

High-ups' perks

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bill to revive the controversial facility.

"A member shall be entitled to import another new car, jeep or microbus after expiration of a period of five years from the date of his last import at the same term and conditions," proposes the bill titled Members of Parliament (Remuneration and Allowances) (Amendment) Act, 2010.

In addition, the current remuneration and other allowances for constituency, sumptuary, office expenses and telephone bills would be increased to Tk 54,800 from Tk 34,000 per month, according to the proposed bill.

The proposed legislation also offers new benefits to lawmakers saying they would receive a laundry allowance of Tk 1,000 besides monthly Tk 5,000 for purchasing cozieries, linen, toiletries and other goods.

The bill also proposes to increase the lawmakers' discretionary grant to Tk 3 lakh from Tk 1 lakh per year.

It also proposes to increase the lawmakers' remuneration to Tk 27,500 from Tk 15,000 per month and sumptuary allowance to Tk 3,000 from Tk 2,000, office expenses to Tk 9,000 from Tk 6,000 and telephone allowance to Tk 7,800 from Tk 6,000 per month.

The amount of a lawmaker's insurance coverage would also be increased to Tk 10 lakh from Tk 5 lakh. The bill also proposes to increase medical allowance for a lawmaker and his family members to Tk 700 from Tk 200 per month.

The bill also proposes to increase daily allowance of a lawmaker for attending the sitting of parliament or meeting of the committee to Tk 800 from Tk 400 and Tk 200 instead of Tk 100 as allowance for attending the sitting of parliament or meeting of the committee.

It also proposes to increase a lawmaker's travel allowance to Tk 75,000 from Tk 50,000 per year.

Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Shafiq Ahmed placed the bill.

PRESIDENT'S REMUNERATION
Agriculture Minister Matia Chowdhury, who is also in charge of the Cabinet Division in the Parliamentary Business, placed the President's (Remuneration and Privileges) (Amendment) bill proposing to increase salary of the president to Tk 61,200 from Tk 33,400 per month.

The bill also proposes to provide family members of the president with facilities to receive medical treatment abroad or consult a foreigner or a physician along with the president.

PRIME MINISTER
Matia also placed the Prime Minister's (Remuneration and Privileges) (Amendment) bill proposing to increase the premier's salary to Tk 58,600 from Tk 32,000.

The bill also proposes to increase the amount of the premier's annual discretionary grant to Tk 1 crore from Tk 50 lakh.

It also offers medical facilities for the premier's family members abroad at government cost.

COUNCIL OF MINISTERS
Matia also placed the Ministers, Ministers of State and Deputy Ministers (Remuneration and Privileges) (Amendment) bill proposing an increase in salaries, allowances for furnishing residence, house rent, telephone, and discretionary grant.

According to the bill, a minister's salary would be upped to Tk 53,100 from Tk 29,000, a state minister's Tk 47,800 from Tk 26,100 and a deputy minister's salary to Tk 45,150 from Tk 24,650.

The official residence of a minister would be furnished by the government at a cost of Tk 5 lakh instead of current Tk 1.5 lakh. For a state minister and a deputy minister, the amount would be Tk 4 lakh each instead of Tk 1 lakh.

If anyone of the council of ministers does not stay in official residence, they would receive Tk 45,000 per month in house rent instead of current Tk 25,000, while a state and a deputy minister would have Tk 40,000 each instead of current Tk 20,000.

The bill also proposes to increase the amount of annual discretionary grant to Tk 4 lakh from Tk 3 lakh for a minister, Tk 3 lakh from Tk 2 lakh for a state minister and Tk 3 lakh from Tk 1.5 lakh for a deputy minister.

Besides, each member of the council of ministers would have telephone, internet or ICT and cellphone facilities at office and official residence.

SPEAKER & DEPUTY SPEAKER
The law minister placed the Speaker and Deputy Speaker (Remuneration and Privilege) (Amendment) bill proposing to increase salaries of the speaker and the deputy speaker to Tk 57,200 from Tk 31,200 and Tk 53,100 from Tk 29,000, respectively.

If the speaker decides to reside in any house other than the official residence, it would be furnished at a cost not exceeding Tk 5 lakh instead of current Tk 1.5 lakh.

The bill also proposes to increase their sumptuary allowance to Tk 8,000 from Tk 6,000 and insurance coverage for air journey to Tk 10 lakh from Tk 5 lakh. It also proposes for allocation of Tk 4.5 lakh as discretionary grant for the speaker and Tk 4 lakh for the deputy speaker.

SCJUDGES
The law minister placed the Supreme Court Judges (Remuneration and Privileges) (Amendment) bill proposing to increase salary of the Chief Justice to Tk 56,000 from Tk 28,125.

Besides, salary of a judge of the Appellate Division would increase to Tk 53,100 from Tk 26,750 and of a judge of the High Court Division to Tk 47,000 from Tk 24,875.

Residence and transport allowances of an SC judge would increase to Tk 26,000 from Tk 20,000 and Tk 15,000 from Tk 12,000 per month respectively.

According to the provision of the bill, the sumptuary allowance for the chief justice would increase to Tk 7,000 per month from Tk 5,200, for a judge of the Appellate Division Tk 5,000 from Tk 975 and for a judge of the HC Division Tk 3,000 from Tk 650.

OPPOSITION FROM BNP
The lawmakers of the main opposition BNP opposed all the bills except that for increasing the salary and allowances of the SC judges. They argued that people are suffering from various problems including price hike of essentials and deterioration of law and order.

Matia and Shafiq, who placed the six bills, replied to them saying the government has already increased salaries of all government officials. They said the salaries of the government's high-ups should be increased to keep consistent only with the pay hike of civil servants.

All the bills were sent to the parliamentary standing committee on law ministry for scrutiny and report to parliament in seven days.

After the bills were placed, the speaker at 5:57pm adjourned the sitting of parliament till 5:00pm today. The question-answer hour session was tabled and call attention notices on different important issues were suspended for yesterday.

Senior ASP Moniruzzaman Chowdhury, also the investigation officer (IO) of the case, submitted the petition for extending time on Saturday, two days before the expiry of previously extended time.

During the hearing on the petition yesterday, Public Prosecutor Kamal Uddin appealed to the court to extend the time as the vessel that carried the ammunition, and the patrol boat of Bangladesh Navy could not be traced so far.

IO Moniruzzaman told The Daily Star they sought time extension since some important matters and enquiries regarding the case are yet to be resolved.

"Some security guards of Chittagong Urea Fertiliser Ltd, who were on duty during the seizure of the ammunition, could not be interrogated so far," he said adding that the vessel that brought in the ammunition and a Navy patrol boat present during the loading of the arms are yet to be traced.

"We sent a letter to the Navy authority in Chittagong a month back for investigation into the Navy patrol boat but still have not got any reply from them," Moniruzzaman said.

He hoped to submit the report within the extended time if all the tasks are completed.

CPB BLAST CASE

3 Huji men on remand

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday placed two members of Harkatul Jihad including its founder on three-day remand each in connection with the CPB rally blast case.

First Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Mohammad Ali Hussain passed the order after Criminal Investigation Department produced Sheikh Abdus Salam, founder of Huji, and Maulana Abu Taher before it with a five-day remand prayer.

The court fixed May 16 for hearing on a five-day remand petition for three other Huji members, Maulana Abdul Latif, Maulana Idris Ali and Arif Hassan Sumon.

Thirteen other Huji men, including its chief Mufti Abdul Hannan, are now in custody in this case.

The case was filed following a bomb blast at a rally of Communist Party of Bangladesh at Paltan Maidan on January 21, 2001. Five people were killed and 50 others were injured.

Port dockers threaten strike on March 28

UNB, Chittagong

Dock workers at Chittagong Port will go on a strike on March 28 for eight hours if their four-point demand placed before the authorities are not met by March 27.

The decision came from a rally and a sit-in programme of the Chittagong Port Dock Workers - Employees' Federation yesterday.

The strike will continue from 8:00am to 4:00pm on that day, the workers said at the rally in front of the Port Bhaban.

They will also form a human chain and stage a demonstration in front of the local press club on March 24 to press home their demands.

The demands include reinstatement of some 2,200 workers, the contracts of those terminated during the last caretaker government, putting an end to repression of workers, placing their jobs under the port authorities and introduction of a Dock Management Board.

By-polls

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IS illegal on the grounds that he stood for the election before the passing of five years since his retirement from the defence service.

He was elected from the constituency on AL nomination in the December 29 polls.

CID gets

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investigation into the sensational Chittagong arms haul case.

Metropolitan Sessions Judge Bhabani Prasad Sinha extended the time till May 23 upon a prayer of CID for 90 days.

With this, the time for further investigation into the case has been extended for the seventh time.

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RanksTel chief

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Afzal Hossain Ahmed and Justice Md Abdul Hye granted the accused bail upon a bail petition filed by the accused, who appeared before the court during the hearing.

On March 20 Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission's (BTRC) junior consultant Kawser Ahmed filed a case against 12 officials from RanksTel with Tejgaon Industrial Police Station for their alleged involvement in illegal VoIP business.

On March 19, BTRC shut down the operations of RanksTel, a telecom service provider, for its alleged involvement in illegal VoIP business.

As a result, around 300,000 RanksTel subscribers remain offline.

Barrister Rafique-ul Huq, and advocates Anisul Huq and Sakawat Hossain appeared for the accused petitioners.

In a separate case, the High Court yesterday rejected a writ petition filed by Dhaka Phone, a private landline phone company.

The petition challenged the action of Bangladesh Telecommunication and Regulatory Commission's (BTRC) decision to suspend its operations.

The HC bench of Justice AHM Shamsuddin Chowdhury Manik and Justice Md Delwar Hossain rejected the petition on the grounds that it is premature because the tenure of the show cause notice issued by BTRC has not yet expired.

On March 15 BTRC issued a show cause notice requesting Dhaka Phone to explain within a week why its license should not be cancelled for violating terms and conditions.

On the same day BTRC suspended the operations of Dhaka Phone and sealed its main switching centre and head office at Rupayan Tower in Banani.

BTRC alleges that Dhaka Phone is running illegal VoIP business.

Barrister Rokanuddin Mahmud moved the petition, while Additional Attorney General Murad Reza opposed the petition.

Why DST failed?

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mw to 2,000 MW, meaning due to the DST the evening demand reduced to a level much closer to that of other times of the day. Typically power demands stay at the lowest point in the morning hours.

But the general people did not feel the difference because load shedding was still on, after all the country's power demand and supply has remained inconsistent for years now.

Unless some new major power projects add power to the national grid, the nation will not see an end to the load shedding.

According to the international practices, the DST should have ended in October, because by then the duration of the day starts to shrink. According to the original proposal of PDB, the period of DST should be from April 1 to October 1.

But for some unknown reason, the government stuck to the idea of DST beyond October. And then the troubles began.

Back in June-July following the introduction of DST, the level of load shedding hovered around 360 MW to 650 MW. But

between August and October, the level increased to 500 MW to 880 MW.

Moreover, the daylight continued to shrink, by November, especially students and teachers became the first victims of the DST as they had to wake up and start for their institutions when it was still dark. The problem became unbearable by mid-December, when finally the cabinet decided to revert to the old time from January 1 this year.

By then, the DST left a large segment of the people bitter about its introduction, on genuine grounds.

If the government stuck to the original proposal of PDB, the bitterness would not have been created.

The failure of DST in Bangladesh has largely been a fault of the political decision making process.

DST is practiced widely in the northern hemisphere and Australia -- not out of pleasure, but out of necessity. It is also followed in some South American, African, and Asian countries. If it can work in those countries, it should have worked in Bangladesh.

PM stops 'wasteful'

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90's. This evolved into a full swing scam during the tenure of the BNP-led alliance government when a politically powerful nexus through tender manipulation sold the REB concrete poles at a price much higher than the market rate.

According to an investigation by The Daily Star in 2007, a syndicate of 13 concrete pole manufacturers through bid manipulation and political influence sold the REB 15 lakh overpriced concrete electricity poles worth Tk 1,100 crore between 2001 and July 2006.

Because of massive expansion of distribution line in 2001-06, the REB's client base doubled from three million to six million and power demand from 1,000 to 2,000MW in the REB network.

Since the government failed to install new power plants at the same time, it can

now supply only 700 to 1,200MW of power to the network creating widespread dissatisfaction among people.

The pole manufacturers became inactive in early 2007 but they reemerged in late 2008, taking advantage of weakness in REB administration.

Hasina yesterday also asked her cabinet colleagues to remain alert about the "ill-effects" of the BNP-led opposition ahead of trials of war criminals.

Stating that the opposition are trying to destabilise the situation in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, she also directed them to be aware of such ill motives, highly placed sources told The Daily Star.

The directives came when the premier held separate meeting with the ministers and state ministers after the regular cabinet meeting chaired by her.

Mohila Dal

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former lawmaker, its general secretary.

Meanwhile, former lawmaker Sultana Ahmed and Farida Yasmin were respectively made the president and general secretary of the organisation's Dhaka city unit, said a BNP press release.

Approved by BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia, the 351-member Mohila Dal Central Executive Committee was made public late last night. Joint Secretary General of BNP Ruhul Kabir Rizvi signed the press release.

A number of newly made Mohila Dal leaders, however, said as per the constitution of the organisation the central committee should comprise of 151 members.

They also expressed surprise over the inclusion of a few BNP leaders' family members to the committee.

Afroza Abbas wife of the party's standing committee member Mirza Abbas has been made vice president while Delwara Begum, daughter of party Secretary General Delwar Hossain, international affairs secretary.

were made vice presidents while seven others appointed as joint general secretary of the women front of BNP.

The vice presidents are: Rabeya Siraj, Nurjahan Yasmin, Afroza Abbas, Rowshon Ara Farid, Nargis Ali, Laila Begum, Saida Rahman Josna, Najmunnahar Baby, Selina Rab Chowdhury, Shamsunnahar Kashem, Nurjahan Mahbub, Abida Chowdhury, Amena Begum, Chamam Ara, Shahana Saleh and Shahana Chowdhury.

The joint general secretaries are: Bilkis Jahan Shirin, Syeda Papia Ashrafi, Rehana Akhter Ranu, Newaz Halima Arly, Yasmin Ara Haque, Samia Chowdhury and Lovely Rahman.

Conservation

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excavated under the project that also includes construction of culverts and walkways on the banks of the canals.

Funded by the World Bank, the project is expected to be complete within 18 months with an estimated cost of Tk 29 crore, says a press release.

3 of a family poisoned to death in Bagerhat

UNB, Pirojpur

Three people of a family died yesterday after taking sweets mixed with poison at Bolpur of Morelganj upazila in Bagerhat early yesterday.

The victims were identified as Abdul Haq, 55, Rabeya Begum, 35, and their daughter Asma, 11.

Police said two persons introducing themselves as relatives of Abdul Haq came to his house on Sunday night with two packets of sweets mixed with poison.

Haq and his family members ate the sweets after having their dinner along with the guests and went to bed.

Locals found the trio dead in the next morning.

On information, police rushed to the spot and sent the bodies to a hospital morgue for autopsy.

However, the identities of the two guests and their motives behind the killing could not be ascertained immediately.

Police said the miscreants might have killed the family members to loot valuables or grab their property.

Thai protesters vow to 'shut down' Bangkok

AFP, Bangkok

Thailand's red-shirted protesters vowed to "shut down" the capital Bangkok with a new anti-government rally this Saturday aimed at forcing fresh elections.

The supporters of deposed prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra began mass demonstrations on March 14 with a gathering of more than 100,000 people, triggering a massive security operation involving 50,000 personnel.

Their numbers waned during the week but a carnival-style parade on Saturday drew around 65,000 protesters in a noisy procession through the streets of Bangkok.

"On Saturday we will shut down Bangkok and rally at provincial halls across the country," said Jatuporn Prompan, a leader of the "Red Shirts", who last week splattered the prime minister's home and offices with their own blood.

Nizami calls

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blasted the media, calling journalists 'fools' and 'ignorant'.

"What Rafiqul Islam said the other day, is not tantamount to equating Prophet Mohammad (Pbuh) with me, the journalists who reported it as an equation are either fools or ignorant," Nizami said while addressing a meeting of ulemas [Islamic scholars] in Al Falah auditorium at Maghbazar of the capital.

Jamaat's Dhaka City Unit Ameer Rafiqul Islam Khan on March 17 at a discussion in the capital said Jamaat Ameer Motiur Rahman Nizami is encountering the same difficulties that were faced by Hazrat Muhammad (Pbuh) while preaching Islam.

Nizami yesterday said, "Our neighbouring country's intelligence agency RAW with the help of Mossad, the intelligence agency of the Zionist state, is sponsoring militancy in the country. The explosives and arms the militants used, all originated from India."

When Jamaat was a part of 4-party alliance government, Nizami told reporters that there was no militant in Bangladesh, rather the notion of their existence in the country was only a fiction created by the media.

Several Jamaat leaders yesterday also slammed the Islamic scholars who have been demonstrating in protest against the remarks made by Rafiq. The Jamaat leaders said the demonstrating ulemas are not real ulemas.

The meeting was presided over by Rafiqul Islam Khan.

AL leader

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of rice allocated to him under OMS quota on the black market.

Bashar calls it quits

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"It is never easy to give up the game you love so much and especially in my case this moment is very emotional as cricket has been my life," said the 37-year-old cricketer who was not considered for any national selection ever since he led a rebel group that joined the banned Indian Cricket League (ICL) in 2007.

A sweet timer of the ball, Bashir scored three centuries and a staggering 24 fifties in Tests after making his debut against India in Bangladesh's inaugural Test in November 2000.

Better known as 'Mr. Fifty' in cricket fraternity, the Kushtia batsman also hit 14 half-centuries in 111 ODIs he played.

"I thank the BCB for giving me the honour of captaining Bangladesh and for the support throughout my career. I will cherish the memories of my time in the Bangladesh dressing room and my heartfelt gratitude goes out to all the players, coaches, team officials and staff I have had the privilege of knowing and working with," said the soft-spoken right-hander.

"There will always be a special place in my heart for the fans for their warmth and genuine affection.

"As I bid bye I also feel excitement at the way the Bangladesh cricket team is progressing. I wish them every success," said Bashir who was at the helm when the Tigers pulled off a famous one-day win against mighty Australia at Sofia Garden in Cardiff in 2005.

BCB president AHM Mustafa Kamal said Bashir's legacy would inspire future generations of Bangladesh cricketers.

"We are indebted to this fantastic cricketer who had instilled belief in the players and inspired them to perform. Under his able leadership Bangladesh had tasted the first Test victory and had progressed to the Super Eight stages of the 2007 Cricket World Cup. With his batting he showed others the way to dominate and score at international level. We hope that he will continue to be associated with Bangladesh cricket after his retirement."

FACTFILE
Specialty: Right-handed batsman and occasional off-break bowler
Test Debut: Against India at Dhaka on November 10, 2000
ODI Debut: Against Sri Lanka at Sharjah on April 6, 1995

ODI	Matches	Innings	NO	Runs	Highest	Average	100s	50s	Catches
	111	105	5	2,168	78	21.68	0	14	26

TEST	Matches	Innings	NO	Runs	Highest	Average	100s	50s	Catches
	50	99	1	3,026	113	30.87	3	24	22

Cops close

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the building, said a Drik Gallery source.

Though two exhibitions are going on on the first and the second floors of the building, the police only wanted to know whether the organisers have permission for the exhibition on "crossfire" from the authorities concerned.

However, in the face of police interference, the exhibition was inaugurated by Indian rights activist Mahasweta Devi on the road in front of Drik Gallery at the scheduled time at 4:00pm.

Officer-in-Charge of Dhanmondi Police Station Shah Alam said they have closed the exhibition first, as the organisers did not have any permission for the exhibition and secondly, as such an exhibition may cause fear in public and deteriorate the law

and order. Shahidul Alam who set up the exhibition said, "Police asked me whether I have permission for the exhibition. Crossfire for which police do not need permission, then why should I have permission for the exhibition?"

He also said, they have organised thousands of exhibitions since 1993 and they never required any permission. Some of those exhibitions were even inaugurated by the present and former prime ministers.

"We organised the exhibition to raise awareness and draw the government and the court's attention to the extra judicial killings through art, Shahidul told The Daily Star.

Farroque

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The High Court bench of Justice MA Wahhab Miah and Justice Md Abdur Razaque also directed the government not to harass or arrest him in the eight weeks' period in the cases.

Farroque appeared before the High Court bench yesterday for bail in the cases. Barrister Moudud Ahmed appeared for the petitioner.

At a press conference on March 12, Farroque alleged that Joy has been doing illegal Voice Over Internet Protocol business from abroad, causing a loss of Tk 1500 crore to the state exchequer.

China keen

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Replying to a question, the foreign minister mentioned that draft of an interim deal was exchanged at the JRC meet.

"Water secretaries of the two countries will examine it and then sit for an agreement. There is nothing to get frustrated as progress is being made," she said.

She told a question