

Rahman, Bangla Bhai

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condemned JMB Majlish-e-Shura member Khaled Saifullah and suicide bomber Iftekhar al Mamun submitted jail appeal against death penalty, for staying the execution.

Meanwhile, Additional Attorney General Abdur Rezzak Khan described the letters as jail petition and said the SC will decide whether to consider them as appeals against the verdict or not.

Of the seven condemned JMB men, only Majlish-e-Shura members Ataur Rahman Sunny and Abdul Awal are yet to submit any petition for appeal. The stipulated seven-day time for submitting such petition has already expired since they were read out the warrant for execution last Friday.

One of the seven JMB men has been absconding. Inspector General of Prisons Brigadier General Zakir Hasan said yesterday they will now fix the date for execution of the condemned who have not yet sought to appeal against the verdict. "We will inform them about it later," he told The Daily Star.

Asked about the possible date of execution, he said, "Since there is a government circular for avoiding execution during the Ramadan, the execution will take place after the Ramadan."

Sunny and Awal still have the opportunity to seek to appeal against their execution, Zakir said. "They can submit an appeal in written within the noon on the day of execution. We will send it to the court immediately once we receive any such appeal."

CONTENT OF THE LETTERS
Referring to verses in the Quran and Hadith and the Islamic history, Abdur Rahman and Bangla Bhai said in their letters that they were out with a mission for Jihad to establish Islamic rule in the country.

"It is obligatory to hold an armed Jihad to establish Islamic rule in the territory of Muslims where it is absent," Rahman said in his seven-page handwritten letter, adding that those who are teaching Muslims about democracy instead of Jihad are oblivious that they are rather strengthening the kafirs (infidels).

"Some say that it is not justified to kill Muslims for establishing Islamic rule. They make up such notion to keep the Muslims away from the rule of Allah," he said, adding, "Those who seek justice from others without following the examples of the prophet [Hazrat Mohammad (SM)] deserve no less punishment than killing."

Nowhere in his letter Rahman

AL, BNP

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My preparations for the talks are almost completed," Jallil, also coordinator of the 14-party combine, told newsmen at his Mercantile Bank office yesterday.

Bhuiyan, also LGRD and cooperatives minister, last night met a number of senior ministers at his official residence. He will sit with the secretaries-general of ruling coalition partners today to discuss different aspects of the proposed dialogue.

A party insider claimed that BNP's strategies have already been finalised at a meeting between Bhuiyan and Senior Joint Secretary General Tarique Rahman on Saturday night. Those strategies were discussed at the BNP secretary general's meeting with the senior ministers last night.

Bijoya Dashami

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"Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) picked Waiz Ghat on the bank of river Buriganga as the place from where the idols will be immersed in the river," he added.

Thousands of Hindu devotees yesterday observed Mahanabami with great festivity at all puja mandaps in the city as elsewhere in the country. Devi Durga was offered the Nabami Bhog of food and fruits which was later distributed among the devotees visiting the mandaps.

Bijoya Dashami is the special ceremony to reaffirm peace and good relations among people. Families visit each other to share sweets during the Dashami festivities. Married Hindu women put vermilion (sindur) on each other's forehead on the eve of Dashami.

The Hindus believe Dashami is the day when Goddess Durga accompanied by her children Lakshmi, Saraswati, Kartik and Ganesh started for Kailash, her husband's abode. Mahalaya, the first day of the festivities, is followed by a series of unique rituals on the days of Sashti, Saptami, Ashtami, Nabami and Dashami or Bijoya Dashami.

Festivities intensify on the days of Mahasaptami, Mahashtami and Mahanabami, culminating in Bijoya Dashami, which marks the end of Durga Puja.

Durga Puja, the greatest extravaganza of the Hindus, is the worship of 'shakti' or divine power symbolised by Devi Durga. The worship is a tribute to the fight between good and evil with the dark forces eventually succumbing to the divine.

President Iajuddin Ahmed and Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday

sought any relief from the death penalty or opportunity to appeal against it.

Despising the court that held his trial as "Taguti", Bangla Bhai in his letter reaffirmed that he will not submit any appeal to any such court for exemption from execution.

"I would seek justice if an Islamic Shariah board is formed to hold the hearing of the case," Bangla Bhai said in the six-page letter.

He asked the SC to allow him to appear before it and place his "logic to uncover a group of conspirator".

Blaming the judges for handing them death penalty "through a farcical trial on the basis of British laws and false witnesses", he said, "I think you [judges] have shown the proof of your disloyalty to Allah. You should be given the death penalty."

"According to Islamic rules, you are guilty of a crime by being judges of the Taguti laws and deserve death."

In the wake of a series of violent militant attacks across the country, senior assistant judges Jagannath Pandey and Sohel Ahmed were killed in a suicide bomb attack at Purba Chadkati in Jhalakathi town on November 14 last year.

Additional District and Sessions Judge of Jhalakathi Reza Tarik Ahmed on May 29 ordered for hanging Rahman, Bangla Bhai, Sunny, Awal, Khaled Saifullah, Mamun and Asadul Islam alias Arif until death.

The High Court confirmed the death sentences on August 31.

As the militants earlier said they will not appeal to any "worldly court" against the penalty, the government hurried to complete the hearing at the death reference bench hoping to execute the verdict before handing over power.

But following the SC registrar's letters stating the executions of Rahman, Bangla Bhai, Saifullah and Mamun, the four cannot be executed during the ruling government's tenure as it will now take more time before the matter is disposed off at the Supreme Court.

Rallies

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as fasting people scrambled for any available transport to reach home from workplaces," said a traffic sergeant.

He, however, said apart from the political rallies the situation had been aggravated in the month of Ramadan as many poor and low-income people poured into the capital. "They moved into the city during the month of Ramadan to earn extra money by taking up odd jobs like pulling rickshaws."

"I had to spend additional two hours to come to Mirpur from Motijheel due to the traffic jam," said Kabir Ahmed, an employee at a private firm.

He expressed his resentment at the authorities' failure to tackle the traffic situation. "It seems that the authorities concerned do not bother about our problem."

"I have waited for over one and half hours near Kakrail intersection as my vehicle was almost standstill. Then, I had to walk for my destination to Rampura," said one Iqbal Hossain.

He said traffic in the city has been bad since the start of Ramadan, but yesterday's situation was the worst.

All NGOs

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told the reporters after the first meeting of the board yesterday.

The micro-credit operators will also have to include all income and expenditure statements, details of foreign donations and local sources of funds with the applications and also have to pay the licence and annual fees.

The meeting also formed a five-member technical committee for preparing a policy guideline for monitoring micro-credit activities with deputy managing director of Palli Karma Sahayak Foundation (PKSF) as the convener. Two central bank officials and one representative from each of NGO Bureau and law ministry will be included in the committee.

The MRA will look into the interest rates of the different micro-credit organisations after it starts working in full swing, apart from issuing a guideline in this regard, Dr Salehuddin said.

The Micro-credit Regulatory Authority Act 2006 was passed in July, with effect from August 27.

An eight-member board was formed last month with Executive Director of Bangladesh Bank Khondokar Majharul Huq as chief executive officer.

Finance, commerce and social welfare secretaries, director general of NGO Bureau and managing director of PKSF will be ex-officio members of MRA, with Rashidan Islam Rahman, research director of Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS) as another member of the board.

1 killed

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Trying to flee, Abdul Awal, 35, vice president of Merung Uttar Union Awami League, was drowned.

Aggrieved relatives of the deceased AL leader damaged the puja mandap.

However, the statue of Durga remained intact. Dighinala upazila Awami League Secretary Abul Kasem and witnesses said police went there to take bribes.

The body was sent to Khagrachhari Adhunik Sadar Hospital for autopsy.

At least 10 people were injured in a clash over watching blue film on the same night.

Seriously injured Mainul Hoque, 45, a naika of Khagrachhari police, was admitted to Khagrachhari Adhunik Sadar Hospital.

Some people of Pancha Mail area were watching a blue film for Tk 5 tickets beside a shop near a puja mandap when a group of youths came in a jeep and tried to enter the shop without any payment, police and locals said.

After they were denied entrance without ticket, they attacked the locals who retaliated using lathi, knives and bricks.

Police beat the attackers and shot in the air to control the situation, witnesses said.

At least 10 were injured in the incident but they were not admitted to hospital in fear of arrest, locals said.

Tarun Kumar Battacharya, secretary of the local Puja Udjapon Committee, said they urged the administration to take proper action as they apprehended attack on the minority community.

Sufficient policemen have been deployed in all puja mandaps from the very first day of the puja and security has been provided for the minority community, Khagrachhari police superintendent said.

Govt gives in

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Operation of essential air-conditioning and lifting system at shopping malls while the market owners will operate their standby generators for keeping their lights on.

The meeting decided to form area-wise coordination committees comprising three members from among the shop owners and another three from local power offices to execute and monitor the decisions.

Presidents of Bangladesh Shop Owners Association Amir Hossain and Dhaka City Shop Owners Association Helal Uddin Helal spoke at the meeting.

Meanwhile, unit-1 of the 450MW Meghnaghat power hub was set for scheduled maintenance from Sunday midnight, giving another knock to the country's erratic power-supply situation.

Power Development Board (PDB) Chairman ANM Rizwan admitted that the shutdown of Meghnaghat plant would "seriously affect" the power supply as the total generation output will fall below 3,000 MW against the demand for 5,000 MW.

"The shutdown of Meghnaghat plant may attribute to a decrease in voltage and create a frequency problem," Rizwan told UNB.

He said it is unlikely that the situation would improve before next week when two closed power plants may resume operation.

Aziz silent

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sources at the EC Secretariat said.

MA Aziz led EC arranged dialogues with political parties last year over the preparation of voter list, but the opposition combine boycotted it as they rejected appointment of Aziz as the CEC.

Talukder's removal

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However, the provisions have not been followed while removing Talukder as the PM neither requested him to resign nor advised the president to terminate his appointment.

Talukder told the media several times that he was not asked to resign from his post; rather, he decided to resign consciously taking all responsibilities for the failures in the power sector.

Just hours after his Friday announcement to resign the next day, the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) relieved Talukder of his office at late night.

State-owned news agency BSS disclosed the dismissal at 10:22pm on Friday quoting a PMO source. A late night government handout also said the state minister was removed from his post.

Asked if the state minister resigned or was removed from the post, Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Moudud Ahmed yesterday said he does not exactly know about it.

"I cannot tell what happened as I was in my constituency on that day," Moudud told reporters while leaving the parliament premises.

Avoiding answering the reporters' questions, the law minister advised them to ask Talukder about the matter. "He [Talukder] may even make a statement in parliament about it as a lawmaker," he said.

Moudud said there is no specific and proper system for ending the tenure of a minister's office. "A minister can resign or be removed

from the post," said the law minister who responded to the query of an Awami League (AL) lawmaker on Talukder's removal in parliament yesterday.

AL lawmaker Suranjit Sengupta on a point of order in parliament yesterday congratulated Talukder upon his resignation taking responsibilities for the failures in the power sector.

"What will happen to the minister in charge of the Ministry of Power, Energy and Mineral Resources when its state minister resigns admitting the failures in the sector?" Suranjit said pointing to the PM who is in charge of the power ministry.

"Isn't the resignation of the state minister a symbolic resignation of the prime minister too?" he said amid repeated interruption by the Speaker.

Speaker Jamiruddin Sircar ultimately switched off the AL lawmaker's microphone, saying the state minister "has resigned on his own".

On another point of order, AL lawmaker Faruk Khan said people in his constituency welcomed the state minister's resignation and they now demand for the resignation of the PM.

In reply, the Speaker said there is no provision obliging the PM to resign since the state minister has resigned.

Lawmakers of the ruling alliance, however, did not counter the AL lawmakers' speech.

Sircar rejects

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an AL rally, and proposed reforms in the caretaker government system and Election Commission.

But the speaker accepted none of the notices neither had he allowed any formal discussion on any of the topics throughout the current session of parliament.

"I hope the government will take steps to control prices of essentials and corruption," the speaker told the House while scrapping the notices.

In defence of his decision of not allowing any discussion on the topics, the speaker categorically said the issues of August 21 grenade attack, killing of former finance minister Shah ASM Kibria, Kansat killings, and grenade attack on British High Commissioner Anwar Chowdhury are not current affairs.

About the killings in Phulbaria, the speaker said the government took steps and the situation there is peaceful now.

About other issues, the speaker said contents of some of the notices were not clear and the contents of many had been discussed on points of order in the current session.

Apart from the AL lawmakers, Jatiya Party (JP) Lawmaker Mashiur Rahman Ranga submitted seven notices demanding discussions on price hike of essentials, crises of diesel and power supply, and Phulbaria killings.

AL lawmakers Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim, Mohammad Nasim, Rahmat Ali, Faruk Khan, Shajahan Khan, Mustafizur Rahman, Shamsur Rahman

Sharif, Atiur Rahman Atik and Ponchanon Biswas had submitted notices from the main opposition, who kept on raising the issues on points of order.

AL lawmaker Rahmat Ali on a point of order yesterday said the government has completely failed to control skyrocketing prices of essentials. "The people are starving due to the price hike," he added.

In response Speaker Jamiruddin Sircar said the people will give their verdict on whether the government has failed.

AL lawmaker Faruk Khan on a separate point of order blasted the government for acute crisis of power supply.

But BNP lawmaker Shahidul Islam who is also the chairman of parliamentary standing committee on power, energy and mineral resources ministry on a point of order denied 'severe power crisis'.

JP WALKS OUT

Ershad led JP, the second largest opposition in parliament, walked out of the House alleging that the government is reluctant to implement the demands for declaring Rangpur as a division and for establishing an educational board there.

Rawshan Ershad, leader of JP parliamentary party, led the walk out raising their demands on a point of order. The JP lawmakers however returned to the House after 10 minutes.

Harbin blacklisted

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But the government brushed aside the review committee's decision.

While Harbin's performance in the Tongji plant that tripped around 90 times from May last year is enough to blacklist this company from all power projects in the country, the government so far took no action against it.

However the ERL, also a government owned body, has taken a tough stance against Harbin for the first time.

"It only proves that Harbin can not even set up a small power plant," noted an expert of the power sector.

In a letter to Harbin in August, the ERL wrote that Harbin has failed to bring its steam turbine generating system to the 'final acceptance state as stipulated in the contract'.

"In fact, (the) steam turbine generating system supplied by you [Harbin], could not be run reliably even at considerably lower than rated load on continuous running basis since Provisional Acceptance," it added.

The letter noted that to rectify inherent faults and to make the system operational, Harbin kept its experts with the ERL for almost two years, but failed to improve anything. It could not even integrate the plant with ERL's existing power generation units.

Keeping the tradition of Harbin's Tongji plant, the ERL plant also tripped frequently and brought misery to the operation of ERL that processes crude oil and produces refined petroleum.

"The purpose of installing this plant was to ensure uninterrupted power supply at the refinery. But that has not been served," said a source quoting the ERL letter.

The ERL letter added, "Failure to deliver the required performance of the said steam turbine generation

FM to talk direct road link in Myanmar

Flies there Oct 5

UNB, Dhaka

Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan will visit Myanmar on October 5-7 at the invitation of his Myanmar counterpart U Nyan Win.

Direct road link, repatriation of the remaining Rohingya refugees and bilateral trade would come up at the official talks between the two foreign ministers.

Morshed will return home today after leading the Bangladesh delegation at the NAM Summit in Havana and attending the 61st UN General Assembly session in New York.

Officials said a last-ditch effort would be made during the visit to pursue Yangon to sign an agreement for establishing proposed road link between Bangladesh and Myanmar.

The 153-km road is considered a major component of the 'Look East policy' of the present government, which was launched in 2002 to strengthen ties with countries in Southeast Asia, especially with China.

The officials said Yangon has been lukewarm in implementing the road link project despite Dhaka's repeated attempts to sign an agreement in this regard.

Yangon has promised several times to finalise the agreement in the last three years, but it has not been implemented so far.

The proposed road will stretch from Taungbro to Kyauktaw in Myanmar via Ramu-Gundom to Cox's Bazar in Bangladesh. It is planned to be constructed in two phases at an estimated cost of Tk 933.46 crore.

The Bangladesh government, according to the plan, will construct a 43-km stretch of the road in the first phase, of which 20km will be in Bangladesh and 23km in Myanmar.

MUMBAI BLASTS

India to give Pakistan proof of ISI role

AFP, New Delhi

India said yesterday it would give evidence to Pakistan about the alleged involvement of its spy agency and militant groups in the deadly Mumbai train bombings in July.

Foreign Secretary Shiv Shankar Menon said the country would hand over evidence gathered by police showing the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) agency and Pakistan-backed Lashkar-e-Taiba helped plant the bombs that killed 186 people.

Menon, who most recently served as ambassador to Pakistan, said that Islamabad's repeated denial of any involvement in the blasts would have to be reassessed after it reviewed the evidence and that India would 'judge it by its actions'.

Last month, India and Pakistan agreed to share intelligence on terrorist activities in the region when Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf met on the sidelines of a summit in Cuba.

India's decision to hand over evidence gathered by police would be the first test of the agreement which came after New Delhi delayed high-level peace talks in response to the July 11 bombings.

On Saturday, Indian police in Mumbai said that interrogations of suspects arrested in the case revealed "a professional, precise and well-planned operation" with links to Pakistan's intelligence agency and the outlawed Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT).

Islamabad Saturday immediately rejected claims of ISI involvement as "totally baseless".

"This is a totally baseless and fabricated allegation and we reject it," Interior Minister Atiab Sherpao told AFP.

Militant Kashmiri and Islamist group LeT, blamed for previous attacks in India, has also denied involvement in the July bombings.

The new allegations came after Musharraf last week visited Washington where US President George W. Bush praised the military's leader's efforts in fighting terrorism.

Altogether, police have arrested 15 people in connection with the blasts, although three of them may be released. "The role of 12 people has been directly established," Mumbai police commissioner AN Roy said.

Malaysia hunting

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Mohamed told AFP on Sunday.

Iskahn said every worker brought into the country was forced to pay up to 18,000 ringgit (5,140 dollars) to these illegal agents.

"These agents are usually Bangladeshis themselves. They go to the slums and villages and lure these poor people by promising them jobs in air-conditioned buildings," Iskahn said.

"The villagers end up paying them a fortune, mortgage their property and everything they own to work here and then they end up slogging in construction sites to pay off their debts back home," he said.

Iskahn said the government had set up one agent in Malaysia - Baira Malaysia - to handle the import of workers from Bangladesh to counter the problem of unscrupulous agents.

Malaysian companies hiring Bangladeshis workers would have to pay 1,200 dollars per worker to the Malaysian agent, which covers the processing fees involved to bring them here.

Malaysia in August had lifted a ban on hiring foreign labourers from Bangladesh which has been in place since 1996.

Malaysia relies on foreign workers to power its construction and agriculture sectors, making up about 2.6 million of the country's 10.5 million workforce.

Hasina spells out

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October 1, 2001 general elections. "If they had not rigged the 2001 election, the country would not have witnessed the series of violence especially on the minorities," Hasina said.

Reiterating her stance that no election would be allowed to be held in the country without the implementation of the proposed electoral reforms, Hasina urged Prime Minister Khaleda Zia to give up plans to rig the elections and accept the opposition's reforms proposal.

On the secretaries-general level dialogue to resolve the reforms dispute, the AL chief said it was their political victory as they would not have to sit with Jamaat-e-Islami in the dialogue. She said the dialogue between the government and opposition parties is important for the nation under the present circumstances, adding that, the 14-party's movement will continue alongside the dialogue.

Hasina categorically said Justice KM Hasan, the probable chief adviser to the caretaker government, cannot be a neutral person as he is BNP

partisan. The AL chief alleged one crore 40 lakh fake voters have been included in the current voter list, 300 upazila election officers have been politically appointed. She said the ruling party hatched multiple conspiracies to rig the election and to come back to power fearing people will not vote for them.

Urging all to protect their right to vote, the former prime minister castigated the BNP-Jamaat government for the price hike of essentials, power crisis, politicisation of the administration, and extra-judicial killings.

Opposition leaders Abdul Jalil Hasanul Haque Inu, Motia Chowdhury, Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim, Abdul Mannan, Akhtaruzzaman and Mofazzal Hossain Chowdhury Maya, Bimal Biswas, former president of Supreme Court Bar Association Mahbub-e-Alam and Editor of Bangladesh Observer Iqbal Sobhan Chowdhury also participated in the discussion.

Israel completes

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the commander of the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (Unifil) was due to meet Lebanese and Israeli officials on the border soon to verify the withdrawal.

The headlights of tanks lit up clouds of dust as they crossed back into Israel past coils of barbed wire. Returning soldiers whipped out mobile phones to call home.

Israel's army chief, Major-General Dan Halutz, said that all troops had quit Lebanon except for some who would remain on the Lebanese side of the divided border village of Ghajar until security arrangements were finalized.

But Halutz cautioned in an interview with Israel Radio that Israel would take further action in Lebanon if Hezbollah moved back to the frontier zone.

"If armed Hezbollah men move to the border, and try to reestablish their infrastructure, we will act to prevent it," Halutz said.

Around 1,200 Lebanese, mostly civilians, and 157 Israelis, mostly soldiers, were killed in the fighting -- the worst since Israel's 1982 invasion.

The war overshadowed an Israeli offensive in Gaza launched after the June 25 capture of a soldier in a cross-border raid. Halutz said Israel is considering intensifying strikes in Gaza by "more continued and deeper ground action."

Although the war in Lebanon had widespread support in Israel, support for Prime Minister Ehud Olmert has since tumbled because of the army's failure to crush Hezbollah.

Thai premier

FROM PAGE 16
"I will act on my own conscience as prime minister," Surayud added.

Even though Surayud has a reputation as a military reformer and a man of integrity, analysts warned that his appointment and the military-imposed constitution signal the junta has no intention of letting go of power any time soon.

"This constitution is a step backward, away from democracy," warned Prinya Thaeawanarumikul, a political science professor at Thammasat University.

"If the new constitution does not look good, the people will hold the (military) council responsible."

The junta has insisted that they staged the coup in support of democracy, which they say had been undermined by endemic corruption during Thaksin's five years in office.

But now the generals will have to overcome at least the perception that the premier's office has become little more than an extension of the military.

That concern has already been voiced by the United States, Thailand's top trade partner and a close ally, which last week suspended 24 million dollars in military aid in protest at the coup.

"He (Surayud) is well known for being honest, politically neutral, and consistent, which makes Surayud well-suited for the position," said Sukhum Chaleysub of Rajabhat Suan Dusit University.

"However, now I think we need to focus more on the cabinet. If people with experience are in the cabinet, rather than people in uniform, that will draw less criticism to the government," he said.

Surayud, who was sworn in Sunday afternoon in a brief ceremony at Government House, is a career soldier who won respect for professionalising the armed forces after he became army chief in 1998.

He had previously spoken out against the military playing a role in Thai politics after troops under his command shot dead more than 50 pro-democracy protesters in 1992.

Surayud later clashed with Thaksin and was sidelined in a less powerful post, before he retired in 2003.

He then joined the Privy Council, the king's inner circle of advisors, but had to quit that post in order to become prime minister.

His powers as premier will be sharply checked by the junta under the interim constitution that the king approved earlier Sunday.

The charter formalizes the junta's role in government by renaming them the Council for National Security, a body which will oversee the nation's defence and which has the power to sack the prime minister.

The military will also appoint all

250 members of the new parliament, and will approve all members of a new assembly tasked with writing a permanent constitution for Thailand before the promised elections.

The charter bars political parties from participating in