

## Speaker's role

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tion as the Saarc chairperson.

Instead of starting the one-hour question answer session, the speaker went on to allow a half-hour unscheduled discussion and gave the floor to opposition lawmakers at the suggestion of some senior lawmakers of the treasury bench, who virtually directed him to do so.

Taking the floor, Jatiya Party (Ershad) lawmaker Rawshan Ershad and Jatiya Party (Manju) lawmaker Anwar Hossain Manju, congratulated the prime minister. The speaker did not interrupt them, but when another Jatiya Party lawmaker Golam Habib Dulal participating in the discussion mentioned former president HM Ershad's role in the implementation of the dream of late president Ziaur Rahman through the formation of the Saarc, the ruling party lawmakers stopped and the speaker switched off his microphone.

On Tuesday, Sircar responded to Krishak Sramik Janata League's lone lawmaker Quader Siddiqui's allegation against him of violating the RP, by saying that his Sunday's decision was in accordance with the RP.

But the speaker had not informed the members of parliament (MP) anything in advance on Sunday when he allowed the unscheduled discussion. There is no scope in the RP for the speaker to keep any decision about a change in the schedule within himself while conducting a session.

Quader Siddiqui also challenged the propriety of the note of congratulation by the finance minister, as he is a member of the government. The speaker however did not respond to the comment.

Sircar allowed the ruling alliance lawmakers to go on a venomous attack on the free media. He did not expunge a single unparliamentary word delivered by the ruling party lawmakers against journalists.

### SPEAKER IN DEFENCE OF THE GOVT

While dismissing the opposition lawmakers' demands for discussions on different important issues including rise of militants and price hike of essentials, the speaker's argument sounded like a reply from the treasury bench.

Dismissing the opposition law-

makers' demand for discussions on rise of militants and the killings of two judges the speaker said on Wednesday that the government intelligence agencies have launched a massive hunt to arrest the kingpins of the militants. So there is no need to discuss the issue in parliament, he claimed.

Referring to opposition lawmakers' demand for discussions on price hike of essentials and shortage of power and gas, the speaker defended the government saying it is trying hard to control the price of essentials and to improve the energy situation, so there was no need to discuss the matter.

Being the custodian of the House that exists to oversee the government's functions, what precedent was set in the parliamentary proceedings by the speaker's remarks?

### MEDIA UNDER ATTACK

The speaker on Tuesday and Wednesday allowed a number of ministers and ruling alliance lawmakers to launch a broadside on the media for what they called "fake news." However no specific instance was cited of those so-called "fake" news.

It is unfortunate that the speaker himself participated in the attack on the media. Responding to the lawmakers' point of orders, the speaker in his rulings said under the existing law journalists cannot be controlled, so new laws need to be enacted.

The speaker also echoed the lawmakers' view that the Press Council does not have enough power to force the newspapers to obey its laws.

## Nizami

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created in the country," Nizami observed.

When Chief Reporter of ATN Bangla Munni Saha asked for his reaction to expelled BNP lawmaker Abu Hena's recent statements linking Jamaat to the militants, Nizami said, "The comments are totally baseless."

"If anything like that [the militant activities] had taken place in his constituency, he should have gone public [with the issue] immediately after the incidents," Nizami added.

Replying to a query about the existence of Bangla Bhai, the minister said, "I don't have any comments on whether he exists or not. If a man really does exist, he won't disappear for my saying that he does not exist."

As the interviewer reminded him of his earlier comments that Bangla Bhai is merely a creation of the newspapers, Nizami said, "Can you tell me for sure that you will publish exactly what we say [to the media]?"

Asked how he sees the activities of the militants, Nizami said, "Those who made the bomb attacks on August 17, spreading leaflets, do not belong to Islam. They did it [bombings] to give Islam a bad name. They are simply being used by the enemies of Islam."

Speaking about what his party is doing against the militants, he said, "We are speaking out against them [militants]. They don't have anything to do with Islam. Unfortunately, the media have been stifling our arguments."

Asked to elaborate on the government measures against the militants, Nizami said, "The government is taking actions against them [militants]. They are being hunted down and would soon be uprooted Inshallah [god willing]."

On the question why the government has yet to capture Bangla Bhai, he said, "Won't it be tough to catch you if you disguise yourself?"

Asked whether the government's will is enough to nab anyone, Nizami referred to the outlawed party operatives who he said had been evading arrest for decades.

## AL to lay siege

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tion in the country," he said.

Chaired by Abdur Razzak MP, the meeting at the Gulshan residence of Jalil was attended by Tofail Ahmed and Abdul Jalil of Awami League, Rashed Khan Menon and Bimal Biswas of Workers Party, Hasanul Huq Inu and Sajidul Jafar of JSD, Saifuddin Ahmed Manik, Pankaj Bhattacharya and Mafizul Islam Khan Kamal of Gano Forum, Alhaj Abus Samad of Gano Azadi League, Nurul Islam Khan of Ganotantri Party and Dilip Barua of Samabadi Dal.

## Lanka to amend

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tion had not scared away Tamil voters who had been expected to back more the conciliatory Ranil Wickremesinghe.

Diplomats, markets and aid workers concerned that work with tsunami-hit communities on the east coast might be hit by worsening violence will all be closely watching Tiger leader Velupillai Prabhakaran's annual Heroes' Day address on Sunday.

Analysts say he might threaten a return to war and possibly set an ultimatum for government forces to pull back from some of the ground they now hold. A shrine to the Tigers' war dead -- including Black Tiger suicide bombers -- has been set up ahead of the address.

Rajapakse, who is allied to hardline Marxists and Buddhists who hate the Tigers and is unlikely to back down, told parliament he opposed the LTTE's demand for a separate state.

## 8 JMB men

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involvement in the bomb attack at Rajarbagh in the capital on August 17. He also confessed to receiving training on shooting and bomb making.

Monwar had been hiding at Kamanna village under Kalihati upazila posing as a weaver since the countrywide orchestrated bomb blasts.

The police said Monwar is named in the charge sheet in the Rajarbagh bomb blast case.

Our staff correspondent in Rajshahi adds: The police yesterday arrested JMB cadre Jakaria Hossain Rony, a former ICS member, at his Basua Terokhada home in the city.

The arrest was made on information provided by detained JMB leaders Abdur Rahman alia Shaka Khaled and Zahangir Alam. The police also recovered a number of books on jihad (holy war) from a neighbouring house Zakaria showed.

Zakaria, an undergraduate student of the Rajshahi College, confessed to being an ICS member in the past and later joining the JMB.

BDNews from Narayanganj reports: JMB member Ariful arrested Wednesday at Pagla bus stand in Narayanganj was sent to Dhaka Thursday night for quizzing at the Joint Interrogation Cell (JIC).

After his arrest Ariful admitted to being involved in the planning of the August 17 bomb blasts in Narayanganj and also disclosed some sensational information about JMB and its operations, police sources said.

Ariful, who hails from Shibpur of Narsingdi, was produced before a court amid tight security. The court put him on a seven-day police remand.

Meanwhile, five suspected JMB militants arrested Tuesday afternoon at a house in Tamaruddi under Hatia upazila were taken on three-day demand on Thursday for interrogation, reports UNB.

They were identified as Abu Taleb, 24, of Chittagong, Mizanur Rahman Dulal, 25, of Dinajpur, Mozammel Haq, 25, of Baguna, and Yusuf, 16, and Tarikul Islam, 20, of Bhola.

For this reason, Alam's former companions Masud, Saka Kabir and others recently threatened him over mobile phone, said Sela.

No case was filed and nobody was arrested in this connection until 8:00pm last night.

In another incident, Tejgaon police recovered the body of an unidentified young man wrapped in a sack from the Farmgate Park in the city and sent it to the DMCH morgue for autopsy.

The police suspected that miscreants had murdered the person aged about 20 somewhere around and left the body in the park at night.

Morgue sources said marks of stabbing were found on the youth's neck and wrist.

A murder case was filed with the Tejgaon Police Station in this regard.

## Dense fog

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or in the mid-river, causing a severe traffic congestion and acute suffering to the passengers.

According to the officials of Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Corporation (BIWTC), two ferries--Shah Mokhund and Bir Shrestha Jahangir--were forced to anchor in the middle of the river while other ferries--Shah Paran, Shah Ali, Keramat Ali and Bir Shrestha Hamidur Rahman--tied up at Paturia ghat.

The ferry services resumed at 9:00am yesterday.

Our Barisal correspondent reported that dense fog hampered ferry and launch services on the river routes on the Meghna yesterday.

Three passenger launches--MV Suravi-6 and 7 and MV Tipu--plying the Dhaka-Barisal route reached Barisal, delaying two hours.

MV Modern and M V Parabat-6 plying the Dhaka-Hularhur route were delayed by four to six hours to reach Banaripara station.

Crews and passengers of the launches said the dense fog forced the water craft to anchor at different points of Hizla Channel, Baher Char and other spots on the Meghna for several hours.

Ferry services were also delayed for hours at different points.

## Bangla Bhai

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mander who led the operations in Rajshahi, told The Daily Star over telephone yesterday.

Sources in the intelligence agencies have also confirmed the use of the government vehicle by Bangla Bhai and other militants.

The JMB commander said Bangla Bhai was one of 12 key figures, who attended a meeting at the residence of a deputy minister in the region on April 10 last year.

He however did not say whether JMB chief Abdul Rahman attended the meeting.

He also refused to give details about the meeting, but admitted that it assured them of full administrative support.

Following the meeting, the deputy minister and some important personalities of the ruling party extended their top against the deputy minister and others.

The 'promise-breakers' would face the same actions now being launched against the judges, he added.

Rajapakse, who is allied to hardline Marxists and Buddhists who hate the Tigers and is unlikely to back down, told parliament he opposed the LTTE's demand for a separate state.

## Oceans, greenhouse

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come mainly from burning coal and other fossil fuels in power plants, factories and automobiles.

Miller and his colleagues analysed five 500-meter (1,650-foot) deep samples to look for fossils, sediment types and variations in chemical composition, giving them data on the past 100 million years.

They also analysed data from satellite shoreline markers and by gauging ocean tides, among other measures.

"It allows us to understand the mechanisms of sea level change before humans intervened," Miller said in an interview.

His team did not determine whether the rate is accelerating.

The research, funded mostly by the National Science Foundation, also found ocean levels were lower during the dinosaur era than previously thought. They were about 100 meters (330 feet) higher than now, not 250 meters (820 feet) as many geologists had thought, Miller said.

Measurements also showed that, while many scientists had thought polar ice caps did not exist before 15 million years ago, frozen water at the poles did form periodically.

"We believe the ice sheet was not around all the time. It was only around during cool snaps of the climate," Miller said.

Another report published in Science, European researchers using three large samples of polar cap ice found carbon dioxide levels were stable until 200 years ago.

"Today's rise is about 200 times faster than any rise recorded" in the samples, study author Thomas Stocker said in an e-mail interview with Reuters.

The historic data "put the present rise of the last 200 years into a longer-term context," he added.

Trapped gas bubbles in the ice,

## Allow duty-free

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bodies, unions, rights organisations demanded transparency in the discussions to be held during the sixth WTO conference. Commerce ministers from 148 countries are expected to take part in the meet.

Expressing pessimism about the outcomes of the conference, they said the WTO seems to have turned into a body to serve the interest of the developed countries while depriving the LDCs of benefits of globalisation.

They urged the commerce minister of Bangladesh to play a robust role as a LDC member in the conference so that interests of the developing nations are better protected.

"In the name of open market, the developed countries are gaining unfair advantages over the LDCs," said Tofail Ahmed, former commerce minister and Awami League (AL) leader.

Jatiya Samajtajota Dal President Hasanul Huq Inu said the sixth conference would not be successful unless it ensures the access for less skilled especially women workers to the international labour market.

Nasrin Awal Mintu, president of Women Entrepreneur Association of Bangladesh (WEAB), said the business in LDCs like Bangladesh are losing markets due to open-market policies.

These times of trial have brought us together as they have also shown how vulnerable we can be alone and yet how much more we can do together," she said.

Turning to poverty, the queen noted that while there had been progress in achieving the UN millennium development goals, which seek to halve poverty by 2015, there was "greater and more sober recognition that much still remains to be done if the goals are to be achieved by 2015."

"There are development challenges that weigh heavily upon so many of our members. It is our collective responsibility to help," she said.

Queen Elizabeth also hailed the spirit of solidarity binding the Commonwealth yesterday that is set to put its full weight behind a new global trade deal to help combat poverty.

The British monarch praised members of the Commonwealth for their generosity and aid after last December's tsunami in Asia, the London bombings in July and the devastating earthquake in Pakistan in October.

These times of trial have brought us together as they have also shown how vulnerable we can be alone and yet how much more we can do together," she said.

The three-day summit is to make a strong push for progress in tearing down trade barriers at next month's World Trade Organisation (WTO) talks in Hong Kong and give poor countries greater access to rich markets.

"We joined together in the struggle against apartheid at the end of the last century. Now it is the scandal of poverty that demands our attention," said Commonwealth Secretary General Don McKinnon.

"Trade is not just an engine for economic growth but is the most potent weapon to combat poverty," he said.

McKinnon asserted that achieving a fair global trade deal "is a test of Commonwealth leadership," warning: "If we can give the WTO the shot in the arm it requires, then our organisation will have shown again its global worth."

The Commonwealth -- which together represent some 1.8 billion people and one fifth of the world's trade -- is a loose collection of mainly former British colonies including wealthy Canada and Australia, as well as poor Sri Lanka and Malawi.

Developing countries will urge British Prime Minister Tony Blair, attending the summit, to press the European Union for further cuts in farm subsidies at the WTO talks in Hong Kong in three weeks' time.

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On whether he would raise the issue in the party's highest policymaking level, the senior leader said they did not meet in the last four years to discuss how the country should be run.

"The cabinet is above the party policymakers. They do not have any role over the cabinet," he said.

He said he had not damaged the image of the BNP and the government made the itself.

When his attention was drawn to the rumour of his arrest that was spread in the capital yesterday, Hena said, "I am not anxious about this. I'm not a criminal."

## Hena's expulsion

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right