

# Govt seeks control of judicial power

## Plans to empower admin in 'extraordinary circumstances'; asks for amendment to separation of judiciary bill

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The parliamentary standing committee on law ministry yesterday decided to recommend that the House vest the authority in the government to empower executive magistrates to take cognisance of offences in "extraordinary circumstances".

In consultation with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, the committee last night came up with the decision and asked the law ministry to draft proposals to bring amendment to the bill on separation of

the judiciary, sources present at the meetings said.

A new provision will be incorporated in the bill saying the government may empower executive magistrates, who are also administrative cadres, to take cognisance of offences for trial "in an extremely special situation" to maintain law and order, committee members said.

The committee also decided to recommend that parliament vest the authority in the government to enact a new law to allow the executive magistrates to run mobile courts to hold trial of offences

under minor acts.

Committee chief and AL lawmaker Suranjit Sengupta, however, claimed that the committee would not make any recommendation undermining the separation of the judiciary. "We are going to make recommendations keeping the spirit of the separation of the judiciary intact," he said.

"The government may empower executive magistrates to take preventive measures to maintain law and order in special situations," Suranjit said but

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## SEPARATION OF JUDICIARY Govt to enact law next week

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Shafiqe Ahmed yesterday said parliament is likely to pass a law on the ordinances separating the judiciary from the executive next week.

He said a bill on the ordinances promulgated by the immediate past caretaker government is now being examined by the standing committee on law ministry.

It will be tabled for passage through the legislature after the committee submits report Sunday.

The minister was speaking at a press briefing at the ministry.

The previous day, a High

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# JMB hand found in BDR carnage

## Says probes coordinator Faruk Khan

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Commerce Minister Lt Col (retired) Faruk Khan yesterday linked the carnage at BDR Pilkhana headquarters to Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB).

He said some of the border troops rounded up for alleged role in the bloody mutiny are found to have connections with JMB, the banned Islamist outfit responsible for terrorist attacks including the near-simultaneous countrywide blasts in 2005.

Faruk, who has lately been tasked with coordinating the probes into February 25-26 bloodbath at Pilkhana, was talking to reporters at his secretariat office around noon.

"We have gathered that a number of BDR jawans arrested in the mutiny case were

involved in JMB somehow or other.

"I won't give more details as that might alert others having links to the mass killings," he said.

The minister made the disclosure at a time when speculation runs rife that militant groups might have something to do with the BDR massacre.

The way Col Gulzar Uddin Ahmed's body was mutilated adds weight to that line of reasoning.

Gulzar, who had recently been posted to BDR from Rapid Action Battalion, was revered for his role in anti-militant drives.

Criminal Investigation Department (CID), which is investigating the case in connection with the mass killings, however would not say

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PHOTO: AFP

Foreign labourers mainly from Bangladesh line up to board a bus at the end of first shift at a construction site in Kuala Lumpur on March 11. Bangladesh has urged the Malaysian government to reconsider a decision to cancel work visas issued to 55,000 Bangladeshi workers.

## 55,000 WORK VISAS CANCELLED

# Dhaka urges KL to review its decision

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has been trying to convince Malaysian government to review its decision on cancelling visas for over 55,000 Bangladeshi jobseekers who were scheduled to enter Malaysia gradually.

As part of the effort, Expatriates' Welfare Minister engineer Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain yesterday wrote to the Malaysian home ministry, requesting it to reconsider their decision and recruit the workers in the sectors where more workers are needed.

"Our ministry in collaboration with the expatriates' welfare and overseas employment ministry has discussed the matter with the Malaysian authorities and I hope a meaningful decision will come soon," Foreign Minister Dipu Moni told reporters after attending a discussion meeting at the National Press Club yesterday.

"The government especially the high officials of foreign and other ministries concerned are ready to go to Malaysia to deal with the situation," she said.

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## Independence Day parade cancelled

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has cancelled the national parade on March 26, the Independence Day, against the February 25-26 carnage backdrop at the Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) headquarters.

Local Government and Rural Development (LGRD) Minister Syed Ashraf Islam yesterday made the announcement in a briefing to reporters after a cabinet committee meeting on law and order at the home ministry.

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# Missing BDR arms cause for concern

## Law-enforcers yet to confirm number of arms taken away

EMRAN HOSSAIN

Daisy Ahmed missed a heartbeat when she saw something wrapped in BDR uniform lying abandoned at the entrance to her house in Ganakuli, a locality adjacent to the fifth gate of border guards' headquarters.

After the February 25-26 mutiny that degenerated into a bloodbath at their HQ, most of the riflemen reportedly fled through the gate 5.

It was 9:00 in the night the next day when everybody thought the wrapped thing was a rifle. But the police discovered a sub-machine gun (SMG) and also recovered 408-round bullets.

Till date the law-enforcement agencies could not confirm how many firearms were taken away from the headquarters or eventually fell to the hands of criminals, posing a threat to law and order.

Hazaribagh police and Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) recovered an SMG, a pistol, 630-round Chinese rifles' bullets, 470-round SMG bullets, three grenades including two Argos, a wireless set and 15 bullet-chargers abandoned in different areas until March 5.

Locals allege some youths took away some firearms and might have sold those by now. The suspicion and allegations of hiding some abandoned firearms and ammo were substantiated after Hazaribagh police held two people in the act of fleeing with arms after the mutiny.

The police say the recovered weapons are in their custody and will be handed to BDR once the paramilitary force gets back to normalcy.

"The reality is that many firearms have gone missing and the number cannot be confirmed yet regarding how many arms there were during the mutiny or how many have gone

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## 12 grenades defused at BDR HQ

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A team from bomb disposal units of Bangladesh Army, Criminal Investigation Department (CID) and Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) yesterday defused 12 grenades found abandoned at different places inside the Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) headquarters during the mutiny.

Meanwhile, arrested Awami League leader Torab Ali was taken on a five-day

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## Hizb ut-Tahrir men to be charged with sedition

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has authorised 14 police stations in the city to bring sedition charges against 27 Hizb ut-Tahrir operatives detained for "distributing provocative leaflets" over last month's BDR carnage.

As of filing this report at 2:00am today, officers-in-charge (OC) of the police stations were preparing to file cases.

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## RU restricts politics on campus

RU CORRESPONDENT

Rajshahi University (RU) authorities yesterday imposed restrictions on political activities including processions and rallies following a clash between Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) and Islami Chhatra Shibir on the campus last Wednesday.

The RU authorities also asked all the residential and non-residential students of the university to carry identity cards during their stay on the

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# Food security gets major boost

## UK pledges Tk 560cr, WFP Tk 1,242cr

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The United Kingdom will give Bangladesh assistance for coordinated development of the country's coastal areas under a £60 million (over Tk 560 crore) trust fund. The UK also pledged to help the country's food security programme.

Visiting UK Minister for International Development Mike Foster gave the assurances when he met with Food and Disaster Management Minister Md Abdur Razzak at the latter's ministry office yesterday, says a ministry press release.

Meanwhile, the World Food Programme (WFP) said it would provide Bangladesh \$180 million (Tk 1,242 crore) to strengthen food security. Agricultural development,

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## Govt expected to deliver fully on poll pledges

Says UK minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

UK Minister for International Development Mike Foster said yesterday the recent carnage at the BDR headquarters is the 'first test' of the new government, and its responsibility is to bring the matter to 'a conclusion through judicial process'.

"It is a serious challenge that the Bangladesh government is rising to meet. I

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