

## Death warrants

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(HC) judgment upholding the death sentences for killing two judges in a suicide bomb attack in Jhalakathi on November 14.

On Sunday and yesterday, the jail authorities read out the SC rejection to all the six condemned JMB men, in accordance with the jail code.

Inspector General (Prisons) Brig Gen Zakir Hasan told The Daily Star last night, "We will fix the date of execution within the next two or three days."

Out of the six condemned members of the fanatic Islamist militant group JMB, one of them is in Rangpur jail, one is held in Kashimpur Jail in Gazipur, and the rest are on death row in Dhaka. Another condemned JMB operative is currently absconding.

Jail authority sources said they are in a dilemma about whether they will follow the new jail code or the old one, because the two codes provide two different timeframes for carrying out executions after receiving court orders.

The jail authorities will seek the help of the law ministry to clarify the matter, said jail authority sources.

IG (Prisons) Zakir yesterday said, "We informed the home ministry today that we have received a copy of the Supreme Court order."

"We will fix a date for the executions in accordance with the code and then inform the home ministry," the IG said adding, "We will wait for the government to confirm the executions."

The old jail code stated, the jail authorities would also ask the condemned to inform the authorities in seven days if they want to petition the president for clemency.

If the condemned men petition for presidential clemency and the president turns it down, the jail authorities will fix a date for the executions within 21 to 28 days of receiving the president's decision.

In case the condemned decide not to file any petition for presidential clemency, the jail authorities will start counting down 28 days after the stipulated timeframe of seven-day for the petitions will be over, and will fix a date for their executions between 21 to 28 days. In that case if counted retroactively from yesterday the execution date will fall between February 12 and 18.

According to the new jail code, after the jail authorities receive the court order, they are bound to read out the order to the condemned, who are then provided 15 days to submit petitions for presidential clemency.

If the president rejects a petition then an execution is to be carried out within 21 to 28 days following the date of receipt of the president's decision by the jail authorities.

If the six condemned JMB men choose not to submit petitions for presidential clemency, then the execution dates will be fixed within 21 to 28 days following the date of receipt of the court order by the jail authorities, which was Sunday, January 21 in this specific case.

Sources said, the jail authorities will then inform the home ministry the dates of executions. The jail authorities will then have to wait for the government's decision up to 60 days.

If the government does not inform

## 14-party wants

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money holders to create a congenial atmosphere for a free and fair poll and build people's confidence in the polls process. He however urged the CG to ensure that 'innocent' political leaders and workers are not harassed.

Mentioning that the previous BNP-Jamaat coalition government had prepared a list of criminals based on political enmity, Jailed demanded its immediate cancellation. He also demanded that the CG prepare a fresh list of criminals and arrest them.

The 14-party coordinator said the whole nation now demands arrest of those people who have amassed crores of taka by looting public money, and created and patronised criminals to protect their illegal wealth.

Jail hoped the CA will help build a prosperous nation by implementing his pledges of taking measures against corruption and other criminal activities.

Referring to the CA's views on the price hike of essentials, he said a 'Hawa Bhaban syndicate' responsible for the price spiral during the previous government's tenure is still active. If those persons are not identified, arrested and tried, any efforts to control prices would not succeed, he stressed.

Jail urged Fakhruddin to take steps for proper investigation into on the August 21st grenade attack on an AL rally in the capital, killings of former finance minister Shah AMS Kibria, AL lawmaker Ahsanullah Master and serial blasts in the name of religion. All political killings, and killings of 26,000 people during the last five years must also be probed, and those responsible tried, he demanded.

Jail said the CA's speech has legitimised their demands for reconstituting the EC, depoliticising the administration, preparing a flawless voter roll, installing transparent ballot boxes, making voter identity cards and improving the law and order for free and fair polls.

"These demands are people's demands and that have been reflected in the speech of the chief adviser," said the 14-party leader.

Senior alliance leaders present at the briefing including Amir Hossain Anu, Abdur Razzak, Tofai Ahmed, Suranjit Sengupta, Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim, Obaidul Quader,

the jail authorities of the decision within the stipulated 60 days, then the prison authorities will have to send a reminder to the home ministry for a final decision.

But, as soon as the government gives clearance to carry out the executions, the jail authorities are free to execute the condemned on schedule.

Although both the old and new jail codes provide specific timeframes for issuing a death warrant, the jail authorities however will receive petitions for presidential clemency up to the mid-day of the dates of executions and send them to the president for his decision, the IG (Prisons) said.

If anyone submits a petition for presidential clemency after the mid-day, the jail authorities will still send it to the president and contact him over the telephone for instructions, the IG said. "If the president tells us to stay the execution, we will do so. But if he turns down the petition we will carry out the execution on schedule," he added.

Executions are carried out at one minute past the zero hour.

Jail sources said, they are already aware that the families of at least three of the condemned JMB men, including JMB chief Abdur Rahman and another lynchpin Siddiqui Islam alias Bangla Bhai, are eager to submit petitions to the president for clemency.

The IG (Prison) said, "I am also aware that some of the condemned are eager to submit mercy petitions, but I'm not sure who they are."

"Even if the families submit mercy petitions, they will be sent to the president for his consideration," Zakir added.

The condemned six are JMB chief Abdur Rahman, top lynchpin Siddiqui Islam alias Bangla Bhai, three other Majlish-e-Shura members Ataur Rahman Sunny, Abdul Awal and Khaled Saifullah, and a suicide bomber Iftekhar al Mamun.

Senior assistant judges Jagannath Pandey and Sohail Ahmed were killed in a suicide bomb attack at Purba Chadkati in Jhalakathi town on November 14 last year in the wake of a series of bombings carried out by JMB militants across the country.

The High Court on August 31 upheld the trial court verdict that had sentenced seven JMB men to death on May 29.

## 5 Pak troops

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Zamzola area of neighbouring South Waziristan region last Tuesday that destroyed a suspected al-Qaeda hideout.

Military officials initially said up to 30 "foreign terrorists" and their local facilitators were believed killed in the raid, although local authorities later said they had found only nine bodies. Ten others were wounded, they said.

Residents, denying the presence of foreigners, claimed the strike killed local tribesmen and Afghan labourers. Some pro-Taliban militants at a protest rally vowed to avenge the air strike.

On Sunday, two policemen were wounded in a roadside blast near a police van in the town of Tank, abutting South Waziristan district.

Pakistan has killed hundreds of militants who fled Afghanistan after the 2001 ousting of Afghanistan's Taliban regime.

Hasanul Haque Inu, Abdul Mannan, Abdur Rahman and Abdus Samad. **HASINA PRAISES CA'S SPEECH**  
AL President Sheikh Hasina also welcomed the CA's speech yesterday. She praised the CA for his stance against the corrupt and criminals and urged the caretaker government to take measures to hold a free, fair and credible election in the country within the quickest possible time.

Hasina, however, stressed the need for announcement of the next poll date. "People's expectation would be fulfilled if the chief adviser in his speech to the nation announced a date for holding the next general elections."

Hasina was speaking at a view exchange meeting with the leaders and activists of AL's student wing Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) at her Dhanmondi office on the occasion of Swaraswati Puja.

Over the criticism of political leaders by the Nobel Peace Laureate Dr Muhammad Yunus, Hasina said he should not criticise all politicians in general. She admitted the existence of corrupt individuals in politics, but asked Dr Yunus to first identify the corrupt politicians and then criticise those particular corrupt ones.

The BCL leaders attending the meeting congratulated Hasina's US-educated only son Sajeeb Wazed Joy on his being nominated as a young global leader this year by the World Economic Forum.

Hasina advised the BCL leaders to concentrate on their studies to prepare themselves for building a prosperous country.

AL leaders Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim, acting general secretary Obaidul Quader, Mukul Bose, Abdul Mannan, Sultan Mohammad Mansur Ahmed, Mostafa Jalal Mohiuddin, BM Mozammel Haque, Enamul Haque Shamim, Ajay Kor Khokon, Sujit Roy Nandi, and BCL president Mahmud Hasan Ripon were present at the meeting among others.

## Political parties

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President Hasanul Haque Inu and General Secretary Syed Zafar Sazzad in a joint statement yesterday congratulated the CA for identifying the barriers to holding a credible election. The JSD leaders urged the CA to outline a clear plan for a free and fair election as soon as possible.

Jatiya Samajtantrik Samik Jote and Jatiya Sramojibi Party also congratulated the CA and insisted on taking necessary steps to prepare national identity (ID) cards immediately.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh National Women Lawyers' Association (BNWLA), Bangladesh Institute of Human Rights (BIHR), Bangladesh Manobadhikar Samonnoy Parishad (BMSP) in separate welcome notes demanded an election supervision council and immediate steps for holding a fair poll.

The CA's vows for reconstituting EC, preparing correct voter list, separating EC secretariat, eliminating corruption and monitoring election has earned the confidence of common people in the caretaker government, BNWLA Executive Director Salma Ali noted.

## BB plans

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election is needed to be amended as its arm does not reach the loan defaulters of financial institutions.

The Election Commission had cancelled about 200 nomination papers on grounds of loan default while scrutinising the candidatures for the general election that was cancelled on Sunday, EC sources said. Some of them, however, were exempted on appeal.

The central bank recommended the finance ministry to prepare the nomenclature of defaulters of financial institutions to prevent them from contesting the election.

"The finance adviser has already discussed the issue with the law adviser," a highly placed official told the news agency yesterday.

The decision came in line with the maiden speech of the chief adviser to the caretaker government to make election free from corrupt people and black money holders.

The central bank also recommended the finance ministry to take up with the Ministry of Law to simultaneously dispose of the pending writ petitions regarding default loan cases of similar nature.

Around 200 writ petitions are pending with the High Court seeking removal of the names from the defaulter list of the Credit Information Bureau (CIB) of the central bank, sources concerned said.

Meanwhile, a large number of writ petitions remain pending with the High Court challenging the verdict of money loan court against the defaulters.

"Realising default loans by banks has become difficult as the defaulters take shelter to the High Court seeking stay orders," said a senior Bangladesh Bank official.

He said the extent of default loans has come down, but not up to the mark and it's because of the writ petitions.

According to the central bank figures, 17.6 per cent of the total outstanding loans was classified in 2004, which declined to 13.6 per cent on December 2005 and again rose to 16.6 per cent in June 2006. It, however, came down to 14.3 per cent in September 2006.

## EC reconstitution

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in the EC meeting that had taken place a little earlier.

"I will certainly resign for the sake of the country if the president asks me," Modabbir Hossain Chowdhury said in his office room.

"This is not an occupation rather a missionary kind of a job," Modabbir observed.

"He (the president) appointed me as an election commissioner because he had considered me neutral and competent," he said.

"If the president now thinks that I am not competent and requests me to resign, I will surely respond to his request," he added.

Modabbir however claimed that he was never controversial in his 35 years of professional life.

"I will give priority to the country's interest if such a proposal comes to me," Election Commissioner Saiful Alam told reporters on Sunday about his personal thoughts after an adviser to the caretaker government had told the media that they expect the election commissioners to relinquish the posts voluntarily.

Saiful Alam said he is ready to resign if such a request comes from the government.

However, the acting CEC Justice Mahfuzur Rahman, while leaving his office yesterday afternoon, did not respond to the reporters' query about the election commissioners' possible resignation or on the recent resignation of Justice MA Aziz from the post of the CEC.

Law and Information Adviser Mainul Hossain told The Daily Star on Saturday that all the 'controversial' commissioners will have to resign including acting CEC Justice Mahfuzur Rahman.

He said reconstituting the EC is a difficult job as constitutionally the government cannot sack or remove the CEC or the election commissioners. "We expect them to resign voluntarily... how long could we keep them on leave. This is really a crisis!" Mainul added.

## Sangu gas production

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on location. "But we will be able to say it for sure in April when we will have all data in hand," said a source.

Sources in Petrobangla and Cairn say it is natural that a gas field's production would gradually decrease over the years but the present state is somewhat surprising.

"This field is producing gas for the last eight years. It is normal that production rate would now reduce. But we did not expect the rate to fall so dramatically," said a Petrobangla expert.

An energy ministry high official said many of the problems of Sangu field could have been avoided if Petrobangla had allowed Cairn to conduct a three-dimensional (3-D) seismic survey. Cairn's proposal to do one such survey was refused a few years back.

"Petrobangla should have been more accommodative about Cairn's proposal. It has allowed Unocal (now Chevron) to conduct 3-D survey at Bibiyana, and Tullow in Block-9. If 3-D survey was conducted at Sangu, there could have been better drilling plans and reduced risks for both Cairn and Bangladesh," the official noted.

A Petrobangla official was critical about its role. "Petrobangla did not take many operational decisions on Sangu based on the original appraisal report on the field," he said.

"When the field started production in 1998, Petrobangla allowed Cairn to maximise production because at that time the country was reeling under gas shortage. If Petrobangla was careful, it would not have allowed 160 mmcf production rate and would have settled for a conservative rate that would have given the field a longer life," the official said.

High rate of gas production, compared with the gas field's capacity, can damage internal structure of the gas field, leading to a premature death of the field. This has happened to Bakhrabad gas field, which was initially estimated to have 1.4 trillion cubic feet (TCF) of gas. It planned production has led this field to

drastically lose its production after extraction of only 0.4 TCF gas. "However that might not exactly be the case with Sangu. But it is a similar case," he added.

Meanwhile, Cairn has mobilised two sea vessels in the Bay of Bengal for fresh exploration at a cost of \$40 million. It will conduct drilling at South Sangu by mid-February, and in Hatia, 25 km off Sangu, in April.

"These are exploration wells. If nothing is found there, Bangladesh will not bear its cost," said a source.

The country now needs around 1,500 mmcf of gas. A large portion of it comes from Jalalabad, Moulavibazar and Sangu under separate production sharing contracts (PSCs) with foreign oil companies.

## NDI

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next parliamentary polls.

NDI Director (Asian affairs) Peter Manakis said they would assist in the electoral process including preparation of a flawless voter list.

Hasina thanked them for detecting flaws in the current electoral roll.

After the meeting at the AL chief's Sudha Sadan residence, NDI Resident Director Dr Owen Lippert told reporters that they are now observing the political parties' thinking in the changed political scenario.

He said the NDI would offer all sorts of cooperation in holding a free, fair and credible election in Bangladesh.

"We are ready to share our expertise in training the field level election officials, if the authorities concerned want," he added.

AL President's Political Secretary Saber Hossain Chowdhury told reporters that they have discussed mainly the current political situation.

They told the NDI delegation that they want an election within the shortest possible time, he said adding that the NDI could train workers of the political parties so that they could contribute to preparing a correct voter list.

Saber said the NDI could also undertake a long-term observation mission to watch the preparation of the voter roll.

"We have asked them to send observers immediately," he added.

## Oriental Bank scam

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former executive vice-president and another former executive vice-president Muhammad Mukhtar Billah were picked up from their houses in the early hours yesterday. Tariqul Islam Khan, the other accused and also a former assistant vice-president of the branch, is still at large.

The arrestees were brought to the Tejgaon Police Station first. From there, they were sent to the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court, Dhaka. The court ordered them to be placed behind bars, setting February 22 for the next hearing.

The scam came out after the bank authorities carried out a probe into Ashfaqul Hakim's account transactions last week. The investigation followed Ashfaqul's resignation from the bank.

The investigation team found one Kiron Traders deposited Tk 5 lakh in his account on June 18, 2006, before the central bank took over the problem-ridden private bank.

It also gathered that the voucher of the Kiron Traders did not describe details of the deposited money. Further investigation revealed that the Kiron Traders' account with the Oriental Bank's Karwan Bazar branch was opened flouting the existing rules. Besides, it had used a fake address.

Five more fake accounts had been opened in the last four years under the name of Swadesh Enterprise, Friends Trading, Mahbub International, Biktampur Traders and Iqbal Enterprise.

A huge amount of money, transferred from the general account of the bank's head office, had been withdrawn from those accounts.

The officials accused were involved in erasing from the bank's computer system the transaction records of the six accounts.

The investigators however have managed to recover some of the data with the help of Leads Corporation, software provider for the bank's computer system.

A high official of the Oriental Bank told The Daily Star that some influential individuals outside the bank might have a hand in the scam.

"I don't buy that some junior branch officials have appropriated such a massive amount. I believe further investigations will identify the real culprits," he said in return for anonymity.

An ACC official told The Daily Star that they would quiz the arrestees to know who the other people involved in the crime are.

Earlier, a Bangladesh Bank (BB) investigation revealed that Tk 595 crore had been swindled out of the Oriental Bank with the connivance of its top management.

The ACC filed a case in this connection, but till date nothing had been done to arrest the accused, majority of who are shareholders of

the bank.

Asked about the matter, the ACC official said, "We are still working on the case and very soon there will be a move to round up the culprits." He said ports and borders have already been alerted so that they cannot flee the country.

Our court correspondent adds: The lawyers representing the three detained bank officials yesterday made submissions seeking bail for their clients. They argued that the three were falsely implicated in the case as part of a conspiracy. Rather, former BNP lawmaker Mosaddek Ali Falu had withdrawn crores of taka from the Oriental Bank Limited in the name of his television station ntv, they added.

## Anti-crime drive

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from Tangail reports that the joint forces detained seven people, including three BNP men, while conducting raids in different upazilas in the last 48 hours.

Army personnel on Sunday afternoon held Shajahan Saju, general secretary of Sakhipur upazila unit of BNP and chairman of Kakrajia UP and Tofazzal Hossain Tapa, general secretary of Sakhipur poura unit of Jubo Dal, sources said.

The same day, Masudur Rahman alias Liakat Mollah, president of Nagarpur upazila unit of Sramik Dal and Mohammad Nannu, a drug peddler, were arrested by the army, sources said.

News agency UNB says that seven listed criminals were nabbed in Habiganj town and Madhabpur upazila by the army yesterday. The arrestees include municipality commissioner Abul Bashar from Madhabpur and some BNP activists.

In Pabna, Rab and army men held arms smuggler Mahidul Islam with a gun and three bullets yesterday, said our correspondent.

Meanwhile in Khulna, the joint forces captured a Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) activist and an alleged informer of an underground party from Paikgachha upazila yesterday evening.

In Jhenidah, 33 people were arrested since Sunday night till yesterday evening by the joint forces. The arrestees include union parishad (UP) chairman Abdul Latif of Bashbaria union and seven listed criminals.

In Sathkira, the joint forces held two UP chairmen with criminal charges against them Sunday night.

They are Asadul Haque, chairman of Kulia union under Debhatta upazila and treasurer of district AL, and Ruhul Quddus, chairman of Anulia union under Assassuni upazila and a local BNP leader.

In Netrokona, the army-led joint forces arrested six people including a Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) activist and listed criminals since Sunday night till yesterday evening.

## Rights body

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inquiry reports.

"We are deeply shocked as killing without trial in 'special drives' after forming 'special forces' in the name of law and order, instance of which was established earlier, did not stop even during the present caretaker government," ASK said in a statement yesterday.

Number of deaths in Rab crossfire and deaths in army custody is on the rise although the government keeps on saying that it will remain cautious about protecting human rights, said the statement signed by ASK Executive Director Sultana Kamal.

Quoting newspapers, ASK said five people were killed in army custody since the declaration of emergency.

The rights watchdog noted that inhumane and extra-judicial activities like killing without trial are contrary to the present caretaker government's vow to eradicate all injustice, corruption and irregularities from the country.

"And the panic it is creating is a clear breach of human rights principle 'freedom from fear'."

"It seems that most of the citizens welcomed declaration of the state of emergency. People have developed positive expectations from the army especially for their laudable and significant role in foreign peace missions."

"So, the army needs to play a more skilled and responsible role regarding the detainees' security. Otherwise, their positive image will be tarnished," the statement said.

ASK expressed hope that the army will behave in a humane, responsible and lawful manner in case of arresting people and during interrogation following the arrest.

It said the government should conduct proper investigation into the deaths, and take necessary and effective steps immediately to stop recurrence of such incidents.

Referring to newspaper reports and its own sources, a press release of Odhikar said 19 people were killed by law enforcement agencies in last 10 days.

Of the 19, three were killed due to torture by army, one died while trying to escape from an army van, one jumped off a six-storied building and died in joint forces' custody, one arrested by the joint forces died in police custody, eight were killed in Rab 'crossfire', one in police 'crossfire', one tortured to death by police, two died in hospital after police arrest, it said.

Of the 19 victims, Odhikar identified four as belonging to BNP, two Awami League, two outlawed Janajuddho and one each to Purbo Banglar Communist Party, Gono Mukti Fouz and Sromojibi Mukti Andolon. Besides there were a farmer, an alleged drug peddler and six alleged criminals.

## Ward commissioner

**FROM PAGE 16**  
drive. "At one stage, she and her associates swooped on the policemen," he said.

Police lobbed teargas shells to disperse the agitating people. Additional police went to the area and arrested Deepti, the police officer added.

## 25 hurt

**FROM PAGE 16**  
working to fulfil their demands.

He also told the students that the authorities would sit with them as soon as the VC came.

But the students continued the protests.

At this stage, the police forced the demonstrators out of the campus.

The students blocked the road in front of the campus and chanted slogans against the administration resulting in a traffic congestion in the area for two hours.

Later, the VC told reporters that he assured the students of sitting with them to discuss their demands and asked them not to create anarchy during the state of emergency.

He said the residential problems would be solved after assessing the university's properties, which will be assessed by a high-powered committee to be formed soon.

The leaders of both Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) and Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) met the VC after the clash and expressed solidarity with the demonstrators' demands.

JCD leaders alleged that Jamaat-e-Islami backed Islami Chhatra Shibir instigated the students to launch the demonstration and fight against the law enforcement agencies.

They demanded the hawkers be allowed to do their business until alternative employments were arranged for them.

## Iran announces

**FROM PAGE 16**  
The United States, which led military manoeuvres of its own in the Persian Gulf in October, also accuses Iran of supporting militants in Iraq's sectarian bloodshed and is trying to rally Arab allies to isolate the Tehran regime.

Iran's new manoeuvres are the first since the UN Security Council imposed sanctions last month over Ahmadinejad's defiance of its demand that Tehran suspend uranium enrichment. The sanctions ban selling materials and technology that could be used in Iran's nuclear and missile programmes.

The United States and its allies accuse Iran of secretly developing atomic weapons in violation of its treaty commitments. Tehran has repeatedly denied that, saying its programme is solely for the peaceful purpose of developing nuclear technology to generate electricity.

A top American diplomat urged Iran on Sunday to resume negotiations on curbing its nuclear programme, warning of stepped-up international pressure if diplomacy fails.

Iran has barred 38 inspectors with the UN nuclear watchdog, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), from entering the country, an Iranian lawmaker was quoted by Iran's ISNA news agency on Monday as saying.

The head of parliament's Foreign Affairs and National Security Commission, Alaeddin Boroujerdi, did not give details about which inspectors had been barred.

IAEA inspectors make routine checks of Iran's nuclear facilities but last summer Iran temporarily denied visas to some inspectors and curtailed the frequency of