

Nonsense!

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The minister also attacked the Integrity Unit of the World Bank, calling it a "jihadist institution".

"The WB Integrity Unit does not believe in right means for right ends. I will give you some examples to describe its problematic behaviour. They eavesdrop illegally which is totally, totally, totally unacceptable."

Muhith further said the unit knowingly dealt with questionable characters.

"This unaccountable office and the jihadist spirit, they are very much at ease with corruption."

He said black money had to be accepted as a reality in Bangladesh, but the scope for legalising it would soon be abolished.

His comments, however, evoked strong criticism from a number of participants at the event and from eminent commentators.

Debapriya Bhattacharya, distinguished fellow of the Centre for Policy Dialogue, said it was the manner in which the banking sector was infringing that was worrying.

"It is not about the quantity of money which has

been embezzled. It is more about the way it has been done. It is not the quantity but the process, which has violated all prudential regulations of the banking sector."

He said as a major champion of good governance the finance minister should be happy that the media had been highlighting the abuse in the banking sector.

"And it [media coverage] would have strengthened the hand of the finance minister and the central bank -- to put things in order. But he [Muhith] did the opposite."

The economist said the total safety net budget of the government was Tk 17,524 crore.

"Now we are talking about Tk 4,000 crore, which is 23 percent of the total government fund for the poor."

"It is almost two percent of the total budget. How can we say that this amount is trivial? So, I am really surprised," he noted.

With regards to comments on the WB Integrity Unit, he said the finance minister should have taken the issue to the bank's

board.

"I am surprised again because Bangladesh is a co-owner of an inter-governmental bank. I think we should take it up with the World Bank board instead of telling this to the Bangladesh media."

Iftekharuzzaman, executive director of Transparency International Bangladesh, said: "Why is he saying so? His comments have brought the issue of collusion of powerful government officials to the fore. It is not acceptable to us."

He said the minister's comment that black money had to be "accepted as a reality" is unconstitutional and contrary to the political commitment of the government.

KM Khalid, a ruling party lawmaker, who spoke after the finance minister had left the venue, said he too was surprised at the minister's remark on the Sonali Bank loan scam.

Former education minister Osman Faruk, who also attended the programme, said this type of mentality undermined the government's commitment to uprooting corruption.

Referring to the recent incident of the railway minister slapping a rail employee over alleged corruption, Faruk told The Daily Star: "The employee was about to lose his job over a trifle. But now the finance minister is saying that the Tk 3,000 to Tk 4,000-crore loan fraud is nothing."

A former central bank governor who preferred not to be named said he was dumbfounded by Muhith's take on the scam.

Ibrahim Khaled, chairman of Krishi Bank, noted that what the finance minister had said was his personal view.

"But to my knowledge, these are not loans. It is a case of fraud and irregularity. The money has been withdrawn from the bank through illegal means."

Khaled, also a former central bank deputy governor, said the amount was in fact very significant.

"We are worried because irregularities have occurred at financial organisations."

Khaled, who led the stockmarket scam probe in 2010, said the loan scam warranted utmost attention.

Voyager 1 off to stars

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more than 76-year-old Ed Stone, who has toiled on the project from the start.

"We're anxious to get outside and find what's out there," he said.

When NASA's Voyager 1 and Voyager 2 first rocketed out of Earth's grip in 1977, no one knew how long they would live. Now, they are the longest-operating spacecraft in history and the most distant, at billions of miles from Earth but in different directions.

Today marks the 35th anniversary of Voyager 1's launch to Jupiter and Saturn. It is now flitting around the fringes of the solar system, which is enveloped in a giant plasma bubble. This hot and turbulent area is created by a stream of charged particles from the sun.

Outside the bubble is a new frontier in the Milky Way - the space between stars. Once it plows through, scientists expect a calmer environment by comparison.

When that would happen is anyone's guess. Voyager 1 is in uncharted celestial territory. One thing is clear: The boundary that separates the solar system and interstellar space is near, but it could take days, months or years to

cross that milestone.

Voyager 1 is currently more than 11 billion miles from the sun. Twin Voyager 2, which celebrated its launch anniversary two weeks ago, trails behind at 9 billion miles from the sun.

They're still ticking despite being relics of the early Space Age.

Each only has 68 kilobytes of computer memory. To put that in perspective, the smallest iPod - an 8-gigabyte iPod Nano - is 100,000 times more powerful. Each also has an eight-track tape recorder. Today's spacecraft use digital memory.

The Voyagers' original goal was to tour Jupiter and Saturn, and they sent back postcards of Jupiter's big red spot and Saturn's glittery rings. They also beamed home a torrent of discoveries: erupting volcanoes on the Jupiter moon Io; hints of an ocean below the icy surface of Europa, another Jupiter moon; signs of methane rain on the Saturn moon Titan.

Voyager 2 then journeyed to Uranus and Neptune. It remains the only spacecraft to fly by these two outer planets. Voyager 1 used Saturn as a gravitational slingshot to catapult itself

toward the edge of the solar system.

Since the spacecraft are so far out, it takes 17 hours for a radio signal from Voyager 1 to travel to Earth. For Voyager 2, it takes about 13 hours.

Cameras aboard the Voyagers were turned off long ago. The nuclear-powered spacecraft, about the size of a subcompact car, still have five instruments to study magnetic fields, cosmic rays and charged particles from the sun known as solar wind. They also carry gold-plated discs containing multilingual greetings, music and pictures - in the off chance that intelligent species come across them.

Since 2004, Voyager 1 has been exploring a region in the bubble at the solar system's edge where the solar wind dramatically slows and heats up. Over the last several months, scientists have seen changes that suggest Voyager 1 is on the verge of crossing over.

When it does, it will be the first spacecraft to explore between the stars. Space observatories such as the Hubble and Spitzer space telescopes have long peered past the solar system, but they tend to focus on far-

Alim handed over

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On the activities of Alim, the 67-year-old witness said the then Convention Muslim League leader Alim was the leader of Joypurhat Shanti Committee and threatened Bangalees so that they do not join the Liberation War.

"I have seen some incidents with my own eyes and I heard of some from others," said Saidur, the second prosecution witness in war crimes case against Alim.

Abdul Alim, the 81-one-year-old politician and former minister of Ziaur Rahman's cabinet, was present at courtroom yesterday.

He is now on bail. The three-member tribunal headed by its Chairman Justice ATM Fazle Kabir with member Justice Obaidul Hassan and Judge M Shahinur Islam recorded the testimony. **RAZAKAR AND SHANTI COMMITTEE FORMATION**

During his 83-minute testimony yesterday, Saidur said in mid-April 1971, Abdul Alim formed the Shanti Committee in Joypurhat with the directives of his high ups.

He said following Alim's instruction, the Shanti Committee was formed in every police station in Joypurhat, including Akkelpur.

Alim then instructed the formation of the Razakar force in Joypurhat.

The Razakars were recruited at the ground floor of Alim's home, said the witness.

Saidur said Alim led the setting up of offices of Shanti Committee, Razakars, Major Afzal, and Pakistan Army officials at Shownl Bajla's home, said the witness.

Alim also established Shanti Committee office and Pakistani army camp at Akkelpur, said Saidur.

Saidur said he along with some other members of Akkelpur all-party action committee went to Panchbibi upazila to meet the leaders of the Panchbibi action committee on April 19, 1971.

They stayed the night there.

The next day, a group of Pakistan army troops led by Abdul Alim and Panchbibi Peace Committee leader Joybar attacked Panchbibi from the east.

They looted and torched homes, and conducted mass killing there, said the witness, adding that around noon, they looted the home of Meher Uddin Chowdhury before setting it alight.

When he was returning to Akkelpur through Joypurhat, he heard that people attacked Abdul Alim's home following the Panchbibi incident, said Saidur.

Alim managed to escape through the back door of his home.

KILLING OF 12
Saidur said on May 7, 1971, a group of 13-14 people were leaving the country after becoming victims of the Pakistani army's atrocities.

When they reached Bhatsha union at night, Syed

Ali Doctor, a cohort of Alim and the then Chairman of Bhatsha union, allured them to stay the night at his place, said Saidur.

Syed locked them in his home, informed Alim and Alim's cohort Matiu Rahman on that night about the matter.

"On May 8 morning, Abdul Alim along with the Pakistani army troops appeared and Matiu Rahman also came and after holding a meeting, three of the detained were handed over to the Pakistani army in Joypurhat and the rest 10 were handed over to a team comprising of Pakistani army soldiers and Razakars," said Saidur.

"They [the 10 people] were kept detained at the waiting room of Akkelpur Railway Station and among them, one Abdus Salam was my childhood friend," said the witness. He said he heard the whole story from Salam through a window at the rear of the waiting room.

The next day, he heard that the three handed over to the Pakistani army were killed at Khanjanpur Khuthibari following Abdul Alim's instruction, said Saidur.

The next day, Alim showed up in Akkelpur again and after holding a meeting with the Shanti Committee members, he handed over the 10 detainees to the Pakistan army.

He said, "The Pakistani army shot them after taking them near a pond at Koktara and all but one were killed."

KILLING OF 15
On June 14, 1971, members of Akkelpur Shanti Committee detained 15 people led by one Khokan Paikar when they were passing through Akkelpur on way to Bogra.

The Shanti Committee members took them to their local office, said the witness.

Saidur said after getting information, Abdul Alim went to Akkelpur and held a meeting with the local Shanti Committee members.

He decided to hand over the detainees to the Pakistani army.

"Alim directed the Pakistani army to kill the detainees after brutal torture and following this, the Pakistani army took them to Akkelpur Senior Madrasa where they were hung from trees and beaten with thorny branches of date trees."

In critical condition they were taken to Amtra village where they were forced to dig their own graves along with some locals and were buried there after being shot dead, said the witness.

Khokan was killed and buried separately in the village.

Replying to a tribunal query, Saidur said he had seen the torture.

KILLING OF 3
The witness said on October 8, 1971, under the directives of Abdul Alim, three youths were forced to disgracefully travel through Joypurhat town on a flatbed truck.

And it was announced that

those who would dared to join the Liberation War would have the same fate.

The next day, they were taken to Joypurhat Degree College the same way, said Saidur, adding that he later came to know that the youths were killed at Khanjanpur Kuthibari that evening.

"I have seen the incident of October 8," Saidur replied to a court's query.

PHOTO SHOOT WITH PAKISTANI ARMY
Saidur said in the latter part June, 1971, when he went to Joypurhat for some action committee work, he saw Abdul Alim, Major Afzal, a Pakistani army official, and 26 civilians were having their photos taken at Joydevpur Railway Station.

"Later, I came to know that the photo was taken by Motassim Billah, owner of Alokchela Studio and a copy of the photo was collected by one Abdul Hai, brother of martyred Fazlul Karim," said the witness.

He said, "Altaf Rahman, the investigation officer of the case seized the photo from Abdul Hai and I have signed the seizure list."

During charge framing hearing, the prosecution said Alim had his photo taken with the 26 freedom fighters and a Pakistani army officer and the collaborators later killed the 26 freedom fighters on Alim's directives.

"I think, Alim tired to get some reward from Pakistan [government] by submitting the photo," said Saidur.

After Saidur, who began testifying Monday, finished his deposition, defence counsel Munshi Ahsan Kabir cross-examined him.

Saidur was asked only three questions before the tribunal adjourned the case proceeding until September 10. Rana Dasgupta appeared on behalf of the prosecution team.

On June 11, the tribunal framed 17 specific charges of crimes against humanity against Alim, which included genocide, murder of Bangalee civilians, and burying people alive during the war. **MOJAHEED'S CASE**
The tribunal yesterday deferred cross-examination of eminent writer and journalist Shahriar Kabir, the first prosecution witness in the case against Jamaat Secretary General Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mojaheed, to today.

It was deferred following a time petition from the defence.

Defence counsel Tajul Islam sought the adjournment saying that Mizanul Islam, who was specially appointed for cross-examination of Shahriar Kabir, could not appear before the tribunal as he was engaged with another case at Tribunal-1.

Prosecution opposed the defence plea and Shahriar Kabir alleged that the defence sought the adjournment to "harass him".

Oman road

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six were admitted to Sur Hospital. Three of them -- one Indian and two Bangladeshis - had serious injuries, said hospital sources.

The accident took place in the wee hours when the truck's driver lost control and the vehicle veered off the road and hit the barriers, a spokesperson of the Royal Oman Police told the Gulf News.

The truck was carrying 18 Bangladeshi and Indian workers.

The bodies of the deceased were sent to Royal Oman Police Hospital morgue in Muscat for autopsies.

India's 'Hitler'

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the storefront, complete with a Swastika as the dot on the "i".

Members of the tiny Jewish community in Ahmedabad condemned the store's name, while a senior Israeli official raised the matter with the state government.

"I plan to change the store's name very soon. There is tremendous pressure from the government and the Jewish community to drop the name," Manish Chandani, co-owner of the store, told AFP.

Chandani said he had not anticipated the shop would draw international attention and protests and that he had no intention of glorifying the German dictator.

The shop's name was chosen as a tribute to his grandfather, who was nicknamed Hitler for being a "very strict man," he explained.

"I will have to spend money from my pocket for re-branding the entire store. The logo, the hoarding and the business cards will be changed," he said.

"I was not aware of Hitler being responsible for the killings of six million people before the shop's inauguration. This time I will choose a non-controversial name."

The row evoked memories of a controversy six years ago when a Mumbai restaurant owner called his cafe "Hitler's Cross" and put a swastika on the hoarding, claiming Hitler was a "catchy" name.

The restaurant owner eventually agreed to change the name after protests by the Israeli embassy, Germany and the US Anti-Defamation League.

Hitler attracts an unusual degree of interest in some parts of India, with his book "Mein Kampf" a popular title in bookshops and on street stalls.

Some Indians express private admiration for a leader seen as strong and decisive, while knowledge of the Holocaust and the other atrocities during the Third Reich is often patchy.

Gujarat schoolbooks issued by the Hindu nationalist state government were criticised a few years ago for praising Hitler as someone who gave "dignity and prestige" to the German government.

Remove 2 HC judges

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revive its authority [in the 1972 constitution], to impeach apex court judges, scrapping the existing system of a Supreme Judicial Council, which was introduced during Ziaur Rahman's rule.

Citing article 78 of the constitution, which deals with the privileges and immunities of parliament and its members, the lawmakers said it does not allow the court to raise any question about parliament proceedings. The two judges in question overstepped their jurisdiction by questioning the Speaker's ruling, they alleged.

Several MPs, including AL's Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim and Sayeedul Haque, Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal's Hasanul Haque Inu and Mayeen Uddin Khan Badal and Jatiya Party's Mujibul Haque said if no action was taken against the controversial judges, the country will face a condition similar to that in Pakistan.

The Pakistan judiciary, with Justice Iftikhar Mohammad Chaudhury playing an over-zealous role in prosecuting politicians, has seen a prime minister fall and has pushed the temperature up in the case of another.

Ten lawmakers participated in the discussion that lasted over two hours.

Sheikh Selim initiated the discussion. The Speaker then gave the floor to State Minister for Law Quamrul Islam.

Citing the government appeal against the HC verdict, the state minister said the matter was sub judice, and so the MPs should keep it in mind while they speak.

Rejecting Quamrul's argument, the Speaker said the HC verdict could not be sub judice, as parliament did not file any appeal against it. "It's not a case like those filed for murder or property disputes. It is related to the constitution and in no way can it be sub judice," he observed.

He, however, urged the MPs not to use aggressive language.

Relations between the legislature and the judiciary got strained after Justice Manik observed during a June 5 hearing that the Speaker had committed an offence tantamount to sedition by commenting in parliament on an HC order.

The judge also said the Speaker was ignorant of the apex court and the constitution.

Justice Manik's remarks came in response to some observations made by Speaker Abdul Hamid in the House on May 29.

problems while people waited for years to get justice.

He had also said that if people were aggrieved at court verdicts, a day would come when they would stand against the courts. "Likewise, if the government becomes autocratic, people will resist it and there are numerous instances of it."

Hours after Manik's remarks against the Speaker, the ruling alliance MPs blasted the judge and accused him of violating the constitution by making "derogatory remarks" against the Speaker.

Finally, the Speaker on June 18 gave a ruling on the matter.

But the issue got back to the fore when Justice Foez and Justice Altaf came up with their verdict on the Speaker's ruling.

Opening the unscheduled discussion yesterday, Sheikh Selim said a vested quarter had launched the attack on the Speaker. "It's an attack on parliament and democracy. So it cannot be accepted."

He said the two judges had passed the verdict out of the blue. The matter had already been settled peacefully through the Speaker's ruling.

Senior AL lawmaker Tofail Ahmed said: "In the name of observations, the two judges gave a 38-page verdict, which surprised us. Those who gave the verdict just cannot do so."

Tofail also questioned whether Justice Altaf was eligible to be a judge of the High Court as "he had not been a practising lawyer of the Supreme Court for 10 years in a row".

He also blasted Justice Manik for what he described as his various irregularities and dual citizenship. "Justice Manik is also a British citizen. Mr Speaker, you will now find him in Britain," Tofail said.

He said another judge named Hasan Feroz was also not eligible to be a High Court judge, as he had not fulfilled the requirement of practising in the top court for 10 years.

"Who is Justice Hasan Feroz? He is a son-in-law of Justice Manik's brother," Tofail said.

"If the Supreme Court does not take any action against Justice Manik, people will lose confidence in the judiciary," he added.

Terming the Speaker's ruling a legislative judgment, former railway minister Suranjit Sengupta said a Supreme Court judgment can be reviewed, but not a legislative judgment.

"If the Speaker's ruling does not exist as per the court's verdict, parliament does not exist either. If parliament does not exist, the judiciary too does not exist and neither do the judges," he said.

"It is an unwise judgment and the judges did not apply their judicial minds to delivering it," Suranjit added.

The veteran parliamentarian also condemned the judges who were part of martial law regimes. "There was no martial law where there was no link of Supreme Court judges. Even a sitting chief justice [Justice Abu Sadaat Mohammad Sayem] had become the chief martial law administrator."

Citing the introduction of the Supreme Judicial Council, he said after the assassination of Bangabandhu, the judiciary in league with the junta usurped the authority to investigate allegations of misconduct against judges.

Workers Party chief Rashed Khan Menon urged the House to draw contempt of parliament proceedings against Justice Foez and Justice Altaf.

"I am requesting the House to send the matter to the Supreme Judicial Council for action against the two judges," he said.

AL MP Sheikh Fazle Noor Taposh opposed discussing the verdict in parliament, saying it was sub judice.

At the end of the discussion, Speaker Abdul Hamid said he would let the House know his decision later. "I hope that everybody will be able to live in their respective position with due dignity and rights," Hamid said.

HK students protest over brainwashing classes

AFP, Hong Kong

Hong Kong students and teachers protested yesterday for a sixth straight day against plans to introduce Chinese patriotism classes, as political tensions rise days ahead of legislative polls.

Protesters at the government headquarters said they would not vote for parties that supported "national education", which they say is a bid to brainwash children with Chinese Communist Party propaganda.

The former British colony goes to the polls on Sunday to elect a new 70-seat legislature, but power will continue to reside with the pro-Beijing executive appointed by Chief Executive Leung Chun-ying.

Leung has ignored protesters' calls for a meeting and refused to abandon plans to implement the new education policy, which schools can adopt voluntarily from this week and will become compulsory by 2016.

"We are willing to talk to the anti-national education parties, but the prerequisite of the dialogue cannot be either to withdraw or not to withdraw," Leung told reporters.

Top outlaw killed in 'shootout'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

A regional leader of outlawed Lal Pataka, a faction of Purbo Banglar Communist Party, was killed in a "shootout" between police and his cohorts in Mirpur upazila of Kushtia early yesterday.

The dead, Abdul Jalil, 43, of Isalmari village in the upazila was a leader of the outfit active in Mirpur and sadar upazila in Kushtia and Alamdanga upazila of Chuadanga.

On information that a group of outlaws, including Jalil, was about to gather at Aziz Brick Kiln at Pulpura, two teams of Detective Branch of Kushtia and Mirpur police raided the area around 3:30am, said Chokdar Abdul Halim, assistant superintendent of police (Mirpur circle).

"Police asked the outlaws to surrender but they opened fire at the law enforcers. We fired shots to defend ourselves," the ASP said.

At one stage of the hour-long gunfight, the outlaws managed to flee the scene. Later, police recovered the body of Jalil from the spot, Halim said. Two light guns, six bullets and two bombs were also found there.

According to police, Jalil was an accused in 11 cases, including four for murder and extortion, two for bombing and one for abduction, filed with Mirpur and Islamic University police stations of Kushtia and Alamdanga Police Station of Chuadanga.

The Kushtia District and Sessions Judge's Court had sentenced Jalil to 10 years' rigorous imprisonment in an arms case in 2001.

Soon after his release in 2011, Jalil allegedly gunned down Abu Zafar, a member of Kursha Union Parishad in Mirpur upazila and since then he was on the run.

Tarique

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meeting at Engineers Institution auditorium to mark the 4th release anniversary of Tarique Rahman, senior vice-chairman of the party, from jail.

Tarique was arrested in March 2007, during the caretaker government tenure, on charges of corruption.

Mirza Alamgir accused the government of looting money from the recent scams of Sonali bank, Destiny, and Unipay2u.

Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain, party standing committee member, said some murky conspiracy is going on and some people are now talking about "the third force" like the one of 1/11 changeover. "But the people will not accept any third force in the country," he added. Nazrul Islam Khan, E m a j u d d i n A h m e d, Mustahidur Rahman, among others, spoke with Mirza Alamgir in the chair.

Woman killed

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motorcycle from the area. The riders -- a man and a child -- escaped unhurt.

Contacted, Joydevpur Police Station Officer-in-charge SM Kamruzzaman said they were informed of the incidents by the locals and that they were investigating them.

Of late, carjacking in and around the capital has seen an alarming rise.

Montasir Rahman, assistant superintendent of detective branch (DB) of police, told this correspondent that the police received about 30 carjacking cases per month. "Different groups are active in the business