

## Rare absence

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opinion with the chief justice, which might have arisen following the chief justice's decision not to administer the two newly appointed judges on oath.

Asked if the en masse absence of the SC judges constitutes a "no confidence" in the apex court, he said he did not think so because difference of opinion is "an expression of the judges' free thoughts", which is not bad.

The former CJ said such contenting opinions might result in the Appellate Division judges delivering dissenting judgments in cases but those judgments will not have any adverse impact on the administration of justice.

Attorney General Mahubey Alam termed the SC judges' absence unprecedented.

He expressed hope that the chief justice would administer Ruhul Quddus and Khasruzzaman on oath soon since the president of the country appointed them as per the constitution.

"Ruhul Quddus Babu is an efficient and honest lawyer. We do not want to lose a judge like him," he said, adding that the allegation against Khasruzzaman that he kicked on the door of the CJ's courtroom is also false and baseless.

The quarter that filed a case against Ruhul Quddus on charge of killing a Shibir worker is spreading propaganda against him on political purpose, he said.

Supreme Court Bar

Association President Khandaker Mahub Hossain refrained from making any comment on the judges' absence from the oath-taking ceremony, saying, "We [the SCBA] were not aware of the incident."

Speaking at a press briefing at his SCBA office, he however thanked the chief justice for not administering Ruhul Quddus and Khasruzzaman on oath. He said the chief justice did the right thing.

He demanded that the government cancel appointments of Ruhul Quddus and Khasruzzaman.

"If the chief justice swears them in, we will launch a tough movement," he said.

Former SCBA president barrister Rokan Uddin Mahmud told The Daily Star that this is the first time that the Appellate Division judges in a body remained absent from the oath-taking ceremony.

The 15 judges who took their oath of office are SC Registrar Md Shawkat Hossain, Additional Attorney General AKM Zahirul Hoque, district and sessions judges of Dhaka Krishna Debnath and ANM Bashir Ullah, Deputy Attorney General FRM Nazmul Ahsan, former deputy attorney general JBM Hasan, and SC lawyers M Faruk, Abdur Rob, Kazi Reza-Ul-Huq, Md Abu Zafar Siddiqui, Sheikh Md Zakir Hossain, Habibur Gani, Gobinda Chandra Tagore, Sheikh Hasan Arifand Jahangir Hossain Selim.

## BB bans loan

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The central bank yesterday in a circular said no loan for tobacco farming would be given to farmers directly or in any other form.

The circular also said the loan given earlier must be realised on time and their payment schedule would not be extended.

The central bank said the decision was taken to improve people's health, financial condition and to discourage tobacco farming, which is harmful to the environment.

The Bangladesh Bank advised the banks to increase the flow of agricultural loans to the farmers who are now engaged in tobacco farming so that they can produce alternative crop under bank loan facility.

Apart from tobacco users, people including children directly involved in the tobacco farming and production are exposed to health hazard.

As a result of expansion of tobacco cultivation the amount of agricultural land is shrinking which is increasingly creating food crisis in a densely populated country like Bangladesh.

Huge amount of fuel is burnt for drying green tobacco leaves, which emits smoke with tobacco odour and carbon-di-oxide. It also encourages felling of trees and thus contributing to the adverse impact of climate change, the circular said.

## 12 killed

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Khulna Medical College Hospital (KMCH) where their condition was stated to be critical.

Police said the accident occurred at 12:10 pm when a city bound bus carrying 42 BNP workers from Kashipur union under Lohagara upazila of Narail district collided head-on with a truck coming from the opposite direction.

Both the bus and the truck bound for Jessore from Dumuria were smashed in the accident.

Nine BNP activists died instantly while three others including the bus driver Kamrul Islam succumbed to their injuries at KMCH.

The death toll may rise as the condition of most of the injured is critical at the hospital, said Nazrul Islam Manju, lawmaker of Khulna-2 and president of city unit BNP.

Manju, BNP standing committee member Tarikul Islam and other leaders of Khulna division visited the victims at the hospital.

A pall of gloom descended on the venue of the BNP's grand rally and the city at the news of the accident.

Hundreds of BNP leaders and activists thronged the hospital where the bodies were kept to carry out autopsies.

In a condolence message, Khaleda Zia expressed deep shock and sympathy to the family members of those killed in the accident. She prayed for them so that they could bear the grief of losing their near and dearest.

She also prayed for the salvation of the departed souls. The opposition leader urged the authority concerned to ensure proper treatment for the injured persons.

## ACC to quiz

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papers and documents due to lack of time and eventually could not reach a conclusion about the allegations.

"We'll question the three accused this time as we have heard the commission has asked us to clarify some points of the report we submitted. Once we receive an official letter of the query, we'll question the three for clarification," says a member of the committee requesting anonymity.

"The case has a lot of documents and papers which require much time for full examination. During the earlier inquiry we examined about 70 percent of the documents. Now we'll complete examination of remaining papers and questioning of the accused," he adds.

According to the existing law, an inquiry must be completed and its report submitted to the commission in a month. If the commission finds the inquiry incomplete, it may ask for further clarification in a second phase inquiry, insiders say.

The second phase would not be bound by any timeframe and thus the inquiry officers would have necessary time to complete the report, sources say.

The parliament on February 7 forwarded its investigation report over misappropriation of Tk 2.5 crore allegedly by the three to the anti-graft body for further investigation.

If the inquiry finds enough evidence against the allegation, the team would recommend filing a case against the accused. The ACC would begin investigation once the case is filed.

## 57 BDR rebels

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types of legal aid.

Before announcing the verdict the court chairman said all witnesses and evidence confirmed that BDR mutiny took place in 19 Rifles Battalion.

The chairman said this is a remarkable day in the history of 19 Rifles Battalion in Feni.

As per the legal process, an accused is to be given at least 27 days for their self-defence, but in this case they were given more time, he said. A BDR official was appointed to ensure legal assistance for the accused. At the beginning, two civil lawyers worked for the accused jawans.

Visitors and newsmen were present during the trial. Four of the convicts -- Havildar Major Md Ruhul Amin, Sepoy Md Mizanur Rahman, Sepoy Md Bashir Ahmed, and Sepoy Md Mohiuddin -- got the highest seven years.

Those who got four years and six months each are Nayek Emranul Haque Bhuiyan, Nayek Md Osman Haider and Sepoy driver Md Abu Hanifa.

Nayek Md Moklesur Rahman will have to serve four years and three months.

Havildar Md Firoz Kabir and Sepoy driver Nihar Ranjan Tanchangya got four years each.

Havildar Md Abdur Rashid, Sepoy Md Lokman Hakim, Sepoy Ching Thoa U Marma, Sepoy Ranju Ranjan Talukder, Sepoy Md Abdul Kadir and Sepoy Nazmus Saadat were sentenced to three years' imprisonment while Havildar Khorsheed Karim, Havildar Md Fazul Haq, Havildar Md Emdadul Haque Sarker, Lance Nayek Swapan Kumar Das, Sepoy Md Abdul Momen, Sepoy Md Saiful Alam, Sepoy Md Aminul Islam Dakua, Sepoy Md Selim Uddin, Sepoy Muhammad Javed, Sepoy Md Sultan Dewan, Sepoy VM Md Zulfikar Ali, Sepoy Rashid Chakma, Sepoy driver Muhammad Safiul Alam, Sepoy Md Abul Kashem and Sepoy Md Abdullah Al Mamun were sentenced to two years and six months' jail term.

Nayek Subedar Yasin Ali, Nayek Subedar Afaz Uddin, Havildar Md Shah Jamal Sarker, Sepoy driver Sudarshan Chakma, Sepoy Moazzem Hossain, Sepoy Kazi Mahmudul Arefin, Sepoy Md Mizanur Rahman, Sepoy Anwarul Azim and Sepoy Shahriar were sentenced to two years' imprisonment while Nayek Mahubur Rahman, Sepoy Md Rafiqul Islam, Nayek Md

Atta Faruque and Sepoy Md Moktar Hossain to one year and six months imprisonment.

Subedar Maj Faquir Abdul Jalil, Sepoy Md Safiuddin (attached with 24 Rifles Battalion), Sepoy Abdus Sattar, Sepoy electrician Md Habibur Hasan Hero and Sepoy Aminul Haque were awarded one year jail term, Sepoy Syed Saidur Rahman and Sepoy Md Bilas to six months, Sepoy Mithun Barua, Sepoy Md Al Amin, Sepoy Md Safiul Islam, Sepoy Muhammad Golzar Hossain, Sepoy Md Sohel Rana and Sepoy Khairul Islam to four months' imprisonment.

The court acquitted Havildar Mohammad Ali, Nayek Dulal Miah, Lance Nayek (signal) Saiful Islam, Sepoy Kazi Saifuzzaman and Sepoy Md Omar Faruque as the charges brought against them were not proved.

Many convicts burst into tears during the delivery of the verdict. Government's counsel Lt Col Gazi Md Salahuddin, also commanding officer of 19 Rifles Battalion, in a press briefing told journalists that he was satisfied with the verdict.

After BDR rebellion at Pilkhana, Dhaka on February 25 last year the mutiny spread to 19 Rifles Battalion in Daganbhuiyan upazila in Feni on February 26. The mutineers rang the alarm bell, looted the armoury and put up blockade on Feni-Noakhali highway.

The accused persons were taken to the special court set up at 19 Rifles Battalion headquarters at Jailaskar from Feni jail under strict Rab and police guard yesterday morning. After delivery of the verdict they were sent back to Feni jail.

**VERDICT IN SATKHIRA**  
The BDR special court no-1 will deliver judgment of the mutiny case against 60 accused BDR jawans of 41 rifles battalion in Satkhira today.

After completion of arguments from the defendants and the prosecutors on March 23, the court fixed April 19 to deliver the verdict in the case.

## Rajuk

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provide the facility of rain harvesting," he said.

Some 9,224 flats will be constructed under the Jhilmil project.

These will include 3,284 flats of 1,001 to 1,200 square feet each, 4,377 flats of 801 to 1,000 sqft and 1,563 of 600 to 800 sqft.

At Purbachal, there will be 7,000 flats of 850 sqft and 1,250 sqft, and 6,000 flats of 1,500 sqft, said the official.

## EC to video

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Nazrul Islam for "the sake of ensuring an atmosphere conducive to holding fair polls", the officials added.

Directed by the EC, the law enforcement agencies on Friday began driving out outsiders from the constituency.

The commission also directed its local officials to publicise a directive asking residents of the constituency to carry their national identity cards with them to satisfy the law enforcement personnel's inquiries.

The EC will deploy two officials in each union of the constituency to observe and report to the commission the pre-poll atmosphere.

Officials in the EC Secretariat said the law enforcers have been directed to set up check posts at launch and bus terminals, so that outsiders cannot enter the constituency consisting Lalmohon and Tojumuddin upazilas.

The move came after the commission had received information that both candidates had hired outsiders to work for them in the by-election, the officials added.

Asked about the present situation, Election Commissioner Brig Gen (ret'd) M Sakawat Hossain told The Daily Star yesterday that there is no visible threat to holding the by-election in a free and fair manner.

"Rab members are now in full-fledged action. They are patrolling areas down to the union parishad level of the constituency, and more Rab and police personnel will be deployed," he said.

An adequate number of law enforcers will be deployed at the polling stations on the polling day, he added.

The EC is keeping constant watch over the developing

situation in the constituency. Chief Election Commissioner ATM Shamsul Huda is likely to leave the capital today for the constituency to observe the prevailing situation there.

Election Commissioner Sakawat visited the area early this month, and the other election commissioner, Muhammed Sohel Hussein, went there on Thursday.

**INQUIRY REPORT**  
The electoral inquiry committee in its report sent to the EC on Saturday said the chief election coordinator of BNP candidate Nazimuddin Alam violated the electoral code of conduct when he went to Satanibazar area in Farashganj union under Lalmohon upazila for electioneering.

According to the code of conduct, he should have informed the local police at least 24 hours before holding a rally there. But Alam informed the police only a few minutes before he went there, the committee found.

He also made provocative remarks in his speech, giving rise to tension among the rival parties, ultimately leading to clashes.

**BNP MEETS EC**  
A BNP delegation led by MK Anwar yesterday met the EC, and renewed the party's plea for army deployment in Bholo-3 constituency to ensure free and fair by-election.

"Law and order situation deteriorated sharply across the country, and the situation is worse in the by-election area. Under the circumstances, the army needs to be deployed immediately there," Anwar said emerging from the meeting last afternoon.

Election Commissioner Sakawat however said the present situation does not require army deployment.

## Muggers snatch

### Tk 26 lakh

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Armed muggers on motor-bikes shot an employee of a business firm yesterday in the city's Banani and rode away with Tk 26.56 lakh he was going to deposit in a bank.

Jyotindra Chandra Burman, 50, an office assistant of MIKA Properties and Securities Ltd located on Kemal Ataturk Avenue, was admitted to United Hospital with bullet wounds.

Police detained AKM Shafullah Rubel, cash executive of the firm who was accompanying Jyotindra on his way to the bank, for questioning to be sure of the nature of the incident.

Managing Director of the firm AA Maniruzzaman said his employees were going to a nearby branch of Premier Bank around 6:00pm to deposit the money on the company's behalf.

Officer-in-Charge of Gulshan Police Station Kamal Uddin said the muggers were four in number and rode on two motorbikes.

## Biman delays

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Biman high official told The Daily Star.

About 20 countries, including UK and Italy, have closed their airspace, cancelling tens of thousands of flights. Millions of travellers are now stranded across the continent.

The volcanic ash from Iceland started erupting on April 14.

A source said, direct flight to London -- Saturday's BG-017 -- has been delayed for 72 hours and rescheduled to leave at 11:00pm on April 21.

And BG-005, another London (via Dubai) flight which was scheduled to depart at 5:45am yesterday, has been delayed for 48 hours and will fly tomorrow at the same time, Biman sources said.

The Rome-bound Biman flight, which was set to fly yesterday, has been deferred to fly tomorrow at 12:00noon.

"The timetable will be changed further if we do not get clearance to land from the respective airport's authority," said a Biman high official.

## Top criminal

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around 11:00am for autopsy.

He, however, could not ascertain the reason behind the killing.

Maksud was accused in 17 cases including several murder cases with Fatullah, Siddhirganj and Narayanganj police stations.

His wife Ummay Salma, brother Ruhul Amin Badsha and other relatives took the body to his Khanpur residence in Narayanganj town after the postmortem, the OC added.

Locals said Shamim Osman's associates announced over loud speakers that the namaz-e-janaza of Maksud will be held today at the Central Shaheed Minar in Dhaka.

Maksud's family members said a team of law enforcers in plain clothes in a microbus stopped a taxi near Golf Club on Airport Road on Saturday at 10:00pm. Maksud and his friend Masud were in the taxi.

Since then, they were missing, and an unknown using Maksud's cellphone informed them of his death, the family members added.

**CRIMINAL RECORDS OF MAKSUD**

Locals said Maksud, locally known as Barisailla or Dredger Maksud, had been enjoying the shelter of Shamim Osman and his brother, and was involved in realising tolls, tender manipulations, land grabbing and garment jhut (reject fabrics of garment industry) grabbing in Narayanganj.

Maksud became more powerful after Shamim's brother Nasim was elected from Narayanganj in 1986.

Maksud and Shamim were accused in the sensational case of murder of Kamal and Kalam on July 24, 1988.

Locals said Maksud used to realise tolls from vehicles at Shimrai intersection on the Dhaka-Chittagong highway.

He with Shamim's help also used to manipulate tenders of Narayanganj Zila Parishad, LGED, Roads and Highway and Dredging departments between 1996 and 2001.

## BNP taking lesson

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you fail to resolve the crises, you will have to quit," she said.

"We have not waged any movement against the government over the last one and a half years as we wanted to give the government time," said the opposition leader.

About Bholo-3 by-poll the former premier said tough movement will be launched if a free, fair and neutral by-election is not ensured; the Election Commission will not be spared.

Thousands of people from adjacent districts thronged the divisional grand rally of BNP, carrying the portrait of late president Ziaur Rahman, Khaleda Zia and their son Tarique Rahman.

Hundreds of processions turned Khulna into a city of processions. A huge number of archways were set up to welcome the BNP chief, giving the town a festive look.

Terminating the Awami League-led government "fraud and cheat", Khaleda said the government has totally failed to carry out its electoral pledges.

The government has failed to bring down prices of essentials, provide jobs to at least one member of each family and ensure the price of rice at Tk10 a kg, which is why the government should not stay in power anymore, Khaleda said.

She alleged that the government, from top to bottom, is involved in corruption and looting; they are busy with pulling in bucks and taking commission.

She claimed that there was no corruption in the country during her party's rule and the power situation was at its best too.

The country is now suffering from "a famine of electricity" as the government has not done anything to this end, she alleged.

Khaleda also claimed that 1,500MW power was added during her 2001-06 tenure and the tender procedure of nine more power plants for 2,500MW electricity was almost completed.

She alleged that the government is running the country in the style of Moeen Uddin-Fakhruddin. The court has been made partisan where verdicts cannot be delivered because of threats from the attorney general, she said.

She said Bangladesh Rifles was destroyed through a premeditated conspiracy to turn Bangladesh borders vulnerable.

"The government could have saved the lives of army officers by taking quick steps at the initial stage of the February 2009 mutiny in Pilkhana," she added.

Khaleda came down hard on the government for not protesting what the Indian border guards are doing along the Bangladesh borders.

"During her visit to India, the prime minister did not protest the incidents on borders when the Indian border guards were killing Bangladeshis and looting properties by intruding into Bangladesh territory," she said.

Referring to the cases filed against opposition Chief Whip Joyntul Abidin Faroque, former energy adviser Mahmudur Rahman and Jatiya Press Club President Shawkat Mahmud, she said whenever people protest the

government's wrongdoings cases are filed against them.

Party leaders Tariquul Islam, Sarwari Rahman, Moyeen Khan, Salauddin Quader Chowdhury, Razia Foyez, Nurul Islam, among others, spoke at the rally with Khulna city BNP President Nazrul Islam Manju in the chair.

The BNP will mourn today the death of 15 party men killed in a road crash on their way to the rally in Khulna.

It decided to keep the party flag at half-mast at all party offices across the country and organise special prayer for the departed.

## AL men force

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describing the irregularities in the lottery and demanding for a fresh tender, sources said.

On February 16, the department in a notice invited the departmental contractors to drop tender documents within April 7 to construct Jamalpur-Vanua-Kamalpur-Rajibpur-Roumari-Datbhanga road at a cost of Tk1.44 crore.

Sources said 11 construction firms took part in the bid. Documents of two firms were cancelled because of faults.

At 10:30 am, the executive engineer conducted the lottery in presence of the representatives of nine bidders and picked the name of M/s Rafique Construction.

Later, the AL leaders kept the executive engineer confined to his room for about half an hour and forced him to select their chosen contractor for the work. In the meantime, they drove out the other contractors.

The AL leaders themselves then declared that contractor Jahurul Hoque Dulal got the work in the lottery, sources said.

## Dhaka-Ctg

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consultants joined the project after Roads and Highways Department warned the National Engineer Service of Pakistan (Nespak) of scrapping a contract signed in 2006 for designing routes and monitoring the project's implementation.

The consultants are Mahmood Ahmad Malik, Syed Tanvir Hussain and Nasir Ali Siddiqui.

The project had remained suspended for about two months as the Pakistani firm declined at the last moment to monitor the project's implementation without a fee hike.

The tender for the project was earlier cancelled twice because of flaws in the process.

The Dhaka-Chittagong Highway, which is considered the main artery of the country's transport system, has become risky because of its narrowness and poor condition.

Chinese company Sinohydro Corporation and local companies Reza Construction and Tahir Brothers Limited are to construct two more lanes measuring 215km in length in three years. The project has 10 different construction segments, major part of which will be done by the Chinese company.

Khan Md Aftabuddin of Reza Construction expressed hope that the main construction work will begin in a couple of months with the target to finish it by 2012.

"The delay in starting the project may delay completion of the construction," he added.

## Air chaos

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TEST FLIGHTS

Dutch airline KLM said it flew a Boeing 737-800 up to the usual maximum altitude of 13km (8 miles) on Saturday and Germany's Lufthansa said it flew 10 planes to Frankfurt from Munich at altitudes of up to 8km.

Lufthansa and Air Berlin said the decision to close much of Europe's airspace was not based on proper testing and that their aircraft showed no signs of damage after flying without passengers.

"The decision to close the airspace was made exclusively as a result of data from a computer simulation at the Volcanic Ash Advisory Centre in London," Air Berlin chief executive Joachim Hunold told the Bild am Sonntag newspaper.

"Not one single weather balloon has been sent up to measure how much volcanic ash is in the air."

Lufthansa spokesman Klaus Walter told Bild: "The flight ban, made on the basis just of computer calculations, is resulting in billion-high losses for the economy."

"In future we demand that reliable measurements are presented before a flying ban is

imposed."

KLM chief executive Peter Hartman, who was on board the plane, said there was "nothing unusual" about the flight.

"If the technical examination confirms this... we then hope to get permission as soon as possible to partially restart our operations," he added.

The tests were conducted at the request of the European Union to see whether travel disruption could be alleviated.

More trials are due to take place later on Sunday in countries including Britain, France and Italy.

UK Transport Secretary Lord Adonis, said "urgent discussions" were taking place between European and international agencies to ease the chaos.

"We want to be able to resume flights as soon as possible, but safety remains my paramount concern," he said.

Weather experts say wind patterns mean the cloud is not likely to move far until later in the week.

The impact is likely to exceed the airspace shutdown after the 11 September 2001 attacks, the International Civil Aviation Organisation said.