

Changes elude JS

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effective. But so far it has made few efforts to have the opposition back in the House.

Time and again the confrontational nature of politics prevented the treasury and opposition benches from resolving to end the culture of boycott and make the House centre of all activities.

The ruling AL has yet to take steps to frame a charter that it pledged in its electoral manifesto to promote politics of consensus and reconciliation.

Despite its pledge, it did not yet arrange for lawmakers to express views without toeing the party line on issues excepting the one concerning national security.

Besides, the opposition was not offered the deputy speaker's post though the AL chief had made an announcement to that end before the December 29 election.

Through it all, the gap between the ruling and opposition parties has yawned even wider.

Many political analysts fear the legislature might not be able to break free of the boycott culture anytime soon.

In his speech to the inaugural session of the ninth parliament, Iqbal Khan, then the outgoing president, termed the new Jatiya Sangsad the "House for change".

But in last one year the House could not quite live up to people's expectations thanks to perpetuation of negative politics.

Addressing the new year session on January 4, President Zillur Rahman said confrontational political culture must end for people's desire for a change to materialise.

The current parliament began its journey on January 25 last year amid hopes that it would set the country on the road to prosperity.

After around two years under a caretaker government and state of emergency the received wisdom was that the political parties would learn that confrontational politics

could only lead to changeovers like 1/11.

Unfortunately, things do not seem to have changed much. Arch rivals AL and BNP could not patch up differences even in the wake of BDR carnage in February last year.

Instead of working in unison, they got locked in a bitter dispute over handling of the crisis.

Constituted through an election lauded at home and abroad, the ninth parliament found itself faced with the task of ratifying 122 ordinances and two national budgets passed during the caretaker government.

In the first session, it approved the caretaker government's expenditures for around two years and ratified some ordinances.

It took a strong stance against corruption that took place in the JS secretariat during the tenure of Jamiruddin Sircar as the speaker.

An all-party body formed by the House took up probing allegations of huge financial irregularities in the secretariat.

Following the probe, parliament passed a resolution suggesting the government recover the money "embezzled by Sircar, former deputy speaker Akhtar Hamid Siddiqui and former chief whip Khandker Delwar Hossain".

Till Thursday, the House passed 69 bills and a number of resolutions including the one for war crimes trial.

Some of the parliamentary standing committees have been working well to ensure transparency and accountability of the executive.

One decision that drew a lot of flak was making MPs advisers to upazila parishads, curtailing further the local bodies' independence.

Immediately after its formation through a credible election, Jatiya Sangsad got back its membership of Inter-Parliamentary Union and Commonwealth Parliamentary Association.

MDG achievers

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The Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey reveals that the mortality rate of children under the age of five is highest in Sherpur with a record of 102 deaths per 1,000 births.

Pabna's performance in this regard is the best with 43 deaths.

The national average in this indicator is 67 deaths.

Meherpur tops in two indicators - births attended by skilled health personal and net attendance in primary education. Bandarban has performed the worst in the two fields.

"It indicates that huge disparities within the districts remain," said Unicef Representative Carel de Rooy. "We should be exploring very seriously the concept of geographical targeting to reduce disparities to achieve MDGs with equity."

Although there is no improvement in the rate of net attendance at primary education, the MICS has found that retention rate of students at primary schools rose to about 80 percent in 2009 from 63.6 percent in 2006.

The study also shows that progress has been achieved in attaining gender parity in primary education but it is yet to be achieved in secondary education.

The rate of birth registration of children under five has attained a substantial rise, it says.

Despite a near universal progress in access to improved source of water, the MICS has found that 12.6 percent households in the country drink arsenic contaminated water.

"Therefore, special attention is needed for these households," said Planning Minister AK Khandker.

He said this district level data will help the government prioritise interventions and allocate resources as well as design the Sixth Five-Year Plan.

Tigers falter early

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wicket, but the Bangladesh batsmen made it look like a real minefield. Credit to the two Indian seamers, Zaheer Khan and Ishant Sharma, who pitched the balls in right places and left the batsmen do the rest of the damage.

The first one to fall was Imrul Kayes who was adjudged to have edged a nick down the leg to the keeper off the bowling of Sharma with the scoreboard yet to get moving. Kayes could feel hard done by as replays showed there was clear daylight between bat and ball and the ball seemed to have come off his thigh pad. However, the next batsman had no one but themselves to blame as their uncalled for adventurism caused their own downfall.

Tamim Iqbal was the next to go. He missed an in-cutter from Zaheer, the ball found a way between his bat and pad before crashing into the stumps.

Next in line was Zunaed Siddiqui, who replaced Shahriar Nafees in the side, as he went on his way swinging one from Zaheer to the leg side, managing a healthy edge instead down to the keeper's hands.

Rokibul Hasan's form didn't get any better as he fished a wishid delivery outside the off-stump from Sharma to the safe hands of Rahul Dravid at second slip. Mohammad Ashraful is another who was struggling for runs, and that has been extended for one more innings as he gave away his wicket after playing a Twenty20-like innings of 39 off 31 deliveries.

Some might say that was a good score in the context of the innings, but that sort of adventurism in the face of adversity is something one would hardly wish for. Dancing down the wicket against a spinner in his first over with half of the batting already gone and the team score just across fifty-run mark only shows lack of temperament on

the part of the batsman, but that's Ashraful for you.

The next two batsmen, skipper Shakib Al Hasan, who hasn't had a good series with the bat so far, and Mushfiqur Rahim, the centurion from the previous innings, looked good for some time and were going in the right direction as they took on rebuilding the wreckage. But again, just when you thought they would find batting easier for the rest of the day, Mushfiqur once failed to negotiate with a nipping delivery from Sharma which caught him plumb in front of the wicket.

Losing his partner, Shakib probably lost his concentration and tried a terrible shot far away from his body and offered a thick edge to the keeper. At 127 for seven, the Tigers looked dead and buried, but for the stubborn resistance from the ever-consistent Mahmudullah Riyad Bangladesh managed to get their score past 200 and past the tea break. Riyad played his natural game and got runs at ease including 13 boundaries. He was supported by the three pacers who stuck with him for periods to make the Bangladesh score look a bit respectable.

Riyad looked good for his maiden hundred in Test cricket, but was unfortunately left stranded on 96 when a vicious off-break from Harbhajan Singh swerved through the defences of last man Rubel Hossain and ended the Tigers' innings on 233.

That gave the Indian batsmen about an hour's time to negotiate and they did so too successfully. The stumps were drawn with India racing to 69 for none in just 13 overs, with the tourists firmly in control of proceedings. The wicket is expected to be best for batting for the next two days which means a lot of workload to be shared for the three seamers and two spinners in the Tigers' ranks.

President

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of a head of state to Bangladesh since the Awami League-led grand alliance assumed power in January last year.

Earlier, President Zillur Rahman paid a 6-day visit to Turkey from November 6 last year to attend Economic Summit of COMCEC (Standing Committee for Economic and Commercial Cooperation) organised by Organisation of Islamic Conference.

A team from Turkey would arrive in Dhaka prior to the presidential visit to finalise the schedule of programmes in the trip, official sources said.

Bangladesh wants to expand trade with Turkey. The issue of trade will be of paramount importance during the visit of the Turkey president, officials said.

Different aspects of bilateral relations and multilateral issues including cooperation between the two countries in different international forums like OIC and the United Nations will come into discussion, officials at the foreign ministry said.

A high-profile business delegation from Turkey will accompany President Abdullah Gul.

On February 13, a joint meeting of businessmen from both the countries will be held in presence of the Turkey president.

According to the tentative schedule, the president upon his arrival in Dhaka will pay tribute to the martyrs of 1971 Liberation War at the National Mausoleum in Savar.

The same day in the afternoon, he will have a discussion with President Zillur Rahman at Bangabhaban.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will pay a courtesy call on the president at his hotel suite. Finance Minister AMA Muhith, Commerce Minister Faruq Khan and Foreign Minister Dipu Moni will also meet the president.

Export of different commodities like readymade garments, jute materials, leather, and frozen foods from Bangladesh to Turkey is increasing.

According to the statistics of Export Promotion Bureau, Bangladesh earned \$33 crore by exporting goods to Turkey in 2008-09 fiscal year while the amount was \$23 crore in the previous fiscal year.

In the last political visit from Turkey, former Turkey president Suleyman Demirel along with Palestine President Yasser Arafat and President of South Africa Nelson Mandela attended a public rally in Dhaka in the celebration of 25th anniversary of Bangladesh's independence on March 26, 1997.

Proshika

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The judge also asked Qazi Faruque to file a leave-to-appeal petition with the SC against the HC order within seven days.

Police took away the keys of the Proshika Bhaban and locked it on January 13.

Upon a writ petition filed by Mahbulul Karim, the HC on January 19 asked the police to hand over the keys of Proshika Bhaban to the petitioner within two days.

Proshika head office reopened on January 23 after police handed over the keys to its CEO on January 22 as per the HC order.

Manmohan rejects

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Copenhagen Accord to combat climate change but emphasised it was a political rather than a legal agreement, which must feed into a legally binding global accord negotiated by all countries.

After a seven-hour meeting here, environment ministers of BASIC (Brazil, South Africa, India, China) also 'expressed their intention to communicate information on their voluntary mitigation actions to the UNFCCC (UN Framework Convention on Climate Change) by January 31, 2010'.

The intention, expressed in a joint communiqué after the meeting, put at rest speculation about whether India and China would support the accord that they -- along with the US, Brazil and South Africa -- had negotiated at the last moments of the Copenhagen climate summit in December.

India's Environment Minister Jairam Ramesh said, "We support the Copenhagen Accord. But all of were unanimously of the view that its value lies not as a stand-alone document but as an input into the two-track negotiation process under UNFCCC."

One track is on long-term cooperative action to combat climate change. The other is for developed countries to commit to what extent they will reduce their greenhouse gas emissions after 2012, when the current commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol runs out.

BASIC countries asked the UNFCCC secretariat to hold six meetings of negotiators this year, starting in March, so that this process could culminate by the next climate summit in Mexico City this December.

Asked if the Copenhagen Accord would become a legally binding treaty later, Ramesh replied, "It has no hope of doing so."

Official sources said India's support to the accord came after UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon clarified to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh that the accord was a political statement of intent that would have no legal force.

The prime minister had sought this clarification in a letter sent to the UN chief Friday, a move that prompted the UNFCCC to indefinitely defer its Jan 31 deadline for countries to indicate their support to the accord.

But the BASIC group would stick to the deadline. South Africa's Water Resources and Environment Minister Buyelwa Sonjica said, "We feel obligated that we must commit what we ourselves were part of. That's a leadership obligation, even if Yvo (de Boer, the UNFCCC chief) has decided to extend the deadline."

In this their second meeting at the ministerial level, all BASIC countries were at pains to state their group was very much a part of the Group of 77 developing countries.

Ramesh said, "Our decisions reflect that BASIC is very much a part of G77." However, Yemen, the current G77 chair, did not attend the meeting, though it had been invited. At the Copenhagen summit, Sudan, then G77 chair, had expressed dissatisfaction because BASIC had negotiated the accord with the US without involving other countries.

DU question

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Vice-Chancellor Prof AAMS Arefin Siddique disclosed this to The Daily Star yesterday.

Prof Delwar Hossain Sheikh, convener of the three-member probe body, placed the report before the vice-chancellor at the latter's office yesterday evening.

"Carelessness of the members of the institute's internal admission test committee was also another reason behind the leakage," Prof Arefin said.

Another five-member committee formed by the university administration is also investigating the matter to dig out overall scenario of the incident, he added.

DU Syndicate member AFM Mezbah Uddin heads the five-member probe committee.

Following the question paper leak, the DU authorities postponed the admission test of the institute on Friday.

The fresh date of the test has been fixed on February 5.

Jamaat's goals

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July 22 last year, Jamaat also refuses to accept the parliament's law making power sanctioned by the country's constitution, saying the people must not accept anyone except Allah as the maker of laws.

The EC officials said in the face of the commission's objection, Jamaat had deleted the clause from its provisional amended charter to get registration before the ninth parliamentary election. But later it reinstated the controversial clause in its ratified charter, they added.

"The letter sent to Jamaat cited it and requested the party to correct its charter in line with the commitment made before getting registration," an EC official said.

Jamaat also did not include in the main body of its charter the provision of keeping 33 percent posts in all committees at all levels reserved for women, and for achieving the goal by 2020. Rather the provision is mentioned in a special note in the last page of the charter.

The EC asked Jamaat to include the provision among the clauses in the main body of the charter, the commission officials said.

A new provision in Jamaat's charter allows non-Muslims to become members of the party, and compels those members to work for Jamaat's aim and objectives.

The EC found the provision to be discriminatory and asked the party to 'correct' it, the officials said.

JATIYA PARTY
The EC also asked Jatiya Party to scrap from its charter the clause that gives Chhatra Samaj the status of its associated body, as the RPO does not allow any registered political party to have associated student organisation, the EC officials said.

The provision of keeping 33 percent posts in all committees at all levels reserved for women is also not stated clearly in the charter, they said adding that the EC asked the party to put the provision in the charter in clearer terms.

The EC also found that the provision of picking final parliamentary nominees from panels of preliminary nominees sent by grassroots level committees, also is not stated clearly in the party's charter, so the commission asked the party to state the provision more clearly as well, the officials added.

Students

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fire to a bus in 3-km long area around Bayezid Bostami, police said.

Following the mayhem, vehicular movement on the roads remained suspended for about three hours.

The students also clashed with police while they charged batons and hurled tear gas shells at them leaving 15 people including eight cops injured.

The injured policemen, including Assistant Commissioner (Panchlaish) SM Nurul Huda, were admitted to Dampara Police Lines Hospital. Police held four students in this connection.

Our Dinajpur correspondent adds: Students of Pachbari School and College put barricade on Dinajpur-Bogra Highway for four hours following deaths of its two students in a road accident at Pachbari village in Sadar upazila yesterday.

Hemanta Chandra Roy, 18, son of Babul Chandra Roy, and his cousin Birodh Chandra Roy Noyan, 13, son of Amullya Chandra Roy, of Chowkrampur village in the upazila died on the spot. Both were students of the institution.

Police said the accident happened when a Bogra bound bus ran over Noyan and Hemanta while they were going to the school by a bicycle at 10:30 am.

At least 30 passengers of the bus were also injured as it fell into the roadside ditch after hitting the victims and several trees.

Following the accidents, students along with thousands of people blocked the highway and damaged several vehicles.

At 2:30pm, they withdrew the blockade as local lawmaker Iqbalur Rahman assured them of compensation for the families of the victims.

Brutality

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"But getting separated from the brutal husband could not save my daughter," Monwara said. Beli, who had bled profusely, needed transfusion of several bags of blood.

Locals said the families of Beli and Anis, who hail from Jamalpur, arranged the marriage when Beli just crossed 13 and Anis was 22. Beli's family gave Anis a rickshaw-van as dowry.

But Anis sold it after three months of their marriage and started torturing Beli for another rickshaw-van. Anis used to demand that Beli give him her full salary too.

Detained Anis claimed that Beli has not divorced him yet and was only trying to get a separation to marry another person, Mirpur Police Station Sub-Inspector Ashok Chowhan said.

Muhith
The decision was made at a meeting between the speaker and the finance minister on Tuesday.

Besides, employing drivers for the vehicles and selling old vehicles would create problems, he said.

There had been instances in the past that some lawmakers, who imported duty-free vehicles, sold those in the market. The speaker will take necessary steps and engine displacement limit for vehicles will be imposed to prevent such malpractices.

Muhith said a proposal in this regard was sent to the finance ministry from the speaker's office.

The finance minister will send it to the Prime Minister's Office for the premier's approval.

The last caretaker government promulgated an ordinance scrapping the privilege of importing duty-free vehicles by lawmakers but the current parliament did not ratify it.

Pinky's family

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impossible for her to make telephonic conversations which Murad could record.

Deputy Commissioner Chowdhury Monjurul Kabir of Tejjagon zone DMP said, "We'll track call records of Murad to know if he had phone conversations with Pinky. We're trying to recover the memory card to examine the photos."

He added they have sent the suicide note to Criminal Investigation Department to verify Pinky's handwriting.

Ali filed a case against security guard Abdul Kalam and Murad on Tuesday with Sher-e-Bangla Nagar police station. The police arrested security guard Kalam the same day.

Kalam is accused of helping Murad tease Pinky.

Start demolition
If the demolitions are not started immediately, the task will not be completed within the stipulated time, he said adding that the illegal structures have to be removed in order to stop encroachment upon the rivers.

The court directive was sent to the deputy commissioners of the four districts who had submitted the survey reports, chairman of Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority, director general of the Directorate of Land Record and Survey, secretaries to the ministries of -- finance, water resources, forest and environment, and land, and to other officials concerned.

Commute penalty

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The adjournment followed separate time prayers by the counsels of three other convicts on death row -- Syed Farooq Rahman, Sultan Shahriar Rashid Khan and Mohiuddin Ahmed.

Making the appeal for commuting death penalty of Huda and AKM Mohiuddin, their counsel Abdullah-Al Mamun said his clients have been suffering in condemned cells for long, and they have already been punished greatly.

Green office

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residential houses environmentally friendly using 'green technology'.

The Science & ICT ministry officials informed the committee that it would provide laptop to all 345 lawmakers within two months and also another computer to each MP's office to digitalise and make easy their communication.

"We asked the ministry concerned to take a pilot project to build its office building using green technology as part of the initiative," Zunaed Ahmed Palak, a member of the committee, told The Daily Star after the meeting held at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban.

Elaborating on the green technology, Palak, also a ruling Awami League lawmaker, said building of offices and residences using green technology would not release any carbon to environment.

Besides, all wastes of houses and offices will be recycled and to produce energy, said Palak.

"Several other lawmakers and I shared our experience of recent visit to the southern state of Karnataka and West Bengal of India where we saw offices and houses were built using green technology," said the AL lawmaker.

"An Indian delegation of West Bengal Electronics City will visit Bangladesh in the next month to discuss different technological issues including building of zero carbon emitting buildings," he added saying "India's one of the largest software exporter Infosys, also expressed their willingness to assist".

Turnout at the government

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