

Govt seeks control

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declined to elaborate the recommendations.

Contacted by The Daily Star over telephone, committee member and former law minister Abdul Matin Khasru said executive magistrates would be empowered to take cognisance of offences in only extreme situations to maintain law and order. "But the executive magistrates in no way can hold trial of offences. Only the judicial magistrates will do that," Khasru said.

Asked about his reaction to the latest development, eminent jurist Shahdeen Malik last night said, "If the executive magistrates are allowed to take cognisance of offences in only special circumstances, then I think there is nothing wrong with it."

On mobile courts, Malik said, "If the executive magistrates running the mobile courts take cognisance of offence and hold trial instantly, it will conflict with separation of the judiciary. The executive magistrates can be empowered to take cognisance of offences but they will have to send the cases to the judicial magistrates for trial."

He also said he would be able to make detailed comments after going through the committee's recommendations.

The admin cadres, appointed as magistrates before the separation of the judiciary, exercised the authority to take cognisance of offences and hold trials. Following the separation of the judiciary, they lost the swaying authority and they were officially termed executive magistrates.

The admin cadres on Monday placed an eight-point proposal before the parliamentary body, seeking the authority to take cognisance of offences and hold summary trial of some offences.

The judicial service association at that meeting strongly opposed the admin cadres' proposals terming those almost tantamount to contempt of the Supreme Court verdict on separation of the judiciary.

That day the committee in principle agreed to empower the executive magistrates with the authority to take cognisance of offences.

In the wake of widespread criticism against the move and following the High Court suo moto rule asking the government to explain as to why the ordinances on separation of the judiciary were not ratified in parliament, the committee apparently retreated from its earlier stance.

The committee chairman said the committee would place its report in parliament on March 15, the very day the current session of the House will return from recess.

The ordinances promulgated by the last caretaker government, separating the judiciary from the executive, were not ratified in parliament and the government later placed a new bill in parliament

12 grenades

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remain yesterday in connection with his suspected involvement in the mutiny.

In other developments, the CID team held several meetings with members of Scotland Yard from UK and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) from USA.

CID senior Assistant Superintendent of Police (ASP) Abdul Kader Akond told The Daily Star yesterday that members of Scotland Yard, the FBI and CID are coordinating the investigation into the BDR carnage.

Akond, the investigation officer (IO) of the mutiny case, yesterday refused to comment about the alleged involvement of Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) in the Pilkhana mutiny.

He said, "I cannot comment on this now as the investigation is yet to be completed."

Mizanur Rahman, assistant commissioner of police, Lalbagh Zone said, "A total of 17 abandoned grenades were found out of which 12 were defused. Others were found to be inactive."

According to sources, the grenades were found near the houses of different senior officials of the BDR, including slain BDR Director General Maj Gen Shakil Ahmed and Col Mujibul Huq.

Officer-in-charge of Hazaribagh police station Mohammad Abdur Razzak said, "Torab Ali, arrested by Rab members from Moneshwar Road on Tuesday, was taken on remand in connection with suspected involvement in the BDR mutiny."

He is however not shown arrested in connection with the BDR carnage.

Ali, the president of Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) welfare association for retired BDR personnel, is the only civilian arrested in connection with the BDR mutiny.

So far 236 persons have been shown arrested in connection with the mutiny and of them 14 BDR members are being questioned by CID, sources said.

Independence

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The ceremonial national parade has been persistently organised at the National Parade Square to celebrate the nation's independence. But a pall of gloom descended upon the parade square this year after the funerals of the army officers killed in the BDR mutiny.

Contingents of freedom fighters, Bangladesh Army, Navy, Air Force, Bangladesh Rifles, police, coastguards, ansar-VDP, different law enforcement agencies and BNCC take part in the parade. An exhibition of Bangladesh military prowess also highlights the display.

There was fighting during the operation, Nanayakara said, but no confirmation yet on casualties on either side. In early February, more than 300 patients were forced to flee the hospital because of fighting.

Security forces captured more territory in northeastern Sri Lanka after heavy fighting that killed at least 12 rebels, the military said Thursday.

Troops took control of the abandoned Puthukkudiyiruppu hospital following Wednesday's clashes, a military official said.

Govt to enact

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Court (HC) bench issued a suo moto rule on the government to explain under which legal authority the judicial magistrates are functioning now that the ordinances effecting separation of the judiciary are not in force.

Shafique said the Attorney General's Office would communicate to the HC that the government has taken measures to enact the bill on the ordinances.

The proposed law would approve with retrospective effect all actions that judicial magistrates had done since separation of the judiciary, and there is no room for misunderstanding here, he added.

The law minister also observed that people have already been reaping the benefits of the separation, as the judicial magistrates now do not have to concern themselves with anything other than their judicial functions.

In April 2007, the caretaker administration promulgated two ordinances amending the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) 1898 to separate the judiciary from the executive in line with the Supreme Court's directives.

The ordinances took effect on November 1 that year.

Despite being recommended by the special parliamentary committee, they were not ratified within the stipulated time limit and ceased to have effect on February 25.

Later though the government placed a bill on the CrPC (amendment) ordinances.

Replies to a query, Shafique yesterday said the border troops with links to the Pilkhana carnage can be tried under the Army Act, 1952, since BDR has been raised as a disciplined force.

However, he added, the decision whether to hold the trial under conventional law or special tribunal acts would be taken once the probe committees submit their reports.

The government has recently filed a leave to appeal with the SC and Osman also filed a petition with the same court (SC) to vacate the chamber stay order.

After hearing the appeal and petition, the Appellate Division yesterday disposed of both the matters.

Additional Attorney General M Enayetur Rahim appeared for the government while Barrister Moudud Ahmed stood for Osman.

Meanwhile, some organisations working for ensuring labour rights expressed their concerns over the Malaysian

JMB hand found

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anything about JMB links to the carnage that left 74 people including 52 army officers killed and scores injured.

ASP Abdul Kader Akond of CID said, "As investigation officer of the case I cannot say at this stage if JMB were involved. At least not until the investigation is complete."

Recently, a team working under 'Operation Rebel Hunt' has raided in vain houses of four suspected BDR mutineers - Anwar, Ismail, Kawsar and Attab - at Bagmara in Rajshahi, an area once considered a militant bastion.

The four are believed to have been JMB operatives before joining the paramilitary force.

Of them, Anwar gained notoriety as a close associate of Bangla Bhai, JMB operations commander executed along with Mujahideen supremo Shaikh Abdur Rahman and four others in 2004.

He was allegedly involved in the killing of Awami League leader Yasin's murderer at Bagmara in 2004. An officer who is among those in the hunt for the four, said around a dozen rebel soldiers took shelter at Ismail's house at Sakao village in Bagmara after February 26.

FARUK KHAN AT IBFB

Coming out of the inaugural session of the annual general meeting of International Business Forum of Bangladesh (IBFB) at a city hotel yesterday

morning, Faruk Khan said JMB links to the BDR massacre have been found, and that things would get clear after inquiry.

Earlier, addressing the function there, he said, "The barbaric acts of violence at Pilkhana were a deep-rooted conspiracy against the country and its secular-minded people."

Faruk blasted the opposition parties for 'not standing by the government' during the crisis stemming from BDR mutiny.

He alleged they (BNP and allies) were nowhere to be seen on the first two days of the mayhem. They did not utter a word at that time.

Meanwhile, a Dhaka court yesterday placed 12 more suspected BDR mutineers on five days' remand each for interrogation.

Those remanded are subedar Gofran Mallick, havildar Rezaul Karim, lance naik Gausul Alam and Yusuf Ali, sepoys Joyanta Kumar Sarkar, Jamir Ali, Abdul Latif, Sohrab Hossain, Shariful Islam, Rafiqul Islam, Ismail Hossain and Masudur Rahman.

Metropolitan Magistrate Mohammad Abdur Rahim passed the order after CID produced the 12 with a prayer seeking a 10-day remand for each.

Free ACC

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good governance are parts of the things," Swedish Ambassador Britt Hagstrom told reporters after a meeting between ACC Chairman Hasan Mashhud Chowdhury and ambassadors of the EU member states in Bangladesh.

"We discussed the work of the ACC. Even in the future, it's very important for the ACC to be an independent institution and continue its importance and good work," said the Swedish envoy whose country is currently holding the EU presidency.

Ambassador Hagstrom said, they also discussed how to work with anti-corruption, including preventive measures and linking them to other issues of the government.

Asked if the ACC is working independently during the political government, she said, "I think the framework is there to continue to work as an independent institution. We hope this will remain so. This is what we also discussed."

Asked if the ACC leadership should be allowed to continue despite criticism from the government, including the prime minister, Hagstrom said, "I think that also calls for continuity to see the performance of the Commission."

Declining to discuss about individuals as to who should be there, she said the ACC should be judged based on their performance and the works they are carrying out and the works that are carried out "that's something we want to see continuing".

Asked if the EU is happy with the performance of the ACC, the Swedish envoy said, "Yes, we've been happy with the performance of this Commission so far. We're supportive of this commission with development assistance."

Ctg rain trees

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area started losing their leaves early in 2007 from a deadly fungal epidemic called Dieback.According to botanists, a pathogen called *Botryodiplodia theobromae* might have caused the condition.

Experts say dieback is caused either by fungal pathogens or other reasons related to soil, lack of nutrition and an unsuitable environment.

"At the initial stages, the leaves of an affected tree turn yellow and eventually all the leaves fall off," said one botanist.

The disease slowly spread to other trees in the city as well as Patiya and Dohazari upazilas.

Experts who carried out research on the condition at the time, recommended that the infected portions of the trees be cut off before they contaminate other healthy plants.

They also urged authorities to find out the real cause behind the appearance of the disease, and also asked the authorities not to uproot the trees or have them cut down before this was found out.

However, authorities of Bangladesh Railway (Eastern Zone) -- which owns the trees -- decided to cut off the infected trees and sell off the timber in an auction.

Accordingly, a bidding was held in January 2008 and M/s Halim & Bros won the contract for the job. They cut down 10 trees before stiff opposition from locals and environmentalists forced them to halt their work.

Now this spring, the 'dead' rain trees have started growing new leaves and branches. The CRB and adjacent Tiger Pass and Polo Ground have regained their green look again.

"The relief must have some limit as the government has limitations as well. The banks will also have to keep up operation," Muhith said.

The BJA delegation that met the minister was led by its chairman Rezaul Karim.

"Over the next five years, the UK development partnership with Bangladesh will be focused on tackling extreme poverty, climate change, improving governance, building better social services and improving the status of women," he added.

British High Commissioner in Dhaka Stephen Evans and DFID chief Chris Austin were

The BJA also demanded arrangements for repayment of bank loans in 20 years.

Iraq jails

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an official visit," Attabi said, adding, "We will appeal this decision."

Zaidi, whose shoe-hurling gesture is considered a grave insult in the Arab and Muslim world, had risked up to 15 years in jail on the charge of aggression against a foreign head of state during an official visit.

The former US president, deeply unpopular in the Arab world for ordering the 2003 invasion of Iraq, had been at a globally televised media conference with Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki when Zaidi let rip with his shoes, zinging them at Bush, who managed to duck just in time.

When Judge Abdulamir Hassan al-Rubaie asked Zaidi if he was innocent, the journalist responded: "Yes, my reaction was natural, just like any Iraqi would have done."

After the verdict, his 25-strong defence team emerged to scenes of chaos outside the court, where several family members screamed: "It's an American court... sons of dogs."

Wearing a light-brown suit, brown sweatshirt and thin-framed glasses, Zaidi had been brought into the packed courtroom under a heavy police escort.

Chief defence lawyer Ehsan Ali-Sadi had argued that his client's motives were "honourable."

"He was only expressing his feelings. What he could see was the blood of Iraqis at his feet when he watched the US president speaking about his achievements in Iraq."

He also argued that although Iraqi law considered it an attack on a visiting head of state, "his throwing of the shoe did not cause any injury or damage."

"The president did not lose a leg or hand or finger. It was not an attempt to murder but an attempted assault."

"But it was not a real assault because he wanted to insult the president. The way he did it was by throwing a shoe not a mortar or bomb."

A Syrian lawyer said she was preparing to file a complaint.

Clashes mark

were planning to leave for Islamabad. Scuffles briefly broke out between police and protesters, witnesses and city police chief Waseem Ahmad said.

The arrests reminded many Pakistanis of similar moves against many of the same activists by Musharraf in 2007 clampdowns that dramatically reduced his popularity, ushered in the new government, and contributed to his ouster the following year.

Sharif spokesman Sadiq Farooq said US diplomat Patterson was "trying to get things resolved" between Sharif and the government.

"It is not only the American ambassador, other friendly countries are in contact," he said.

The US Embassy said it does not comment on the ambassador's meetings, but foreign help in resolving political disputes in Pakistan has been common in the past.

The growing political unrest is raising the spectre of a possible military intervention in a nuclear-armed nation prone to army coups. It could put Washington in a prickly position if the civilian government which itself rose to power on the back of the rallies and marches against Musharraf keeps clamping down on dissidents.

Zardari, the widower of assassinated former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, has cultivated ties with the US and sought to rally Pakistanis behind the fight with Islamic extremists. Sharif is considered closer to Islamic parties and conservative factions less inclined to support the US war effort.

Hizb ut-Tahrir

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According to sources in Dhaka Metropolitan Police, the Hizb ut-Tahrir leaflets urge the countrymen to "dislodge the government to save the army and Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) from Indian conspiracies".

The home ministry issued the sedition instructions in letters to the OCs of Shahbagh, Dharmamandi, Ramna, Khilgaon, Tejgaon, Uttara, Gulshan, Mohammadpur, Mirpur, Darussalam, Pallabi, Kafirul, Jatrabari and Sabujbagh police stations Wednesday.

Despite the crackdown, several hundred political party workers set off for Shahbagh from the southern cities of Quetta and Karachi in convoys of buses and private cars, waving flags and cheering.

"Allah willing, we will achieve our target and we will go on a sit-in... until the day when the judges under the chief justice Chaudhury Iftikhar are restored," said Ali Ahmad Kurd, a leader of the Biodiversity Research Group of Bangladesh.

"Nevertheless, it's good to see the trees coming back to life again," Mridha said.

Earlier in Karachi, police arrested around 60 activists from across the city and outside the high court, where they

Dhaka urges KL

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She said the foreign secretary had already talked to the Malaysian high commissioner in Dhaka and made a formal request to review the decision.

Urging all not to get panicked over the issue, the foreign minister said, "We have to consider the issue in the perspective of global economic recession," adding, "I think that the panic-stricken situation is yet to come."

She also said it is the time to find out new labour markets to adapt to the impact of global meltdown.

Meanwhile, State Minister for Foreign Affairs Hasan Mahmud hoped that a positive result will come for Bangladesh in this regard after the Malaysian national election to be held on March 30.

"The negotiation will continue until a solution is found," he told reporters after attending a programme at Hotel Sheraton.

After hearing the decision on cancellation of 55,000 visas for Bangladeshis, many workers gathered at the offices of the recruiting agencies and expressed their utter frustration over the uncertainty of their jobs.

"I had paid Tk 2 lakh to get a job in Malaysia six months back after borrowing the money. So, I am now totally upset about my future," said Mosharraf Hossain, who secured the Malaysian visa.

Talking to The Daily Star he also said many jobseekers like him are not able to contact their recruiting agencies or the brokers to know the information in this regard.

Bangladesh Association of International Recruiting Agencies (BAIRA) President Ghulam Mustafa said Malaysian government has allowed its employers to recruit 532 Bangladeshi workers who have been waiting at Kuala Lumpur International Airport since March 8 for the decision.

"This is a good development. We hope that Malaysia will reconsider its decision and we are trying to make all-out efforts in this regard," he told The Daily Star.