

# Bush signs harsh terror trial bill

REUTERS, Washington

President George W Bush signed a law yesterday authorizing tough interrogation and prosecution of terrorism suspects and took an indirect, election-year swipe at Democrats who opposed the legislation.

Bush, trying to help Republicans maintain control of the U.S. Congress by emphasizing national security, called the Military Commissions Act of 2006 "one of the most important pieces of legislation in the war on terror."

Human rights groups charge that the measure would allow harsh techniques bordering on torture, such as sleep deprivation and induced hypothermia.

In a White House East Room ceremony, Bush praised members of Congress who approved the law over the opposition of the Democratic leadership in both the Senate and House of Representatives.

"Every member of the Congress who voted for this bill has helped our nation rise to the task that history has given us. Some voted to support this bill even when a majority of their party voted the other way," Bush said.

Much of the new law, which critics say still does not protect detainees' rights and predict will face legal challenge, was negotiated in September after senior Republicans rebelled against Bush's plan.

The new law means Bush can continue a secret CIA program for interrogating terrorism suspects whom he believes have vital information that could thwart a plot against America.

Bush said the law will allow intelligence professionals to question suspects without fear of being sued by them later.

"This bill spells out specific recognizable offenses that would be considered crimes in the handling of detainees so that our men and women who question captured terrorists can perform their duties to the fullest extent of the law," he said.

# Razzaq restricts

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lead Pakistan's fightback, while spinners Shoaib Malik (2-34) and Shahid Afridi bowled tight in middle overs to end Sri Lanka's early flourish.

Sanath Jayasuriya (48), Kumar Sangakkara (39), Upul Tharanga (38), Marvan Atapattu (36), skipper Mahela Jayawardene (31) and Farveez Maharoof (22) all got starts, but none could convert into a big knock.

Jayawardene also became the fifth Sri Lankan to complete 6,000 runs in one-day internationals after Jayasuriya, Aravinda de Silva, Atapattu and Arjuna Ranatunga.

Sri Lanka could capitalise only on early overs after winning the toss as veteran left-handed opener Jayasuriya went on the rampage and dominated a 63-run stand for the opening wicket with in-form Tharanga.

Jayasuriya, making a joint-record 368th appearance in one-

The White House has refused to describe what techniques will be allowed or banned.

Critics and legal experts have predicted the new law will draw vigorous court challenges and could be struck down for violating rights guaranteed under the U.S. Constitution.

They cited provisions that strip foreign suspects of the right to challenge their detentions in U.S. courts and what they described as unfair rules for military trials.

Bush insisted the law complies with the spirit and letter of international agreements. "As I've said before, the United States does not torture. It's against our laws and it's against our values," he said.

The law also establishes military tribunals for terrorism suspects, most of whom are held at the U.S. military prison at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

The law was prompted by a Supreme Court ruling in June that said Bush lacked legislative authority in setting up his first system of military commissions. Future legal battles will likely end up in the high court.

Shortly after Bush signed the law, the Republican National Committee issued a press release headlined, "Democrats would let terrorists free" and listed the names of many House and Senate Democrats who opposed it.

The American Civil Liberties Union expressed outrage, calling the new law "one of the worst civil liberties measures ever enacted in American history."

"Nothing separates America more from our enemies than our commitment to fairness and the rule of law, but the bill signed today is an historic break because it turns Guantanamo Bay and other U.S. facilities into legal no-man's-lands," said ACLU Executive Director Anthony Romero.

## Hassan issue

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in accordance with the Constitution. And the president can go for other alternatives as per the Constitution if Hasan refuses to take oath.

In the context of the prevailing political situation, political observers are doubtful if the people would be able to celebrate the ensuing Eid-ul-Fitr in an atmosphere free from apprehension of political confrontations.

Some of them however expressed guarded optimism about success of the sixth round of parley between BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan and AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil scheduled for October 23. "The people will have a sigh of relief before the Eid if the two leaders can come up with the breaking news of resolving their differences over Hasan issue," one observer noted.

The dialogue that began on October 5 claimed progress after each round but finally on October 16 left the Hasan issue to be settled on return of the prime minister and the leader of the opposition. Khaleda returns from Saudi Arabia on October 21 and Hasina will be back from US on October 23.

Bhuiyan and Jalil resume talk on the day public holiday for the Eid begins—October 23. The Eid holiday ends on October 25 while the tenure of the present government expires on October 27.

Wrapping up the fifth round of negotiation on Monday, Bhuiyan and Jalil claimed they have reached a stage where they need approval of their respective party chiefs and consultation with their parties and alliances to finalise the decision.

But no one knows on which point they have reached a consensus as they did not give details about their talks. This has triggered apprehension in public mind whether the dialogue will be a success.

Many political analysts believe the dialogue may not reach any decision to break the stand off during the tenure of this government. To substantiate their belief, they noted that the ruling coalition does not want to see the opposition parties celebrate their political victory at the end of this government's tenure.

Besides, Beximco Engineering

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Judge SM Mujibur Rahman of the First Additional Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court handed down the sentence in presence of Aslam and three others at a packed courtroom.

The convicts are Abul, Babul, Shakil alias Shaikhya, Abul Mannan alias Roni, Babu alias Badal and Harun-Ur-Rashid. Of them, Shakil and Babu were present in the court during the delivery of the verdict while Abul, Babul, Mannan and Harun were tried in absentia. Another acquitted Anwaruzzaman alias Anwar is also in the custody.

In his verdict, the judge said that the prosecution failed to prove the allegations against the acquitted while the charges brought against other six were proved. The punishment of the fugitives will be effective from the day of their arrest or surrender, he added.

Earlier, the prosecution and the defence completed their arguments and the court recorded statements of 13 prosecution witnesses.

According to the prosecution, one of the accused, Mannan, called Mohammad Ali out of his house at East Rajabazar in the city's Tejgaon at about 11:30am on March 29, 1996 and took him to a nearby place where his accomplices Shakil, Abul, Babul, Babu and Harun shot him dead.

Victim's elder brother Delwar Hossain filed a murder case against Mannan and five others the same day and the investigation officer pressed charges against Sweden Aslam and seven others on February 10, 1998.

Court sources said, 14 other criminal cases are also pending with different courts in the city against Sweden Aslam.

The speaker had earlier pinned the same blame on the AL but it was rejected by the IPU.

"The investigation has been delayed due to non-cooperation of the Awami League," he asserted.

"The FBI, Scotland Yard and Interpol arrived in Bangladesh to investigate the grenade attack. But the Awami League did not appear or cooperate with the investigation agencies. So, they (investigation agencies) were unable to collect any evidence from the Awami League," he said.

Sources in the Jatiya Sangsads Secretariat said the speaker was scheduled to attend the Geneva IPU conference. The parliament secretariat was also making preparations in this regard, but Sircar suddenly cancelled his visit to Geneva and departed, he said.

The Bangladeshi government

constituted a high-powered judicial enquiry commission headed by Justice Joyinul Abedin. Many people appeared before the commission and gave testimony, but the AL leaders did not cooperate with the commission, he alleged.

Sircar, whose role in running parliament in the last five years has been questioned on neutrality grounds, had earlier communicated

to the IPU blaming the AL for non-cooperation.

But the IPU examined the facts and rejected his allegations against the AL. The IPU's findings were included in its resolution adopted by consensus by the IPU Governing Council at its 178th session in Nairobi, Kenya on May 12, 2006.

The speaker sent his letter to the IPU during its ongoing conference on October 16-18 in Geneva. In the reply he also lauded the government's initiatives to probe the grenade attack that killed 23 AL leaders and activists and injured several hundred including a number of lawmakers.

"The government of Bangladesh has made every effort to unearth the real culprits. Thorough investigation, by high officials of the home department is continuing. It is regrettable that neither at the investigation stage nor any other stage did Awami League leaders extend any manner of cooperation for a fully-fledged investigation," the speaker continued.

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