

Why MP-led

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to allocate Tk 15 crore to Akkelpur constituency in Joypurhat for two weeks.

Bablu in his petition said as per the constitution, the elected representatives of local government are assigned to carry out the rural infrastructure development projects.

But the Ecnc allocated money for the projects that will be implemented under the supervision of the lawmakers in violation of the constitution, said M Yousof Ali, who appeared for the petitioner.

Cabinet secretary, principal secretary to the Prime Minister's Office, secretaries to the ministries of finance, planning, and LGRD have been made respondents to the HC rule.

Legislators' involvement in carrying out local development activities has been mired with controversy and has triggered debate on whether MPs can be empowered to interfere in the activities of the local government bodies.

The Supreme Court in a verdict delivered on April 27, 2006, categorically stated that legislators are entitled to ask for any information and object to any of their electorates before the House, but they cannot interfere with the local administration.

It had said the scheme of the constitution is that members of parliament and the ministers would perform their functions centrally, keeping a broad view of the necessity of the country as a whole, while functioning of the local government bodies envisaged under Articles-59 and -60, shall be confined to the needs of local areas.

"...The members of parliament have got no direct role or function, in respect of either development or maintenance of law and order, in the district or in other local administrative units," said the court in the verdict on a writ petition titled "Anwar Hossain Manju versus the Government of Bangladesh". The court in that verdict declared illegal the notification on the appointment of district ministers. The government did not file any appeal against the verdict with the appellate division, which means the verdict is now law of the land. The current government also refrained from introducing the system of district ministers.

But the government allowed MPs to interfere with the functions of upazila parishes, a crucial tier of the local government body that was reintroduced after around 19 years.

BNP leaders

FROM PAGE 16
Minister Sheikh Hasina.

Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate AGM Al-Masud passed the ruling following a prayer by Kamruzzaman, a sub-inspector of Paltan Police Station.

Earlier, Sub-Inspector Khan Mohammad Nurul Islam of the police station filed a general diary in connection with the death threat. Kamruzzaman submitted a report upon investigation to the court and prayed for the arrest warrants.

On July 25, the BNP leaders at a public meeting in the city allegedly threatened the premier with death.

JMB active despite

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launch bomb attacks against those he would consider as enemy," said a top Rab official seeking anonymity.

Rab Director General Hassan Mahmood Khandker told The Daily Star yesterday they have kept a grip on JMB activities. Even then, he considers it a potential threat.

Rab sources said there is also a chance that one of two sura members -- Shaheed alias Osman and Dhaka University graduate Siddiqur Rahman alias Mostafiz who worked as an adviser to Saïdur -- has assumed the post of JMB ameer.

The JMB stepped into the spotlight as a hardcore militant outfit through synchronised bomb attacks in 63 of 64 districts on August 17, 2005.

In subsequent attacks, they killed a number of people including two judges in Jhalakathi.

Since August 17 blasts, crime busters have so far arrested 985 JMB leaders and operatives, including 607 captured by Rab alone.

The arrestees include its founding ameer Shaikh Abdur Rahman who along with his second-in-command Siddiqur

The government in the new upazila parishad act, passed in parliament last year, made MPs advisers to the parishads in their constituencies and the parishads have to "accept the suggestions of the lawmakers".

Over one and a half years have passed since the upazila election and the upazila parishads cannot begin functioning fully as the upazila nirbahi officers, who are secretaries to the parishads, have been discharging almost all functions of the body in consultation with the lawmaker of the constituency.

Since the enactment of the law, representatives elected to the upazila parishads have been strongly denouncing the provision allowing lawmakers' interference in the bodies' activities and demanded its scrapping to allow the parishads function independently.

They threatened the government with street agitation.

Power supply

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the three-day long holiday ending Sunday, some areas of the city experienced load shedding of only one hour. However, the frequency of load shedding increased yesterday.

This situation would improve further as a 100 MW rental power plant is set to begin operation any day now.

"We've targeted to generate 4,600 megawatts power during the month of Ramadan," said Power Development Board (PDB) Chairman Alamgir Kabir. If the target is achieved, the frequency of power-cut will come down to a somewhat tolerable level in the current context.

The maximum average power generation in the current month stands at 4595 MW so far against the demand for nearly 5500 MW.

The PDB has roughly planned load shedding of 20 per cent against the maximum power demand of Chittagong, Khulna, Rajshahi, Comilla, Mymensingh, Barisal and Rangpur areas and 16 per cent against Dhaka. Of these areas, Dhaka's demand alone is close to half of that of the other areas combined.

Meanwhile, the PDB and the power ministry are closely monitoring implementation of more than a dozen rental power contracts -- some of which have already missed the deadlines and contributed to the existing crisis.

Two money

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to mosque to offer prayers at 8:10pm, he heard gunshots. Riding on four motorcycles, about seven to eight miscreants indiscriminately fired 15 to 16 bullets, added the witness. The miscreants left the scene exploding six to seven bombs.

The victims said cashier Rezaul Karim was carrying a bag full of notes - about Tk 14 lakh in Bangladesh currency and the rest in foreign currency.

Locals said the employees were heading home, after closing their firm, with the bag of money in hand when the goons attacked them.

Owner of the firm Mirza Moinuddin was away at the time of the incident.

Officer-in-Charge of Paltan Police Station Shahidul Haque said no arrest was made in this connection till 10:00pm.

FLOOD AID WB to provide 900m dollar to Pakistan

AFP, Washington

The World Bank said yesterday it has agreed to provide a 900 million dollar loan to flood-hit Pakistan, saying the economic impact of the disaster on the economy was expected to be "huge."

"The government of Pakistan has requested around 900 million dollars of financial support from the World Bank, which we have committed to provide," a statement from the Washington-based bank said.

White House: politics no role in mosque remarks

AP, Aboard Air Force One

A White House spokesman says politics wasn't a factor in President Barack Obama's remarks about building a mosque near the site of the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks in New York City.

Deputy White House press secretary Bill Burton said it was "not politics" but Obama's feeling that he had the obligation as president to "make sure people are treated equally" under the Constitution.

Obama has said that religious freedom allows the mosque to be built, but without commenting on the wisdom of building one two blocks from ground zero. Republicans have pounded him for his comments, making it a prime mid-term election issue.

Burton said Obama "felt it was his obligation as president to address this." Obama was on the way to Wisconsin for fundraising.

HC pulls

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An HC division bench of justices Syed Mahmud Hossain and Govindo Chandra Thakur asked the respondents to reply why the government agencies should not be directed to protect the forest from adverse and contrary activities such as felling of trees.

In 2005, the Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) initiated a plan to clear part of the forest on the island to construct a road to link the island with the mainland.

But the plan was stalled the same year following opposition from the forest department and issuance of a letter of objection from the environment and forest ministry.

The forest department said if the proposed road was constructed clearing part of the forest, illegal logging would become rampant there.

However, a local lawmaker revived the plan and got it approved at a meeting of the Upazila Unnayan Samonoy Committee in October last year.

The objections against the plan were purportedly withdrawn on the plea that the road is needed to rescue the islanders in case of a natural disaster.

The petitioner pleaded that there had been no assessment of environmental impact of the proposed road. Besides, the ministry's deviation from its earlier stance was highly subjective and done under political consideration.

Bus driver

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Hannan of BRTA in Manikganj.

Anwar Hossain, the driver, was denied bail and sent to jail after he appeared before the Manikganj Judicial Magistrate's Court on August 2.

Superintendent of Police (SP) Md Masud Karim of Manikganj yesterday said the charges against Anwar will be submitted this week.

Razia Begum, secretary (in-charge) to the ministry of women and children affairs and Siddiqur Rahman, chairman of Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation (BSCIC), were killed after the speeding bus collided head-on with their car at Uthuli in the district.

The two officials were going to Gopalganj from Dhaka to attend a programme.

SP Masud said police already started monitoring motor vehicle speed on Dhaka-Aricha highway using speed guns.

Around 150 cases were filed against vehicles violating speed limits in the last two months, he added.

He said Manikganj police are using a speed gun belonging to the highway police, as they have none. Speed monitoring will be more effective if the government distributes speed guns among police, added Masud.

Provisions of law

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Quader Molla jointly filed the writ seeking direction from the HC to stop proceedings of the International Crimes Tribunal and trial against them.

The International Crimes Tribunal is holding the trial of crimes against humanity and war crimes committed during the Liberation War. The act was amended last year.

The Jamaat leaders challenged the constitution amendment that empowers the government with sweeping authority to try war criminals by introducing any law regardless of inconsistency with any part of the Constitution.

They said the provisions of the International Crimes Tribunal Act, 1973 which have restricted the accused to challenge the formation, proceedings and order of International Crimes Tribunal are unconstitutional.

The petitioners prayed to the HC to rescind the proceedings of complaint petition filed with the International Crimes Tribunal against them on charges of war crimes during the Liberation War and the tribunal's orders against them.

They stated in the petition that this provision of this act has violated the basic structure and supremacy of the constitution.

The HC bench of Justice MA Wahab Mia and Justice Kazi Reza-ul-Haq fixed today for hearing on the petition.

Petitioners' lawyer Barrister Abdur Razzak told reporters the writ has challenged the First Amendment to the Constitution and some provisions of the International Crimes Tribunal Act.

Replying to a question whether they have filed the petition to foil the process of trial of war crimes, he said it depends on the HC verdict.

He added they have filed the petition to establish justice and rule of law.

A pro-Jamaat lawyer told The Daily Star the petition has been filed to stop the trial against the Jamaat leaders on charges of war crimes.

Advocate Tajul Islam,

another lawyer for the petitioners, said the petition has challenged the first amendment, which was brought to the Constitution in 1973, including its article 47(A) and 47(3) curtailing the fundamental rights of the armed forces, defence forces, auxiliary forces and prisoners of war who were involved in war crimes, and Sections 3, 6, 19, 20, and 23 of the International Crimes Tribunal Act, 1973.

Quoting the petition he said the two articles of the Constitution and the sections of the Act have damaged the basic features of the Constitution and fundamental rights of the petitioners.

Assault of OC

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He was speaking at a press briefing at Jessore Press Club yesterday.

The lawmaker alleged that Enamul had been involved in corruption. When he tried to mend Enamul's ways, the police officer fabricated a story to harass him.

He admitted that he summoned the OC to his jute mill on Sunday to ask him why he filed a murder case without any investigation.

But Enamul said Afil asked him to go to the lawmaker's jute mill on Sunday evening with the statement of a case filed over the murder of BNP activist Abdul Hamid.

When he went to the mill, Afil rebuked him and slapped him on the face for arresting an accused in the case without the lawmaker's permission.

Moments after this, ruling party activists Musa Mahmud, Asad and Kamal beat him up.

Enamul managed to escape and filed a general diary against the lawmaker and the three others later in the night.

BNP activist Abdul Hamid of Paruighupi village was killed by unidentified criminals on Saturday night. A case was filed against 26 Awami League leaders and activists with links to the murder.

Cops block filing

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bodyguard, of ruling party lawmaker from Bhola-3 constituency Nurunnabi Chowdhury Shaon, but the police refused to record the case, Rina said yesterday.

The police told her that they had already taken an unnatural death (UD) case and were investigating the matter on the basis of allegations made in the case.

She told The Daily Star that the police even refused to give her a copy of the UD case.

However, Sher-e-Bangla Nagar Police Chief Reaz Hossain claimed the police were carrying out a probe into the incident lawfully since Kala filed the UD case Friday night.

Asked as to why they did not record a murder case, he said there was no need for that as of now since one case had already been filed and investigation into the case was on.

However, the police refused to show the copy of the UD case to journalists.

Police have so far seized two vehicles including the jeep used by MP Shaon, 18 rounds of bullet, a bullet

cartridge, the pistol from which a bullet pierced Ibrahim's face and the bullet. They also collected blood specimens from the dead body.

They will hand over the seized materials to the Criminal Investigation Department (CID). CID will submit a report after examining those things and police will take further steps if inconsistencies are found in the case.

Speaking in return for anonymity, an official of the police station said there was a number of inconsistencies in the case.

Lawmaker Shaon Sunday afternoon visited Segun Bagicha residence of Ibrahim and expressed sympathy to the bereaved family.

He told the family that he was not present at the scene during the incident.

A police official said they doubt whether the incident occurred at the place mentioned in the UD case.

The lawmaker could not be contacted for his comment even yesterday.

Constitution

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said, "Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Father of the Nation, shall become, and enter upon the office of President of Bangladesh and shall, as from such commencement, hold office as President of Bangladesh as if elected to that office under the Constitution as amended by this Act."

Before the amendment took effect, Bangabandhu was the prime minister and the country had parliamentary form of government.

The fourth amendment act is still valid and none of the previous amendments were deleted from section 34.

On condition of anonymity, a constitution expert said the section of the fourth amendment act has been kept as a part of the constitution but was not incorporated in it.

Even the special provision was not included in the fourth schedule of the constitution, which deals with the transitional and temporary provisions. Perhaps, it was a drafting mistake, he added.

"The special section remained unattended," he said.

Another provision will be

CNG filling

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Although most of the vehicle owners and drivers knew about the government decision, many still came to the stations in vain and scores of CNG-run buses and CNG-run three wheelers stopped running earlier than usual.

The government last Thursday decided that the CNG filling stations across the country, except for those in Sylhet, would remain closed between 3:00pm and 9:00pm during the month of Ramadan effective from yesterday.

Sultan Miah, a CNG-run bus driver, said he did not know about the government decision. "Now I'll have to switch off my engine and remain idle after Iftar." A number of other bus and CNG-run three wheelers drivers made the same comment.

Farhana Zaman, an NGO official, said, "Certainly we're suffering because of the decision. But I accept to face it, if power supply improves."

Zakir Hossain Nayan, general secretary of the Bangladesh CNG Filling Station and Conversion Workshop Owners' Association, told The Daily Star that the decision will cut down their sales by Tk 1.5 crore a day.

"Considering people's sufferings [from power shortage] we've agreed to implement the government decision only during Ramadan. But we'll launch tough movement if the government plans to extend the closure farther," he said.

The association leaders yesterday also placed their demands at a meeting between them and the managing director of the Titas Gas Transmission and Distribution Company Abdul Aziz.

Country's total gas requirement a day is around 2,000 million cubic feet but there is a shortfall of around 400 million cubic feet. This is causing a severe gas crisis across the country affecting not only the power plants and industries but households too.

Over 100 CNG-run vehicles were waiting in two separate queues at the Canada-Bangla CNG Filling Station at Karwan Bazar around 8:10pm. Employee of the filling station Nuruzzaman said the cars, taxis and CNG-run auto-rickshaws started joining the queues soon after they closed for the six hours at 3:00pm.

"I have been waiting here for nearly five hours," said auto-rickshaw driver Kamal Uddin from the city's Muggda area.

"The sudden decision to shut down filling stations has thrown us into terrible sufferings. I have to pay Tk 750 to the owner of my three wheeler before 10:00pm but I am short of Tk 200," said Kalam Hossain of capital's Faridabad area.

Other drivers of vehicles waiting there expressed resentment over the government decision. They said the decision put them in a lot of trouble and demanded the closure time be fixed at three hours rather than the current six.

Charge framing

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They are now on bail from different courts and were present at the court yesterday.

The other accused are Abdul Gani, another director, and Mahbulul Islam and Enamul Haque, two pharmacists of the company.

Gani, Mahbulul and Enamul went into hiding immediately after the case was filed on August 11 last year.

The five officials were charged with producing adulterated paracetamol syrup that caused death to 28 children across the country from June to August last year.

Judge Golam Mortuza Majumder of the Drug Court issued the warrants after Drug Superintendent Shafiqul Islam filed the case with the court for such offences.

In his complaint, Shafiqul Islam said several children died at Shishu Hospital in the capital due to renal failure after taking paracetamol syrup of Rid Pharma.

He said the government realised the gravity of the situation and published advertisements asking all not to take any syrups manufactured by the company.

The government also tested Temset and Ridaplex syrups of the company the results of which were that the drugs lacked standards specified for manufacture, the complainant said.

Four other cases were filed against Rid Pharma in Brahmanbaria, Comilla, Narayanganj and Sylhet.

DCC official

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He was rushed to United Hospital where he succumbed to his injury around 11:00am.

Quoting victim's wife, the OC said Shahidur had his meal at Sehri, offered his Fajr prayers and then asked her wife to leave the room showing some excuses.

Afghan couple 'stoned to death' for love affair

AFP, Kunduz, Afghanistan

A man and woman have been stoned to death in northern Afghanistan after being accused by the Taliban of having a love affair, a witness and an official said yesterday.

The 23-year-old woman and 28-year-old man were killed because "they had an affair," said Mohammad Ayob, the governor of Imam Sahib district in Kunduz province.

"Two people were stoned to death by Taliban in Mullah Quli village late yesterday," he said. The village is under the control of the Taliban.

Mullah Quli resident Abdul Satar said about 100 people, most of them Taliban insurgents, gathered in the village on Sunday evening as a statement was read out saying the pair had confessed to their affair.

He said the man was married to someone else, and the woman was engaged.

"The Taliban convicted both to stoning to death, some from the crowd started throwing stones at the couple until they died," Satar said.

The couple had their hands bound behind their backs and were forced to stand in an empty field as their sentence was carried out, he said.

A local Taliban commander, who contacted media but refused to give his name, confirmed the killings.

"The couple confessed they had eloped together and based on their confession they were stoned to death," he said.

Human rights group Amnesty International said the stoning was the first it could confirm to have taken place in Afghanistan since the Taliban were overthrown by the US-led invasion in late 2001.

"The couple had eloped to Pakistan but returned to their village of Mullah Quli in Archi district of Kunduz after being told that their families had agreed to marry them," Amnesty said in a statement.

"Instead, they were stoned to death on 15 August by a Taleban council," Amnesty said, describing the couple's execution as "a heinous crime."

"Afghan leaders must stand against stoning and other appalling human rights abuses masquerading as 'justice', no matter how much pressure they are under to deal with the Taliban," said Sam Zarifi, Amnesty International's Asia-Pacific director.

Under Islamic Sharia law, sex between unmarried people is punishable by public beatings, while punishment for those caught in extra-marital affairs is death by stoning.

Earlier this month, the Taliban publicly flogged and then killed a pregnant widow for alleged "adultery" in western Badghis province.

The killings are a grim reminder of the Taliban's harsh 1996-2001 rule, when apparent crimes were brutally punished after summary trials.

As well as lashings and death by stoning for alleged

adulterers, people accused of theft regularly had their hands or feet amputated.

In regions that have come under Taliban control as the war drags towards the end of its ninth year, rough justice is meted out in the same manner, and includes execution of people accused of "spying" for foreign forces.

WTO rules against EU on hi-tech duties

AFP, Geneva

The World Trade Organization has backed the United States, Japan and Taiwan in their complaint against EU duties on high-technology products, according to a ruling published Monday.

"Having found that the European Communities has acted inconsistently... we recommend that the Dispute Settlement Body request the European Communities to bring the relevant measures into conformity with its obligations," the WTO panel of arbitrators said.

The ruling was issued confidentially to the parties involved in July.

The plaintiffs had accused the EU of violating the WTO's Information Technology Agreement by imposing duties on imports of products including television set-top boxes, flat-screen panels and printers with multiple functions.

Brussels countered that the agreement did not apply since the products in question had taken on multiple functions.

For example, the EU maintained that the flat-panel computer monitors cited by the United States should properly be classified as video monitors because they can also be used with DVD players and thus fall outside the scope of the WTO agreement.

Likewise, set-top boxes with Internet access should be seen as video recorders because they can record live television, the EU said.

All these arguments were thrown out by the WTO panel.

The United States had accused the EU of "manipulating tariffs to discourage technological innovation."

The United States estimates that global exports of the affected products were worth more than 70 billion dollars in 2007.

Cops asked

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traders reportedly sold adulterated foods and increase their prices illogically. Such foods caused health hazards to many.

This type of acts of the dishonest businessmen and traders are criminal offences, pleaded the counsel.

Deputy Attorney General Nazrul Islam Talukder represented the government.

Pakistan floods

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The World Health Organization was also preparing to assist tens of thousands of people in case of cholera, although the government has not notified the UN of any confirmed cases, he added.

He estimated the number at risk from such diseases at six million.

In southern Pakistan, angry flood survivors blocked a main road in Sindh province to protest against the slow delivery of aid and demanded more action from the authorities.

One of the protesters, Mohammad Laiq, said the government had to do more to help people.

"There seems to be no government here since the floods. We lost our children, our livestock, we could hardly save ourselves - though we have come here but we are getting nothing. Where is the government, what do we do, where do we go? We have to tell the government and it is the responsibility of the government to do whatever is possible."

In eastern Baluchistan, at least one district centre and three major towns have been inundated following a government decision to divert the thrust of the flood in the Indus river away from Jacobabad, a major town in the north-west of Sindh province, and the nearby Pakistan Air Force base.