

Pledges unfulfilled

FROM PAGE 1
have made its own the number one position in the corruption index of the Transparency International.

The parliament, which is commissioned to ensure government accountability, cannot play its role due to indifference of the ruling alliance.

Burning issues are not discussed in the House while parliamentary standing committees have failed to monitor corruption and irregularities in the government expenditure because of unwarranted pressure and interference from the government high-ups.

Highlighting the significance of some vital parliamentary standing committees, the Public Expenditure Review Commission in a report observed that there is no need to form any commission to check graft if the parliamentary bodies like Public Accounts, Estimate and Finance, function properly.

The parliamentary standing committees on various ministries in last two years formed several dozen sub-committees to probe alleged corruption and irregularities in different ministries, but they could not proceed due to non-cooperation of the ministers and undue pressures from the ruling alliance bigwigs.

One of the glaring examples is that the parliamentary standing committee on the communications ministry in January and February in 2004 formed two sub-committees to probe the allegations of corruption in the import of CNG-run autorickshaws and allocation of government lands to set up CNG filling stations. The subcommittees were asked to report back in a month. Since then, 19 months have passed but none of the committees has come up with report.

Even a ruling BNP lawmaker, SA Khaleq, during a parliament session had accused the state minister for communications of bribery in allocation of lands for setting up CNG stations in the capital.

Whenever the parliamentary bodies raise allegations of irregularities and corruption in the ministries, some of the ministers go to Prime Minister Khaleda Zia and complain about the committee chiefs. Last year, the prime minister had summoned a number of committee chiefs and asked them not to confront the ministers.

The parliament in fact has been sidelined as a mere rubber stamp for the government. It has not been able to advance its objectives including ensuring the executive accountability and transparency.

The alleged involvement of an alternative power centre in corruption and irregularities in the government expenditure has been a much-talked issue during the present government's term.

SLIDE IN LAW AND ORDER, RISE OF MILITANTS

First, the Operation Clean Heart, a drive using the armed forces, and then Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) comprising members of the armed forces, could not successfully cope with pervasive lawlessness.

Criminal activities including those of militant outfits had soared to unprecedented levels last year when Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) and Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh (JMJB) allegedly being patronised by some ministers and ruling party lawmakers unleashed a reign of terror in different parts of the country, particularly in the northwestern districts.

The home ministry that had long ignored the prime minister's orders to arrest JMB's self-proclaimed operations commander Bangla Bhai at last banned the two Islamist outfits following pressure from the donor agencies in last February.

Taking advantage of the home ministry's slackness and complacency over the activities of the banned outfit, the JMB staged countrywide blasts on August 17.

The law enforcers launched crack-down on militants immediately after the blasts, but the militant kingpins are still at large.

The masterminds behind the assassination attempt on Leader of the Opposition and Awami League (AL) Chief Sheikh Hasina have not been brought to book though an year has gone since the grenade attacks which left 23 people killed and scores injured.

Investigators are still in the dark about the identity of those responsible for the bomb attack on UK High Commissioner to Bangladesh Anwar Chowdhury, killings of former finance minister Shah AMS Kibria, AL lawmaker Ahsanullah Master and leader Manzurul Imam.

Besides, they have yet to unravel the mystery of the arms hauls in Chittagong and Bogra last year.

PRICE HIKE AND POWER CRISIS

In addition to deteriorating law and order, price hike of essentials and rise in transportation fares have made life difficult for the people. The ever-soaring cost of living coupled with unemployment have brought unrelenting misery to the lives of commoners.

Besides, there have been power outages to make things even worse. The government claims to have taken a large number of measures, but it has yet to produce a single MW of new electricity in accordance with its election pledges. In fact, the power crisis in the country is more acute compared to that during the previous government.

POLITICISATION AND CONTROVERSIAL POLLS

Politicismation in the public administra-

tion and the Election Commission gets worse as the next parliamentary election nears. The government has promoted a significant number of public servants loyal to ruling parties and recruited favoured candidates to different important posts.

Recently, it has recruited over 150 Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) men as upazila election officer through the Public Service Commission.

The BNP ahead of the last election had pledged that if voted to power it would strengthen the local government system by introducing upazila parishad and gram sarkar systems to ensure people's participation in rural development.

But the government policymakers have split over reintroducing the upazila system and thus failed to reach any decision over the important tier of the local government.

The government however had reintroduced the gram sarkar, a non-elected body to assist union parishad, the lowest tier of the local government. But as rampant politicisation and irregularities in the process of forming gram sarkars drew flak from every corner, the High Court declared the system unconstitutional.

Elections to the different local government bodies and by-elections in several parliamentary seats under the alliance rule have been widely criticised as they were marked by irregularities and political influence of the ruling parties. The government indifference to provide the Election Commission with support necessary to conduct election in a free and fair manner has given rise to questions whether the present government really wants to have credible and transparent polls.

The Dhaka-10 by-election held last year broke all previous records of vote rigging in Bangladesh. The election was held ignoring the High Court order to deploy army personnel in each polling station and the ruling party candidate, the political secretary to the prime minister, won the prestigious polls.

During the union parishad election in 2002, the then chief election commissioner termed the polls a futile exercise as the administration failed to check violence and rigging. The government had denied the EC's call for deployment of army in the polls.

The government did not properly carry out its pledge regarding the reintroduction of women reserved seats in parliament. Instead of 64 seats and direct election to those, the government has introduced a system of indirect elections to 45 reserved seats.

The ruling BNP that promised to raise the number of parliament seats to 500 from 300 (now 345 including 45 women reserved seats) has never discussed the issue in any forum after being voted to power.

About the pledge to separate the judiciary from the executive, the government seems to be dilly-dallying by taking repeatedly time extensions from the Supreme Court.

The appointment of the judges to the High Court during the alliance government has been bitterly criticised for alleged politicisation and nepotism in the process.

The government has not yet initiated any move to form a National Human Rights Commission though the country, since last year, has been witnessing an alarming rise in human rights violation, especially at the hands of law enforcers. Extra-judicial killings have surpassed all records.

The government had ordered mass arrests and detention of people in an apparent bid to foil the opposition movement in 2004.

The ruling BNP's pledge to establish and uphold the rule of law in the country was dealt a severe blow when the government in last January granted presidential clemency to a BNP man, who was sentenced to death in a double murder case over 22 years ago.

Besides, there is little possibility for the state-run Radio and Television to have full autonomy in line with the electoral pledge. Bangladesh Betar and Bangladesh Television are rather being used to serve the purposes of the ruling parties.

On foreign policy, many believe, the country has lost some good friends in the international community for the 'wrong' steps taken by the government which promised before election to maintain good relations with all countries. The diplomatic relations with China and countries of European Union have become somewhat strained in last four years.

The parliamentary standing committee on foreign ministry had observed that the relationship between Bangladesh and neighbouring India has reached a record low in recent years.

One killed

FROM PAGE 1
into the house of Mohammad Ali of the village at about 1:00am.

Sources said the NBCP cadres went there to kill Mohammad Ali, a former member of Jodibaira Union Parishad (UP) and local Awami League (AL) leader.

As Mohammad Ali and his family members cried for help, a large number of villagers rushed to the spot and encircled the gang.

The gang hurled bombs on them, injuring Esarat and Aminul. Esarat died on the way to Kustia General Hospital.

Aminul is undergoing treatment at the hospital with injuries to his face and left leg.

JMB men

FROM PAGE 1
Mohila Madrasa.

Police sources said Ahad is an active member of banned JMB and his name was on the list of 37 wanted JMB members in the district.

Police also raided his Baliadanga house in sadar upazila that was found locked, as his family have already escaped, sources added.

Ahad was the director of the military training wing of the Sathkira JMB, said a top official of the district police.

Contacted, Assistant Superintendent of Police (sadar circle) Delwar Hossain Saidee said, "Ahad is an active JMB member and we have already gleaned some important information from him." He however declined to disclose the information for the sake of investigation.

BAGERHAT
Detectives arrested JMB members Maolana Mizanur Rahman, 40, and Sheikh Iran Moula, 25, on Thursday in connection with the serial blast, reports BDNews.

Police said Mizanur is the principal of Rajpat Aliya Madrasa in Bagerhat and Iran is the son of a teacher of the madrasa. Sources in Detective Branch (DB) of police said the two during interrogation confessed 26 JMB members had received training at a camp in Burigangni village in Bagerhat in 2003.

They also said JMB Operations Commander Siddiqui Rahman Bangla Bhai visited Mollarhat during their training.

SYLHET
JMB cadre Mohsin Khan who was arrested in Jaintapur upazila in Sylhet on Monday gave confessional statement before a magistrate yesterday, reports our Sylhet staff correspondent.

Mohsin admitted he along with one of his fellow activists had kept the bombs at the garden of Sylhet District Judge's Court and at the stairs of the Sylhet ADM office on August 17.

He along with three others including Master Abdul Hai started for Sylhet at around 8:00am from Jaintapur and took breakfast in the city, he added.

Mohsin joined the Sengram Madrasa in May 2004 and had earlier served as an Imam of a Burichang mosque. He said he joined the JMB in 2000 and took training at a hideout in Narayanganj.

Son of Rustom Ali and a resident of Kadiatal village in Comilla, Mohsin was sent to prison. He had served as a teacher in Sengram Mohammadpur Dakhil Madrasa.

PANCHAGARH
Our Dinajpur correspondent adds: Instructions have been given to the law enforcers of Panchagarh to step up security at important establishments and cinemas following intelligence report that a wave of further bomb attacks might be carried out by Islamist militants.

The officer-in-charge (OC) of Kotwali Police Station told The Daily Star over phone they have beefed up security since Thursday at important establishments including DC office, courts, local press club, post office, Panchagarh Sadar Hospital, bus terminal and Panchagarh Electrification Office.

Police are also checking incoming and out going transport including buses and trucks, the OC added. Eleven check posts have also been set up at different points of the district.

KHULNA
Our Khulna staff correspondent reports: Shahidullah alias Lokman, arrested on September 8 at a house in South Gordan in the capital, will be brought to Khulna today showing him arrested in the blast cases filed with different police stations in Khulna.

He has already confessed to his involvement in the bomb explosions at the compounds of Khulna Judges' Court and the Court of Chief Metropolitan, Khulna on August 17.

Shahidullah also named Abdul Hakim Gazi, a teacher of Saint Joseph High School in the city, as one of the masterminds behind the blasts in greater Khulna.

Police sources said they have got important clues about from where and how the explosives used in the bombings were sent to target points. Investigators got the lead when they were probing about the source of the two cartons seized on September 22 from Hakim's house.

Apart from the two cartons, police also seized some materials including powder explosives from the house. The cartons, bearing numbers KHL 243676 and KHL 171076 and containing bomb making materials, were booked from Jessore office of Continental Courier Service, said Sub-inspector Saiful Islam of Khulna DB.

Police however could not detect the people who had booked the cartons, as they did not find the records despite searching the courier service office in Jessore and its head office in Dhaka.

Chafee assures

FROM PAGE 16
the support of a number of key senators, making its prospects bright.

Stressing the need for duty-free access for textile products from Bangladesh, the foreign minister said, "Such access is not only important for the economy of Bangladesh, but also crucial for sustaining empowerment of women as readymade garment industry employs over 1.5 million female workers."

The foreign minister reiterated Bangladesh's commitment to fight extremism in all its forms. He said the government is seriously dealing with the August 17 bomb blasts, and has already arrested a large number of people involved in the incident.

Khan assured Senator Chafee of the government's sincerity in bringing to justice the perpetrators of all political violence, including those responsible for the killing of former finance minister Shah AMS Kibria.

During the meeting, both sides agreed on the need for working together on various areas of Bangladesh-US relations. Chafee accepted Morshed Khan's invitation to visit Bangladesh at a convenient time.

They also discussed the overall political and economic situation in the South Asian region when Khan told the senator that Bangladesh is sincere in maintaining friendly relations with all its neighbours.

Bangladesh Ambassador to the United States Shamsher Mobin Chowdhury accompanied the foreign minister to the meeting.

Criminal, two outlaws

FROM PAGE 1
Police said Anis, an accused in seven murder cases, had long been absconding and recently came back to his village.

Following his statement, Mirpur police took Anis to Katdah village on Thursday night to recover illegal firearms.

When police reached the village at about 3:30am, the JGB cadres opened fire on them.

The law enforcers retaliated. Police said Anis was shot during the shootout and died instantly.

Police retrieved two bombs and four bullets from the spot and sent the body to Kustia General Hospital for an autopsy.

In Meherpur, members of the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab-6) arrested PBCP cadre Aziz at Bamundi village under Ganni upazila on Wednesday night.

During interrogation, Aziz confessed to his involvement with the underground outfit and also admitted to have firearms hidden at a graveyard of the village.

The Rab men along with Aziz went to the village to recover the firearms. When they reached Eidgahpara graveyard at about 2:30am, the PBCP men fired on them. The Rab men retaliated.

Rab said Aziz was caught in the crossfire and died on the spot.

They said Aziz was an accused in several cases, including four for murder, filed with Gangni and Mujibnagar police stations.

Rab sent his dead body to Meherpur General Hospital for an autopsy.

UNB adds: Criminal Bachchu Khan, 28, son of Quader Khan of Samki village under Dohar Police Station, was killed in a 'shootout' between Rab and his cohorts at Dharmashur early yesterday. Rab-2 sources said they arrested Bachchu at Islampur under Dohar Police Station at 10:00am on Thursday.

During the interrogation, Bachchu told the Rab members that he was planning to commit a robbery at Dharmashur in Keraniganj on Friday night.

When the Rab men took him to Dharmashur at about 3:00am,

Bachchu's accomplices opened fire on them, forcing the elite force to retaliate.

Rab sources said Bachchu was caught in the shootout and died on the spot. One sawed off rifle, one shooter gun and six bullets were recovered from the spot.

Dohar police said Bachchu was wanted in five criminal cases.

Aug 17 blasts

FROM PAGE 1
Mooshahary told the joint press conference.

"We have decided to promote swap of training facilities, as well as cultural and sports exchanges," he added.

On cross-border infiltration, BDR stuck to its stance that there is no insurgent groups operating inside Bangladesh territory while BSF maintained insurgent leaders like Arvind Rajkhowa, Paresh Barua and Anup Chetia of ULFA, and Nayanbasi Jamatia and Bishwa Mohan Debbaram of National Liberation Front of Tripura are holed up in Bangladesh.

The BDR chief said it is in fact the criminals from India who had infiltrated into Bangladesh and in conjunction with local criminals perpetrated the serial blasts.

Mooshahary denied the allegation and said there was only one Indian among over 500 people arrested in Bangladesh after the bombings. The arrested Indian national named Niazuddin had been living in Bangladesh for the past 17 years, he added.

"It is known internationally that leaders of north-eastern insurgent groups like Barua and Chetia are in Bangladesh," he said.

On the issue of the killing of BSF officer Jewan Kumar allegedly by BDR along the border with Tripura in April this year, Chowdhury said an investigation by top Bangladeshi officials had exonerated his men from the charge.

Mooshahary expressed dissatisfaction with the investigation carried out by Bangladesh and insisted that BDR personnel shot the officer dead when he had crossed over the border unarmed for discussion with the Bangladeshi border guards.

RU yet to take action

FROM PAGE 16
they reach a consensus," said a senior teacher, seeking not to be named.

When contacted, RU Vice Chancellor Prof Altaf Hossain denied the allegation and said, "We have formed a probe committee and we will take action after we get its report."

The JCD faction that brandished arms, blasted crackers and attacked Sher-e-Bangla Hall on Thursday filed a case under the explosives act with Mothiar Police Station last night.

Abdul Latif Hall JCD unit Vice-president Akramul Haque Aikra filed the case accusing 30 people, including four Sher-e-Bangla Hall unit JCD leaders. The four are Adil Sharir Gorki, Asaik, Manik and Golam Kabir.

Earlier, police arrested injured Gorki as he moved out of the hall for treatment in hospital. Supporters of Gorki immediately met the vice chancellor, threatening to cripple university activities if their injured leader was not released.

Tension is prevailing on the campus and many resident students of Sher-e-Bangla Hall left the campus, fearing fresh clashes.

A large number of police and armed police personnel were deployed in front of the halls of male students.

Meanwhile, Progressive Teachers Association, Bangladesh Chhatra League and Progressive Students Association in separate statements yesterday condemned the JCD factions' gunfight.

They demanded that the RU authorities must ensure security of the teachers, students and others on the campus.

Journalists of Rajshahi will hold a rally and bring out a procession on the campus today, protesting JCD cadres's attack on photojournalist Nazrul Islam Zulu of the daily Jugantor.

Khatme Nabuwat

FROM PAGE 1
other Ahmadiyya complexes in the country.

They will save the 'dignity of Islam and Khatme Nabuwat Movement' at any cost, the speakers said.

The IKNMB will hold a 'grand rally' on October 28 at the same intersection to press its demands, its leaders said.

They cautioned that the BNP-Jamaat ruling alliance will suffer a debacle in the next national elections if it fails to declare the Ahmadiyyas non-Muslim.

Tight security was maintained at and around the rally venue to avert any untoward incidents. Around 1,000 police personnel were deployed there and no vehicles were allowed to pass through Nabisco intersection for about four hours from noon.

IKNMB Ameer Mahmudul Hasan Muntajir said although the parties in the ruling coalition claim themselves as nationalist and pro-Islam, they are just silent spectators to anti-Islamic activities.

"We want the government not to play such a role over an issue linked to the dignity of Islam. Its silence will bring danger for it," he said.

He also said activists of Khatme Nabuwat will not occupy or demolish any religious complexes of the Ahmadiyyas if the government declares them non-Muslim.

Muhammad Nazmul Huq, Secretary General of the IKNMB said, "We do not have any complaint against the Christians, Hindus and also Ahmadiyyas but what we want is they (Ahmadiyyas) must live as non-Muslim like people of other religions."

This is a 'reasonable' demand because the Ahmadiyyas do not admit

Diabetes test not working for Asians, study says

APP, Hong Kong

Experts fear a diabetes test is failing to detect the disease in thousands of Asians who may be unaware they have the condition, a study said yesterday.

Researchers at Hong Kong Chinese University said they believed the test, which worked well with Caucasians, was not suited to Asian subjects.

"Although (the test) is often used to diagnose diabetes, increasing data suggest that this value is not sensitive enough to detect (the disease) especially in the Oriental population," the statement said.

"It's possible people have been tested and given the all clear but could be carrying the illness," Chan Wing-bun, part of the university research team, told AFP.

Chan said the differences in reactions among ethnic groups was baffling.

"We believe it is probably because of the genetic differences between Caucasians and Asians, but we cannot be sure," he said.

The study tested 230 Hong Kong people with high blood pressure, and found that a quarter had undiagnosed diabetes.

However, only 60 percent of sufferers were detected to be diabetic through the regular test recommended by the World Health Organisation. The rest were detected with a more time-consuming and more expensive test.

Diabetes affects the level of blood-sugar, the essential fuel needed to provide the natural energy that keeps us alive.

Hasina

FROM PAGE 1
League has long-standing and historic relations with the Congress Party and other Indian political parties, it is but natural in a democratic setup to meet Indian leaders," writes our Delhi correspondent.

Earlier on Thursday, Hasina told reporters in Ajmer there should be unity among India, Pakistan and Bangladesh to check increasing "external interference" in internal affairs of the developing nations.

She said if the three countries of this region wanted to combat poverty, they should boost mutual cooperation on economic issues.

She expressed "regrets" that Indo-Bangladesh relations had "declined" since the present Khaleda Zia regime came to power in her country.

Asked about charges of existence of northeastern Indian terrorist camps in Bangladesh, Hasina said, "Ask the government of Bangladesh."

She said when her party was in power, no terrorist activity was allowed against India in Bangladesh territory.

The former prime minister said she was "confident" of facing the next general elections in her country and her party would "comfortably win" the race.

Hasina, also Awami League chief, held meetings with her Indian counterpart and BJP chief LK Advani and Defence Minister Pranab Mukherjee yesterday.

She meets today External Affairs Minister K Natwar Singh who will host a lunch in honour of her.

Hasina will also meet West Bengal Chief Minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharya and former chief minister Jyoti Basu in Kolkata tomorrow.

UNB adds: Quoting diplomatic sources, the Statesman said Hasina's visit, before the Saarc summit in Bangladesh in November, is significant in view of New Delhi's efforts to mend fences with Dhaka following some progress in the water-sharing talks between the two countries and a little thaw in border related disputes.

Many bus operators are already taking increased fare.

SUST students

FROM PAGE 16
of his maid-servant tried to sexually abuse her, the victim alleged.

The girl managed to free herself and cried for help. Some of her fellow students residing on the ground and fourth floors of the building came out and asked Quddus about the incident. As Quddus failed to convince them, the students went on the rampage kicking at the doors and windows of the building.

A good number of students from the nearby area joined them as the news spread within minutes. The agitating students put up barricades on the Sylhet-Sunamganj Road and laid siege to the building demanding immediate punishment to Quddus.

Police charged baton on the agitating students to bring the situation under control. Later, at about 9:30pm the additional district magistrate along with police forces went to the area and asked the students to withdraw the barricade.

When Quddus was brought out of the house, he openly apologised for the incident. Police took Quddus and his maid-servant under their custody at about 11:10pm.

However, the situation went tense again as the students put up barricade in front of the varsity gate on the Sylhet-Sunamganj Road and damaged autorickshaws and tempos at around 11:30pm.

A clash ensued and continued for about an hour as the locals came out on the street protesting the vandalism.

Additional police teams were deployed in and around the varsity area after midnight.

The victim filed a case under the Women and Children Repression Act, accusing Abdul Quddus and his maid-servant, with the Kotwali police, a police official said.

BNP, AL should unite

FROM PAGE 1
the two major parties usually blame each other.

The political leaders were speaking at a seminar titled "The role of Politicians, Civil Society, Bureaucrats and the Media in the Free Market Economy" organised by the BGMEA on the sidelines of the 16th annual Bangladesh Apparel and Textile Exposition 2005 at Sonargaon Hotel.

Prothom Alo Editor Matiuur Rahman moderated the seminar.

"Even if BNP proposes an angel as the chief of the caretaker government, Awami League will not accept it. Similarly, we will follow suit if Awami League does the same," Mosharrarf said.

"We have to sit and have constructive discussion on political issues and improve the political culture," the minister said, noting it is not important who takes the initiative.

Tofail said when the AL was in power, the Dhaka University (DU) vice-chancellor (VC) belonged to AL and used to attend its public meetings. Now that the BNP is in power, the DU VC belongs to the ruling party and goes to its public rally.

The BGMEA also has three persons to chair the organisation by rotation for a single term, he said adding that politicisation is now everywhere.

On hartal, Tofail said when the AL was in power, it opposed hartals and now the ruling BNP-coalition is also doing the same. "It is true, we politicians are losing dignity and respect. I agree that we don't have consistency in our work."

Comparing the relationship between political rivals when he was young, Tofail cited many names saying they had respect for each other and used to visit each other on occasions. This practice is no more seen today, he said.

When the age limit of the chief

justice was extended, it became clear how free and fair the next election in 2007 will be held with the chief election commissioner, immediate past chief justice as the caretaker chief, army chief and the president being BNP's men, Tofail sarcastically said.

Rejecting Tofail's argument, Mosharrarf, however, said there are four other options for the chief of caretaker government in the constitution which could be discussed.

"We don't have patience today...There are no options but to improve the political culture because it is the politicians who will have to run the country," he noted.

"We may be responsible for the political differences or maybe they [the AL] are. But the present situation has to be changed," he added.

Former cabinet secretary Mujibul Huq said governance is being nullified by huge corruption. Politicisation of the bureaucracy started long before and only the present BNP-coalition should not be blamed for it.

The conflicts between the two major political parties have reached an unthinkable level, which only speaks of political immaturity, he said.

Matuier Rahman said senior leaders of both the political parties admitted that they need better understanding among them to take the country ahead. "We should play our role as pressure groups," he added.

BGMEA President Annissul Huq said decisions taken at the highest level are not being implemented due to the political reasons although every political decision affects the lives of common people.

Lt Col (retd) Faruk Khan MP, former secretary Waliul Islam, President of Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association and BGMEA Director Fazlul Haque also spoke at the seminar.