that two suspects had been arrested.

Two Iraqi civilians were killed and another seriously wounded when a rocket-propelled grenade hit the car they were travelling in near Kirkuk, police said.

Also in Kirkuk, two civilians were injured in a car bomb attack on a US convoy in an industrial area, the city's police chief said. The US army had no immediate comment on the attack.

In the same city's eastern Wahda district, two Kurdish civilians were shot dead at their home by unknown attackers, police said.

An Iraqi soldier was killed and another wounded in a mortar attack on their base early Wednesday near Dhuliyah, 75km north of Baghdad, police said.

Another mortar strike on an Iraqi base near Tarmiya, north of Baghdad, killed two soldiers, said an army officer.

An Iraqi subcontractor working on an Iraqi base was killed and another

obligation to sit at least once in a month, most of the parliamentary standing committees did not sit regularly from January to August 2004.

During that period, only the standing committee on law, justice and parliamentary affairs ministry held 10 meetings. Eight standing committees did not hold a single meeting, while six others sat only once.

Analysing the activities of the committees, the TIB said, "Most of the committees could not play an effective role in detecting corruption and irregularities in the organisations under the ministries concerned."

To strengthen the committee system, the TIB recommended appointing heads of the parliamentary bodies from among the opposition lawmakers. It also suggested amending the rules to ensure that the parliamentary bodies sit twice a month.

ABSENCE OF POSITIONS
Out of the total 83 working days last year, lawmakers of the main opposition Awami League were absent on 47 days, while Jatiya Party (JP-Ershad) deputies boycotted six working days.

The House last year witnessed a total of 21 walkouts by opposition parties. Of those, AL walked out 13 times and JP, the second largest opposition, staged two walkouts.

Besides, the lone lawmaker of Krishak Sramik Janata League, Abdul Kader Siddiqui, Bikalpa Dhara lawmaker Mahi B Chowdhury and independent lawmaker MM Shahin staged walkouts several times.

INDIFFERENCE TO OPPOSITION
The House did not hold any discussion on several hundreds of adjournment motions made by the opposition members.

The opposition deputies submitted 77 adjournment motions in the 11th session, 131 in the 12th, 167 in the 13th and 121 in the 14th session demanding discussions on a range of issues. The issues include the August 21 grenade attack on an AL rally, law and order downside, 'crossfire' deaths and price hike of essentials.

But the speaker did not accept a single adjournment motion.

The House passed at least 30 bills last year, with the government accepting not a single amendment proposal from the opposition bench. All such proposals were rejected by voice vote, the TIB report said.

JS session

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When Speaker Jamir Uddin Sircar on last Tuesday adjourned the session till next Sunday, only 48 lawmakers were present while at least 60 lawmakers' presence is needed to fulfil the quorum.

UN HR agency

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Shah AMS Kibria and five others were killed in a grenade attack on an Awami League rally in Halbiganj on January 27. Kibria was also executive secretary of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific from 1981 to 1992.

government's failures to arrest criminals who were involved with the grenade and bomb attacks.

But leaders of left-middle block believe it is about time the government came down hard on Islamist extremism in order to stay with the main stream countries waging war on terror.

"Bangla Bhai was allowed to operate in Rajshahi at the pressure of the extreme rightwing leaders, but that decision by the high command has now threatened to bring the alliance government upside down," said another BNP policymaker, preferring anonymity.

"The BNP has to decide now on fundamentalism and its association with Islamist coalition partners before it is too late," he said.

He also suggested Prime Minister Khaleda Zia should review the role of Jamaat. "Take a hard look at the coalition's three-and-half years in power, you will see it is the Jamaat, which cashed in on all political instabilities," he said. "They are growing in strength very methodically throughout the state mechanism."

"Jamaat can only gain as a moderate religion-based party with the rise of Islamist extremism," he quipped.

Meanwhile, the government has asked all the law enforcement agencies to take legal action against the so-called religious militants.

"The issue should be resolved politically, as religious extremism can not be stopped by force alone," a high home ministry official told The Daily Star.

Govt finally cracks down

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few months.

But State Minister for Home Lutfuzzaman Babar denied any foreign pressure. "We did not receive any international pressure to ban them. The government has done it out of its sense of responsibility," he told the BBC Bangla Service last night.

However, much to the concerns of rights organisations home and abroad, political parties, civil society and media, JMJB Amir Moulana Abdur Rahman and Operations Commander Bangla Bhai are still eluding the dragnet.

"It has not been possible to arrest Bangla Bhai. We feel very disturbed and embarrassed for this. Though we have been putting extreme pressure on police to catch Bangla Bhai, he could not be tracked down," Babar said.

But, on January 26, this minister had told the BBC: "We have no official knowledge of the existence of JMJB. Only certain so-called newspapers have been running reports on it. We have no record that any such group has formed."

And, even after yesterday's banning of the JMJB and JMB for bomb attacks and killings, Babar claimed to the BBC Radio that there is no militant organisation in the country.

"We've taken steps whenever we received such information," he said, adding the move will be on.

With yesterday's ban, the number of banned Islamist organisations now stands at three. Earlier on February 9, 2002, the government banned Shahdadal Hiqma operating in the Rajshahi region.

In a press-note yesterday afternoon the home ministry said, "The government notices with concern that two organisations called Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh and Jama'atul Mujahideen have been carrying out a series of murders, robberies, bomb attacks, threats and various kinds of terrorist acts causing deaths to peace-loving people and destruction of property."

It said these people have been trying to create a social unrest by misleading a group of youths misusing their religious sentiments. "Under the circumstances, the government announces enforcement of ban on all activities of Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh and Jama'atul Mujahideen. Their so-called leader Dr Asadullah al Galib has already been arrested. Meanwhile, police has been ordered to intensify their activities to arrest JMJB leader Bangla Bhai," the press-note read.

Explaining the background of the tough government stance, the press-note said in the recent past several incidents of attacks, bomb attacks and blasts have been carried out on different social, cultural and religious functions and several branches of BNC and Grameen Bank in different areas of the country.

It said the incidents prompted the government to intensify police vigil all over the country, resulting in the 'red-handed' arrest of a number of suspects in Bogra, Joypurhat, Sirajganj, Gaibandha, Moulvibazar, Gopalganj, Dhamrai and Savar. The police operations also led to seizure of explosives and 'objectionable books and booklets'.

"According to the confessional statements of a number of the arrestees, they all are members of Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh and Jama'atul Mujahidin [, and] they are engaged in such criminal activities to achieve their objectives," the press-note said.

The note then announced that "The government wants to inform all that such activities will not be tolerated" and that it is "determined to take legal measures against whoever is engaged in terrorism or activities to frustrate peace and discipline."

ARREST OF GALIB
Our Rajshahi correspondent reports: Police arrested Galib, his second-in command Ahab Nayebe-e-Amir Shaikh Abdus Samad Salafi, Ahab General Secretary Moulana Nurul Islam and Organising Secretary ASMAzizullah in the early hours yesterday.

Gas pipeline

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State Minister for Energy AKM Mosharrar Hossain yesterday told reporters that currently there is a difference of opinion whether the pipeline will enter Bangladesh through Cox's Bazar from Myanmar or from Tripura in India.

He said while dealing with the pipeline project Bangladesh will remain firm on getting access to hydropower of Nepal and Bhutan by signing a bilateral agreement with India.

Bangladesh will also seek a corridor for transporting commodities between Nepal, Bhutan and Bangladesh and find ways to reduce trade imbalance with India, he added.

Earlier in January, Mosharrar said upon his return from Myanmar, "Without this bilateral treaty, we will not sign the trilateral agreement."

Back in December, the Bangladesh Cabinet Committee shelved the pipeline project proposal pushed by a private company on the grounds that such a scheme needs political decision at tri-national level and the governments should be involved in it.

Although the concept of the pipeline is eight years old, Myanmar has recently started hammering on the idea.

hours yesterday.

Salafi is also the principal of Salafi Dakhl Madrasa of Ahab-sponsored Al Markazi Islami. Nurul Islam is a lecturer of Islamic Studies at Gangni Degree College in Meherpur and Azizullah a librarian at Atrai Degree College in Mohonpur of Rajshahi.

Police said the three were held under Section 54 of Criminal Procedure Code following requests from three police stations in Bogra and Gopalganj districts.

The requests came after Islamist militants arrested there in cases of murders, bomb attacks and robberies at NGO offices had linked Galib with the incidents. They alleged Galib has been leading them in actions against 'anti-Islamic activities at shrines', cultural functions and NGOs that brought women out of homes.

Intelligence sources said the government high-ups on Tuesday decided to arrest Galib and his men, and directed the police stations concerned for necessary action.

About 300 members of police, Bangladesh Rifles and Rab (Rapid Action Battalion) besieged Galib's house and his madrasa at Naodapara in Rajshahi at 2:00am yesterday. Galib and Nurul Islam were found in the house and taken to Shah Mokhdum Police Station. Salafi and Azizullah were arrested in the madrasa, from where they were taken to Boalia Police Station.

Police produced them before a court yesterday pleading to send them to jail and submitting that Galib might have links with a murder in Shahjahanpur, a bomb attack in Gabtoli and a robbery at a Brac office in Kotallipara. Police also suspected the other three arrestees to be involved in the Kotallipara robbery.

The court ordered the four to jail custody.

Police meanwhile halted preparations for a two-day annual Ahab conference scheduled to begin today in Rajshahi Truck Terminal. The podium and structures built in the ground were put off and Ahab workers were instructed to leave the place.

Police and Rab men have been deployed at the madrasa and the conference site to check any agitation.

"ISLAMIST MOVEMENT TO GO ON"
"Even if we are hanged or sent to jail, our movement for Islam will continue", Galib said at the court custody.

Reiterating that the statements against him were made and guided by a vested quarter 'either to harm our positive movement' or to hide the real culprits, he told journalists that he and his associates were not involved in any of the charges police brought against them.

AHAB, JMB & JMJB
When he was a student of Dhaka University in 1978, Galib formed Ahab's youth wing Ahle Hadith Jubo Shangha (AHJS) splitting from Jomiyat-e Ahle Hadith, three years after preparations for a Islamic revolution had begun in the country, said AHJS workers.

During the AHJS formation, Galib argued that they needed to engage in Jihad against Islamic fallacies including the mazar culture to bring an Islamic rule in the country.

Sources said Galib received funds from the Middle East through an Indian militant leader named Moulana Abdul Matin Salafi. Ershad government in 1988 expelled Salafi, engaged in the country as Muballigh (religious pleader) of Soudi government, for anti-state activities. Salafi

left huge Soudi money to Dr Galib, said sources.

AHJS took its base in Rajshahi as Galib joined Rajshahi University in 1980 as a lecturer resigning his job at Dhaka University teacher and started public activities in 1990.

The mainstream organisation Ahab was formed in late 1994 when he formed its women wing, welfare organisation Tawhid Trust and a publication organisation Hadith Foundation Bangladesh.

At the same time in Dhaka, the JMB started working headed by Galib Rahman. With help from Dr Galib, Rahman's JMB militants enjoyed the 700 mosques built across the country by Revival of Islamic Heritage Society that witnessed a seize of bank accounts in Pakistan after the 9/11 incident.

Dr Galib visited Afghanistan, India and Pakistan with fake travel documents since he stationed at Rajshahi. He had close relations with Kashmir militants. In 1998, he visited India with a business passport and was questioned by RU authority. The issue, however, was not still settled.

Police and intelligence sources said most of Ahab young workers have been working underground for the JMB.

The AHJS and the JMJB were formed at the same time with the same goal for turning the country into an Islamic state. Although ways of the two parties are different, a number of selected workers were responsible for launching political and underground activities in both the parties.

Corroborating the information, militants arrested from Thakurgaon, Joypurhat, Bogra and Natore told police that Dr Galib used to lead them and see them at Ahle Hadith mosques.

The militants have designs of training and codes for uniting to others and were inspired in actions against 'Islamic fallacies at mazars and NGOs'.

The JMJB amir Maolana Abdur Rahman and Ahab amir Dr Galib were known well to each other. Spiritual leader of Bangla Bhai, Rahman appeared before public in Rajshahi's Bagmara in April last year. He studied in Medina University in Saudi Arabia at Dr Galib's recommendation and joined Dr Galib back from the university.

A former colleague of Dr Galib, Rezaul Karim told The Daily Star that Galib introduced Rahman to him. "I heard them talking on whether armed struggle for Islamic rule would be viable or not," he said. But talking to The Daily Star, Dr Galib denied all allegations against him and said that the allegations are mere propaganda made by those who were expelled from his organisation in 2001.

"Allegation of militancy began in 2001 when we expelled two persons from our organisation", he said naming Rezaul Karim, a professor of Bogra Azizul Haque College and RU Assistant Registrar Shafiqul Islam.

Asked about a Ahab notice in 2000 claiming it has no involvement with militant outfit 'Qital Fee Sabillillah' that drummed for Islamic revolution, Galib said: "Those were not published in newspapers".

About Abdur Rahman, he said, "I know him as son of an Islamic scholar and saw him once, but never met him after he returned from Medina."

Asked about Salafi, he said, "He was a man whom our country needs most. Driving him out from the country was a conspiracy."

Eating own words

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radio, Babar, on government's inaction to arrest Bangla Bhai, said, "I oppose very strongly that our ministry has failed to take action, because we are still trying. How would we arrest anyone if he is absent physically or not available?"

But yesterday, after the government banned the JMJB, Babar told the same radio, "We are embarrassed, as it is not being possible to arrest Bangla Bhai....We have put extreme pressure on the police to nab him."

In April last year, newspapers started running stories on the JMJB actions in the name of fighting Sarbaharas (outlaws), but failed to motivate the government or the police to arrest the members of Bangla Bhai's outfit.

The government first denied Bangla Bhai's existence, then said they did not find him.

Even Prime Minister Khaleda Zia herself, while exchanging views with editors in August last year, said there is no existence of Bangla Bhai.

Ruling coalition partner Jamaat-e-Islami Ameer and Industries Minister Matir Rahman Nizami on July 22 last year said, "Bangla Bhai was created by some newspapers."

He also accused newspapers of having links with Bangla Bhai. "If they (newspapers) do not have any relations with him (Bangla Bhai) then how do they publish exclusive interview of Bangla Bhai," the Jamaat ameer told a press conference.

"Police have nothing to do if there is no existence of the so-called Bangla Bhai. Whom should they arrest?" said Nizami on June 22 last year while exchanging views with reporters of national dailies at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhavan.

However, Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman and PM's Political Secretary Harris Chowdhury said the PM had ordered the arrest of Bangla

Bhai and his operatives.

Harris Chowdhury on May 30 told the BBC radio that the PM has directed law enforcement agencies to arrest all people with criminal record including Bangla Bhai, with the announcement of Tk 50,000 bounty on the Islamist outfit chief.

But he brushed aside media reports on Bangla Bhai.

On July 22, Social Welfare Minister Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mujahid came up with different explanations. "The prime minister's directive was in this line -- if there is any one who takes law in his own hands, police have to arrest him immediately."

On May 15 last year, a cabinet committee meeting on law and order ordered police to arrest Bangla Bhai and his followers. A week later, the JMJB operatives staged a show-down in Rajshahi and met DC, SP and DIG.

Even the SP (Masud Mia) welcomed the JMJB team and said, "We (police) hail you (JMJB) as you are helping us eliminate the Sarbaharas from Rajshahi. We must co-operate with you in the coming days so that people can rest without fear."

But he told The Daily Star, "There is no one called Bangla Bhai, nor any party called the JMJB. It's the local people who have forged resistance. I have come to know about Bangla Bhai through newspapers."

Rajshahi range's DIG (Deputy Inspector General) of Police Noor Mohammad on June 23 said there is no existence of 'so-called Bangla Bhai' in the region.

Zahirul Haque, director general of the external publicity wing of the foreign ministry, on January 25 this year quoted US Embassy in Dhaka officials about the non-existence of Bangla Bhai. But the US embassy later refuted his comment.

JCD men beat up journos for reporting on gambling

STAR REPORT

Cadres of the ruling BNP's student front, Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD), yesterday beat up a journalist in Kushtia, demanding he leave the town within 12 hours or face 'dire consequences,' and also confined four other senior journalists at an office who attempted to rescue him.

Fear and foreboding have now set in among the journalists of Kushtia in the aftermath of the attack.

Police said Al-Mamun Sagar, Kushtia correspondent of the national daily Jugantor and electronic media ATN Bangla, was attacked by JCD cadres after sending a report to the daily about a gambling programme at the Ekusey Fair, organised by JCD on the Kushtia Government College premises.

Sources said the general public has been concerned about the widespread gambling taking place at the fair, which has been running since February 1st.

On February 18, the Purbo Banglar Communist Party (PBCP), an underground political party, even threatened to launch a grenade attack on the fair if the authorities failed to stop the gambling programme.

District police banned all gambling activities after the threat, but JCD men latter restarted the nuisance 'reportedly' by managing police within two days.

Al-Mamun Sagar filed a news report on the issue yesterday.

Witnesses said a group of JCD men stormed into Sagar's office soon after he sent the report at about 6:00pm, demanding to know what he wrote. When Sagar refused to say, the JCD men pounced upon him, beating him with their fists, sandals and iron sticks.

Learning of the attack, local journalists Manjur Ehsan Choudhury, senior journalist and editor of local Andolonar Bazar, Bhorer Kagoj correspondent Noor alam Dulal, UNB and Akker Kagoj correspondent Munshi Toriqul Islam, and journalist Rahamat Risvee - rushed to Sagar's office and tried to rescue him. The JCD men, however, confined them and tried to beat them as well. But a team of sadar police rushed to the spot and rescued them while the JCD men fled.

In an urgent meeting, Kushtia Reporters Unity condemned the heinous attack and demanded the immediate arrest of the culprits.

Terrorist Islamic

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or person has the right to take the law in his own hands," they said.

The statement said Islam does not support any act of terrorism. The Islamic parties and the ulama of the country have no relations with those who are carrying out such acts of terrorism.

The Islamic leaders are the peace-loving people and they are against all sorts of anarchy, they said.

"Those who are involved in terrorist activities in the name of Islamic organisations, are the enemies of the country and the nation. They (enemies) should be brought to justice for punishment according to the Islamic law," they said.

The Islamic thinkers demanded immediate arrest of the miscreants who are involved in killings and other criminal activities.

The signatories to the statement are Chairman of the JSCB and Khatib of Baitul Mokarram National Mosque Moulana Obaidul Haque, Chief Adviser of the JSCB Shaikhul Hadish Azizul Haque, Vice-Chairman Moulana Abul Kalam Muhammed Yusuf, Moulana Delwar Hossain Sayeedi MP, Moulana Muhammed Abdus Sobhan MP, Secretary General of the JSCB Mufti Syed Ahmed, Members of the JSCB Moulana Ataur Rahman Khan, Advocate Moulana Nazrul Islam, Moulana Kamal Uddin Zafari, Moulana Abul Kalam Azad and Moulana Jaynul Abedin.

Cops under

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branches and agencies of the police department and took salute.

People's expectation from police is high and there are a lot of allegations against this force, she said, adding: "You must have to come out of the allegations."

Terming the allegations of immoral acts and misuse of power against any police personnel a 'serious' concern, Khaleda said the entire police force can not take responsibility for the misdeeds of a few corrupt personnel.

She said the chain of command in the police has been restored through reform and modernisation. The prime minister also said the police department has been modernised through expansion of its facilities, establishing more new police stations and investigation centres, providing transport facilities and modern firearms.

She said the government has decided to create posts for 600 sub inspectors in 300 police stations with a view to streamlining the investigation process.

The prime minister claimed that the law and order situation has substantially been improved after formation of Rab and other forces in the police department.

HC stays probe

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to submit its findings to the court.

The court issued a rule asking the respondents including the finance secretary and the Bangladesh Bank (BB) governor to explain in two weeks why the BB actions to probe the matter should not be declared illegal.

The HC also asked the capital market regulator SEC to explain in two weeks why its order for suspending a Tk 55 crore initial public offerings (IPO) of Premier Bank should not be declared to have done without lawful authority.

The Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) on February 12 suspended the public floating of the Premier Bank after its 25,000 beneficiary owners' (BO) accounts were found to be 'fake' in an investigation.

On February 14 and 16, Bangladesh Bank ordered investigation into the opening of a huge number of bank accounts with 12 branches of Premier Bank.

Yesterday's orders were passed by an HC bench comprising Justice M Joyrul Abedin and Justice M Miftah Uddin Chowdhury upon writ petitions filed by Premier Bank on Tuesday challenging the BB actions and the SEC order.

Dr M Zahir, Barrister Rokanuddin Mahmud and Barrister Mahbubuddin Khokon moved for the petitioners.

During the hearing, Attorney General (AG) AF Hasan Arif submitted that irregularities including opening of fake accounts with Premier Bank have been established prima facie through an investigation.

There is no scope to halt the investigation by BB into the alleged scams, he said.

The AG told the court that the SEC action was taken against the bank after an investigation found its activities to be suspicious, collusive, unethical and unfair affecting the public interest and the capital market at large.

The SEC probe found that 15,000 BO accounts were opened by the depository participant of Premier Bank using a single address. About 5,500 BO accounts did not have any

address while another 3,000 accounts were opened using only one address.

The BB also launched an investigation after being informed by the SEC. The probe detected irregularities in opening the bank accounts.

The anti-money laundering department of the central bank is also investigating possible link of four other banks with the 25,000 false BO accounts.

Meantime, the HC yesterday summarily rejected the writ petition of Nowrin Iqbal, upholding the BB order that had stripped her of the directorship of the Premier Bank.

The BB in compliance with the banking rules had removed Nowrin, daughter of Dr HBM Iqbal, chairman of the bank on February 16.

Action too little

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instead of issuing a press note banning the extremist outfits Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh and Jamaatul Mujaheedin hours before the Washington meeting," Saber told the BDNEWS.

He said each and every member of the government, including the prime minister, has denied the existence of any extremist or terrorist organisation in the country over the last three years.

"This sudden change in position reflects a clear acknowledgement of government's patronage to these groups over the last three years and a very weak attempt to distance itself from such tendencies," Saber said.

"When the instruction to arrest Bangla Bhai by the prime minister is not followed, what can people expect as the outcome of a press note issued by a ministry?" he said.

It is nothing but a show to the donors, Saber said, adding, "They (government) made too delay and reached the situation to an extreme."

The Awami League leader said, "There is an extensive network of criminal organisations in the country and unless we are able to get to the root of the problem, which lies with the ruling alliance itself, we can not expect the situation to get any better."

Launch masters rely

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Meanwhile, the number of passengers on the river routes has declined sharply following Saturday night's deadly accident as well as the onset of inclement weather.

Launch operators told The Daily Star that the number of passengers went down by at least 40 per cent from their normal levels. Usually, the number of passenger is lower during the Bengali month of Chaitra and Baishakh because of regular tornadoes and storms in the afternoon and nights, they said.