

## 7 lawmakers

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left Dhaka for Berlin last night.

Earlier, the German parliament had invited Speaker Abdul Hamid and a group of MPs to visit their country and sent economy class tickets for the invitees as per their rules.

The speaker opted not to be on the team, as only days are left before the Jatiya Sangsads goes into session. He instead picked seven lawmakers for the tour, which is part of an exchange of parliamentary delegations, said parliament secretariat officials.

In February, a delegation from the Bundestag (German parliament) visited Dhaka. Their travel and other expenses were met by their legislature, which also offered an all-expenses-paid trip for the Bangladesh delegation, sources said.

But the seven-member team nominated for the tour said they would not go to Germany unless the tickets are upgraded, officials said.

At the insistence of the lawmakers, the parliament secretariat contacted the German embassy only to be told that their rules do not allow spending taxpayers' money on business class airfares.

In the wake of this, the secretariat decided to foot the bill for business class tickets.

According to airline officials, usually an economy class return ticket costs \$950 and a business class \$1,970.

Awami League lawmaker (AL) ASM Firoz, who is leading the parliamentary delegation, yesterday told The Daily Star that they had the tickets upgraded, considering the long journey to the central European state.

"It shouldn't cost much to upgrade the tickets," observed Firoz, also a whip of the ninth parliament.

Queried, he however could not say exactly how much was spent to upgrade their seats.

The delegation head said

## Nepali PM

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Nepal-United Marxist Leninist (CPN-UML), one of the Himalayan country's oldest parties, was acclaimed for the post as he was the lone candidate.

He has been elected unopposed as the new prime minister of the federal democratic republic of Nepal, parliament speaker Subash Nembang said.

Nepal was named the prime ministerial candidate by an alliance of 22 parties last week. His election came after Maoist leader Prachanda quit as prime minister three weeks ago following eight months in office to protest a decision by the president to veto his bid to sack Nepal's army chief, a longtime rival.

The latest political crisis in impoverished Nepal has raised fears about the future of a 2006 peace agreement which ended a decade-long Maoist insurgency that left at least 13,000 dead.

The Maoists stormed out of parliament on Saturday before the new prime minister was chosen, branding the selection process "a farce."

But they promised not to disrupt the peace process, saying they were committed to civilian government.

## Govt mulls trial

Commenting on militancy the law minister said the government's determination to root out militancy from the country and has already passed two acts to this effect.

He said militancy spread fast in the country as religion-based politics was allowed through the Fifth Amendment in the constitution.

"A political party, which is also a key component of the four-party alliance, said militancy cannot be eliminated from the country without their support. It indicates that they are also involved in militant activities," the law minister said.

Ain o Salish Kendra Director Md Nur Khan said the government needs to intensify its efforts to root out militancy from the country.

He suggested forming a national committee comprised of representatives from political parties, media and research organisations to fight militancy.

Amena Mohsin, professor at the international relations department of Dhaka University, said the government is showing positive signs in combating militancy.

Mithila Farzana of BBC moderated the dialogue on the country's current issues.

## Low over Bay

UNB, Dhaka

the German government will bear all other expenses during their stay there from May 24 to May 29.

He said they would visit the German parliament to gain insights into their proceedings. Besides, they will meet local business leaders and discuss ways to enhance the trade ties between the countries.

AL lawmaker Abdullah Al Islam, Jacob and BNP lawmaker Rehana Akhtar Ranu however said they were not aware of the ticket upgrade.

"It doesn't matter to me if I should fly business class or economy class," Jacob told The Daily Star.

The other members of the delegation are AL lawmakers Atiur Rahman Atik, Abdullah Al Kaiser, Nazma Akhter and Jatiya Party lawmaker Hossain Makbul Shahrier.

The whip's personal secretary and Jatiya Sangsads's sergeant-at-arms are also in the entourage. The two were however given economy class seats, parliament officials said.

The MPs enjoy VIP status and thus are entitled to business class airfares. In previous parliaments as well, the secretariat upgraded air tickets on several occasions, added the officials.

## River view

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There is a specific law in effect -- the Open Space and Natural Water Body Conservation Act, 2000 -- which prohibits change of characteristics of any wetland.

Contacted, Dr Azizur Rahman, vice-chancellor of Uttara University, said: "Nobody is obeying the law; why are you asking me only? We are not different from others.

"Besides, the government has no right to prohibit me from developing my land," he added. "We have checked the land documents several times and are sure all our land is legal."

He added they wanted to be very 'clean' as they are going to set up a university in that wetland.

"We haven't taken any government land or encroached on any river," he claimed.

According to the law, it is prohibited to change any natural land in the capital and all municipalities for conservation of all playgrounds, open space, parks and natural reservoirs.

If anyone violates the law, they should suffer five years in prison and may also be fined up to Tk 50,000.

Unfortunately, the law is hardly enforced, apparently encouraging the encroachers to repeat their offence again and again.

## Pak troops

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also in two neighbouring districts as a mission to "eliminate" militants.

Islamabad has the full backing of the United States, which has identified Pakistan and Afghanistan as central to its "war on terror".

The prospect of an assault on Mingora, which has loomed for days, has raised fears of a bloody battle and the possibility of civilian casualties.

US-based Human Rights Watch earlier this week quoted residents as saying the Taliban had mined Mingora and "prevented many civilians from fleeing, using them as 'human shields' to deter attack".

The group also said Pakistani forces "appeared to have taken insufficient precautionary measures in aerial and artillery attacks that have caused a high loss of civilian life".

Pakistani commanding officers have stressed that soldiers are under top-level orders to avoid collateral damage and not to use either artillery or air strikes in built-up areas.

## Siemens scam

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The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) on March 17 sued Arifat Rahman Koko, younger son of former premier Khaleda Zia for laundering money he had illegally taken from Siemens, a German industrial giant, a Chinese company and other sources in exchange for helping them get government contracts.

The former prime minister's son received at least \$1,80,000 (Tk 1,26 crore) as bribe in September 2005 for helping Siemens Bangladesh to win the contract to set up mobile network for state-run operator TeleTalk, according to sources.

## Defaulting Huawei

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BTCL official said the decision of imposing the penalty on Huawei was taken as the Chinese company had repeatedly failed to supply the generators.

He said the penalty was imposed in line with the signed agreement, to recover liquidity damage incurred by BTCL.

New BTCL Managing Director SM Kabiruzzaman however told The Daily Star that there had been no decision of imposing a penalty on Huawei.

He said now BTCL will buy the generators itself, after getting back the procurement money from Huawei.

Ashok Kumar Mondal, director (procurement) of BTCL, said penalties are usually imposed on vendors who fail to supply equipment within a project timeframe. In case of Huawei no delay has happened yet, he added.

The generators are required for BTCL's project titled 'Supply, installation, testing and commissioning of IP-based NGN TAX in Dhaka, Khulna, Kushtia, Barisal and Sylhet on a turn-key basis'.

Huawei and BTCL, the predecessor of BTCL, had signed a \$2.42 million deal in December 2006 for the project which was supposed to be completed by May 2007.

But the project still remains incomplete as Huawei failed to supply five French-made SDMO diesel engine generators, one of the major requirements of the project.

The anomalies in the equipment supply part of the deal between BTCL and Huawei was first uncovered through an investigation by a taskforce of the now-defunct National Coordination Committee on Corruption and Serious Crimes (NCC) under the immediate past caretaker government, which also found involvement of some BTCL officials in the irregularities including repeatedly changing clauses of the deal agreement.

According to the deal, Huawei was supposed to install French-made SDMO brand diesel generators. But changes were brought to the agreement allowing the Chinese company to supply Spanish-made PRAMAC generators through a local vendor Rahimrao, as Huawei had claimed that the French manufacturer of the SDMO generators had been acquired by another company which had stopped manufacturing the specific type of generators, according to the NCC taskforce report.

Huawei somehow persuaded BTCL high-ups to amend the deal the two companies had signed, so the Chinese company could supply PRAMAC generators, the report added.

The investigation report also said BTCL, which was BTCL back then, however denied receiving any PRAMAC generator, claiming that bringing such changes in the specifications of the equipment to be supplied, is not allowed under the Public Procurement Rules (PPR).

The Billing of Quantity (BOQ) Committee also repeatedly denied accepting Huawei's proposal to amend the deal, the investigation report added.

But the taskforce report includes a document dated

## Fit-again 7-yr-old

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He was supposed to return to his normal life but instead he is now fighting for his life in the city's Apollo Hospital.

Before he was discharged from the clinic the on duty nurse of the postoperative ward was supposed to administer him an antibiotic injection as per the doctor's directive.

"As soon as the nurse pushed the injection the boy lapsed into unconsciousness," Shankar told The Daily Star.

After he became unconscious we got anxious and called the doctor immediately. We collected the ampoule and showed it to the doctor," he said.

The doctor said it happened due to reaction of the medicine and advised us to take Sanjoy to Dhaka immediately," he added.

In a state of confusion Sanjoy's family members went over to several doctors with the ampoule to ascertain what really had gone wrong and came to know that he was given anaesthesia.

"We rushed Sanjoy to Apollo Hospital the same day and since then he has remained unconscious for 11 days in the intensive care unit (ICU) of the hospital," Shankar said.

Wishing anonymity one of the doctors who is treating the boy at the Apollo Hospital told

## One killed, 25 hurt as AL factions clash

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jhenidah

December 24, 2007, which shows that BTCL's erstwhile chairman M Moudud Chowdhury, and erstwhile director (planning and development) M Shamsul Alam agreed to amend the deal.

Meantime, Huawei secretly signed a deal with Rahimrao for supplying the low-priced PRAMAC generators, the task force reported.

Huawei, however, even failed to supply those Spanish-made PRAMAC generators on time.

According to another letter issued by the erstwhile project director of the then BTBL on December 24, 2008, BTBL had changed relevant clauses of the contract in order to accommodate the Chinese contractor's change of mind about which kind of generators it would supply.

"We understand that action should be taken against the contractor within the purview of the contract," the letter added in light of Huawei's failure to supply even the generators of the changed category.

Talking to The Daily Star recently, Ansar Uddin, managing director of Electro Mechanical Service Ltd, the local agent for SDMO brand generators in Bangladesh, said it is true that the company which used to manufacture SDMOs, was acquired by another company, but supply of that brand of generators never stopped even for a day.

He said SDMO brand generators are still being sold in Bangladesh.

Huawei however claims that it received a regret letter from SDMO's local agent, which said the required generators were not in supply.

But, Ansar Uddin emphatically contradicted Huawei's claim saying, "I am the person to issue that kind of a letter. But as far as my knowledge goes, I never issued any kind of regret letter."

**HUAWEI'S VERSION**  
Thong Poh Wah, Vice Director (PR) Asia Pacific Marketing of Huawei Technologies, told The Daily Star that his company was unable to provide the French-made SDMO diesel engine generators because the manufacturing company had been acquired by another company, which subsequently stopped manufacturing SDMO generators of the specifications mentioned in the contract.

"Such information was not made available to us during the time of bidding as this bidding was re-tendered several times for more than one year. So that we proposed BTCL the new brand of DEG (diesel engine generator) with better specification as per the contract, once we got such information," Wah said in a written statement.

However, BTCL was taking too long a time to decide on the issue, Wah said adding when Huawei proposed to substitute with PRAMAC diesel engine generators, BTCL decided to procure the generators on its own instead.

The decision was reflected in the inclusion of an additional provision in the agreement, Wah went on saying. Huawei did not fail to supply the PRAMAC generators, rather it refrained from supplying those because BTCL had decided to make the procurement itself.

Additional policemen have already been deployed there to ward off any further clash, he added.

## 2 Jubo League

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at United Hospital in the capital yesterday.

Police said Rinku, organising secretary of ward no-41 Jubo League in the capital city, was rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) after a gang of criminals shot him near his residence at Babor Road in Mohammadpur, leaving him critically injured.

Mohammad Shaheen, a relative of Rinku, told The Daily Star that two friends of Rinku - Rony and Sohel - called him out from his residence around 8:00pm on May 9 and shot in his head and back.

Nearby people rushed him to DMCH and informed Rinku's family of the incident on the night, he said, adding that Rinku was later shifted to the United Hospital.

Talking to The Daily Star correspondent, Rinku's mother filed a case with Mohammadpur Police Station, accusing four people including Rony and Sohel.

Police could not ascertain the motive behind the killing but they arrested two youths in this connection.

A correspondent from Jessor says: Jubo League leader Ruhul Amin was a probable chairman candidate for the forthcoming election of Nibrasul Hulon Parishad.

Locals and police said unknown criminals hurled a bomb on them at about 11:30pm on Friday while Ruhul and Ansar were returning home by a motorcycle after finishing their polls campaign at Sheordah village.

The killers also cut throats of the Jubo League men to confirm their death.

Police recovered the bodies and sent those to Jessor General Hospital morgue for autopsy. No one was arrested.

"We are negotiating with the victim's family members to come to a settlement," he said.

The doctors who are treating the boy at the Apollo Hospital told

## Indian FM

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minister of southern Karnataka state and party veteran to guide India's foreign policy during a period of heightened tensions with neighbouring Pakistan.

P. A. L. N. A. P. P. Chidambaram, seen as having overhauled India's security in the wake of the Islamist attacks on Mumbai last November that left 166 dead, will continue to head the home ministry, a government statement said.

AK Anthony will retain charge of the defence ministry, said the statement, which added the new parliament would convene June 1.

Sharad Pawar will keep the agricultural ministry while Nazrul Islam said AL leaders Motiur Rahman and Mohsin Shikdar became involved in an altercation over filing of a case with Shaikupura Police Station.

At one stage, at least 30 people were injured and 35 houses damaged in another clash between two rival factions of AL at Tikari village.

Both Pawar and Banerjee are key regional allies in the Congress-led coalition which won 262 seats in the 543-member national parliament, just 10 short of the 272 needed for a working majority.