

## US wants

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tougher anti-money laundering bill. He urged the authorities concern to formulate the bill in a way that facilitates apprehending and punishing the money-launderers and terrorist financiers.

Although the government has succeeded in nabbing some militant kingpins, it is yet to trace their sources or networks of finance, the assistant secretary pointed out.

O'Brien also conveyed the US interest in providing technical assistance to the proposed Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU) to be set up in Bangladesh Bank (BB).

After his meeting with BB Governor Salehuddin Ahmed yesterday, O'Brien did not disclose any significant information to reporters on the purpose of his visit and the issues he had discussed.

However, the American Center in Dhaka in a press statement said O'Brien talked terrorist financing and money laundering issues with the government.

According to the statement, "The talks were constructive. The two sides discussed Bangladesh's efforts to strengthen its legal framework for dealing with terrorist financing and money laundering, which is part of a broader US Government commitment to support Bangladesh in combating terrorism and preventing terrorists from using Bangladesh as a venue or a conduit for terrorist actions."

The BB governor also told the press that their discussion was on issues related to terrorist financing and financial crimes. The central bank apprised O'Brien of what it has been doing in this regard, Salehuddin said, adding O'Brien also offered technical assistance for the proposed FIU.

Washington has been pressuring Dhaka since 2002 to amend the existing Anti-Money Laundering Act. The US government also has been offering technical and financial support for strengthening the BB activities to curb money laundering and terrorist financing. A number of US experts have already visited Bangladesh and held discussions with the central bank and government officials concerned.

Following the recent upsurge of Islamist militant activities across the country, the BB could only detect some bank accounts used for suspic-

cious monetary transactions but failed to trace the sources of the funds.

"We could not find out information beyond the suspicious nature of the transactions," said a BB source, "and so far have forwarded over a hundred such cases to the Criminal Investigation Department of police." But, there has been little progress in investigating those cases, he added.

The existing Anti-Money Laundering Act has many weaknesses. For example, it has shortcomings in investigation modality and punitive provisions. That is why, though the central bank found involvement of some banks in terrorist financing, it could not penalise them except fining Tk 1 lakh at the highest.

Following the US government's insistence to refurbish the law in line with its counterparts in other countries and a lot of examinations, the finance ministry drafted and sent a new Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing Prevention Act to the cabinet a couple of months ago. But, the cabinet sent it back for further scrutiny and revision.

Then, a recent inter-ministerial meeting decided to amend the existing law, instead of introducing a new one. The process of drafting the amendments has been going on for a long time now.

There was a proposal for creating a separate Financial Crime Investigation and Prosecution Office in the draft Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing Prevention Act, but the inter-ministerial meeting struck it off from the draft.

If such an office cannot be formed it will not be possible for the CID to investigate into financial crimes, sources said.

But, a central bank source said no law is needed for setting up such an office; the government can do it through an executive order.

Meanwhile, according to a BDNews report, the US assistant secretary also called on State Minister for Home Lutfuzzaman Babar yesterday. But the report did not give any further information on the meeting.

## Musharraf eyes another term okayed by parliament

REUTERS, Islamabad

Pakistan's President Pervez Musharraf said he could be voted in for a second five-year term by the current parliament before its dissolution for general elections due at the end of 2007 or start of 2008.

Musharraf's current term expires next year and a debate has been going on in the media over whether the president, who came to power in a military coup over six years ago, could be re-elected by the present parliament and provincial assemblies or those formed after the general elections.

"You read the constitution. It is very clear... when the tenure of the president ends, as mine will do on Nov. 15, 2007, a minimum of one month before, or a maximum two months before, an election should be held for me again," Musharraf told Avi Khyber Television in an interview, parts of which were aired on Thursday.

"It means it (the presidential election) will be held between Sept. 15 and Oct. 15. There are no ifs or buts in the constitution," Musharraf told the private Pashto language channel. The interview will be aired in full on Friday.

Musharraf did not say categorically whether he would seek re-election from the current parliament or the new one formed after the general election, but a senior government official said the time period mentioned by Musharraf for the presidential election showed that it would be done by the current parliament.

"Technically, it will be done by the existing assemblies because general elections will be held after that period," the official told Reuters on condition of anonymity.

Musharraf is widely expected to be re-elected given the majorities his allies enjoy in parliament and the provincial legislatures.

Under Pakistan's constitution, the two houses of parliament -- the National Assembly and Senate -- as well as four provincial legislatures elect the president.

Musharraf's remarks came as opposition parties moved to strengthen alliances in preparation for the coming general election.

Two exiled former prime ministers Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif last week vowed to work together by signing a "charter of democracy" in London and said they would return to Pakistan together before the elections.

Musharraf was first elected as president through a referendum in 2002, that his opponents say was rigged.

Later in 2003, he won parliament's endorsement and obtained sweeping powers through amendments to the constitution as part of a deal with Islamist opposition parties in return for a pledge that he would give up his role as army chief by the end of 2004.

However, he later reneged on his pledge, saying his role in the U.S.-led war on terrorism and peace moves to rival India made it necessary to remain as head of the army in Bangladesh, it noted.

There is now heated speculation over whether Musharraf, who has survived several assassination attempts, will give up his uniform after 2007.

## Verdict

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Both were present in the court and made submissions on behalf of themselves as well as the other accused.

After completion of arguments from the prosecution and the defence, Public Prosecutor (PP) Advocate Haider Hossain yesterday made submissions on the statements of witnesses and confessional statements of the accused. He demanded capital punishment of the accused.

Abdur Rahman requested the court not to make hurry in the trial of the case and demanded formation of a jury board comprising Islamic thinkers for the trial.

Criticising the government, he said it has hired some Islamic-minded people and is forcing them to speak against us."

Rahman further said a major obstacle to implementation of Islamic rule is democracy, and parties that want Islamic rule are also working for it (democracy). Instead of uniting people for 'jihad', these parties have gone for 'vote battle', he added.

Bangla Bhai said he had protested corruption of police in Bagmara in the northern part of the country. A section of police officials used to back 'extremist forces' who had created a reign of terror in the area by killing people and raping women.

Bangla Bhai said he had formed Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh (JMB) to ensure security of people of the area and later joined the JMB.

About jail authorities, he said, "We shall wage a movement in all the jails if chains of our leader Abdur Rahman are not removed."

JMB operations commander Sunny and top leader Awal are also among the accused. All the accused sang their party song while walking towards the prison van after the court proceedings.

State-appointed defence counsel Siddique Hossain pleaded that one of the accused, Sultan Hossain Khan of Jhalakathi, is innocent.

Senior assistant judges Sohel Ahmed and Jagannath Pande were present.

Abdus Sattar, Sumi's father, filed a case accusing the six with the 75kg heroin in the UK on 14 August 2000.

They knocked on the window of Sumi's room. They told her that her beloved Alam was waiting for her near her house and they went there to take her to him. The gang took her to a nearby crop field. "My accomplices and I raped her one by one," convict Milon added. She was tied up and strangled to death later.

Badrudzoza was arrested on May 14 following the confessions of his two accomplices to have smuggled 75kg heroin to the UK under cover of export consignments.

## 6 to die

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and his accomplices went to Sumi's house around 11:00pm on 13 August 2000.

He urged the authorities to refrain from "harassing" Badrudoza and provide him with necessary medicine and diet under police custody.

On May 15, the court of Metropolitan Magistrate, Dhaka, placed him on seven days' remand for interrogation, turning down his bail.

Badrudoza was arrested on May 14 following the confessions of his two accomplices to have smuggled 75kg heroin to the UK under cover of export consignments.

## BAIL PETITION REJECTED

The High Court yesterday rejected an application filed by Badrudoza for staying a lower-court order of remand for quizzing him over heroin smuggling, reports UNB.

However, the HC division bench asked the authorities to refrain from "harassing" Badrudoza and provide him with necessary medicine and diet under police custody.

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