

MPs engaged in negative

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or, if they did, the police refused to accept it.

Of those involved in "negative activities," over 80 percent were involved in controlling the decision making process of local administrations, and appointments and transfers in different national and local organisations. Seventy percent of the MPs were engaged in government tenders, using licences of their relatives or other people.

Of the surveyed lawmakers, 141 are male and eight female while 136 are treasury bench lawmakers (27 ministers or state ministers) and 13 opposition lawmakers. However, the surveyed MPs were not named in the report.

More than eight percent of the 149 legislators who have government plots or flats in Dhaka in their or their wives' names have taken plots or flats for a second time by submitting false statements.

Titled, "Analysis of positive and negative role of lawmakers of the ninth parliament," the survey data was collected from, among other sources, 44 group discussions in 42 districts. With the participation of more than 600 discussants, these meetings, held between July and September, discussed the out-of-parliament activities of the MPs.

The participants included local teachers, lawyers, media persons and other professionals and those selected were apparently impartial. The survey was done on 149 MPs as they are well-known to the participants. The lawmakers about whom the participants had little or no information were not discussed at these meetings, says the report.

In its analysis, the TIB said lack of intra-party democratic values, a tendency towards doing anything to win elections and a culture of impunity might have inspired the lawmakers to get involved in negative activities.

On the right side, 53.7 percent of the surveyed MPs had "positive contributions" outside parliament.

These activities include their role in education, health and agriculture sector, keeping cordial relations with the opposition and voters, constructing infrastructures, solving local problems, ensuring relief distribution on personal initiatives, maintaining law and order and encouraging women's empowerment.

The opposition lawmakers are better connected with the voters compared to their ruling party counterparts. But in the case of "negative and immoral" activities, the ratio of the ruling and the opposition MPs is almost the same.

The study reveals that the lawmakers spent a little over

nine percent time of the total 254 sittings (till the seventh session) for legislation, which is their main task.

"The reason is that the MPs spend most of their times interfering in local administration work and local development projects. The TIB therefore recommends making a law to stop MPs from engaging in local development activities," TIB Executive Director Iftekharuzzaman told a press conference in the capital's Brac Centre Inn.

According to him, MPs will devote more time to the law making process if they are legally barred from engaging in local affairs.

The study shows that all of the 149 MPs secured 4 points on an average out of total 10 by the electorate.

"Only 3.36 percent lawmakers could secure score 7.6 out of 10 by the electorate and 68.45 scored less than 5," the study report says.

It shows 27 percent of the time spent in legislative purpose was used to amend bills by rephrasing sentences instead of debating core issues.

Nearly 24 percent of the time of the 254 sittings was spent in question answer sessions of the prime minister and other ministers. While these sessions were important, ministers tended to avoid "embarrassing" questions.

Due to the lawmakers' delay in attending the session, there was a regular quorum crisis from January 2009 to December 2011. The duration of this quorum crisis amounts to 7,785 minutes (about 130 hours). MPs are late as they remain busy with out-of-parliament activities, says the report.

The financial value of this loss of time would be Tk 32.67 crore, according to the report.

The TIB reiterated its recommendation for banning en masse abstention from the House through limiting the maximum time for remaining absent from parliament to 30 days and the highest seven days in a row.

It also called upon the government to elect a deputy Speaker from the opposition and making it mandatory for the Speaker and the deputy Speaker to resign from party posts before taking office.

In addition, the anti-corruption watchdog recommended amending Article 70 of the constitution, allowing members to vote against their parties on issues other than impeachment of the president, the national budget and national security.

TIB Senior Programme Manager Shahajada M Akram presented the study report. TIB Chairperson Sultana Kamal and Trustee Board Member Hafizuddin Khan were also present on the occasion.

REACTION

Reacting to the report, AL lawmaker Abdul Matin Khasru said, "The study is totally unacceptable as its method is unscientific."

Khasru, also a former law minister, said: "The TIB published a similar study report just days before the 1/11 changeover in 2007. It [TIB] has again engaged itself in likewise conspiracy. We strongly condemn such objectionable move by the TIB."

Hafizuddin Ahmed, a lawmaker of the Jatiya Party, an ally of the AL, doubted the accuracy of the statistics but said the survey was not "completely bogus".

Opposition Chief Whip Zainul Abdin Farroque said, "We [the opposition] are only a few. The opposition does not get any allocation. So the question of our involvement in irregularities does not arise."

He said most of the ruling alliance lawmakers were now running after money, but added, "Not that all of that is bad."

Terming the report accurate, BNP lawmaker Mahbub Uddin Khokon said most of the politicians were now using politics to make money.

Philippine rebel chief in historic peace trip

AFP, Manila

The leaders of the Philippines' biggest Muslim rebel group yesterday arrived in Manila for a historic visit aimed at ending one of Asia's longest and deadliest insurgencies.

Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) chief Murad Ebrahim and other senior rebel figures emerged from their remote bases in the country's south to oversee the signing of an accord today that outlines a roadmap for peace by 2016.

The accord, announced by President Benigno Aquino a week ago, has won applause from foreign governments and the United Nations as a rare chance to end a rebellion that has killed an estimated 150,000 people since the 1970s.

However rank-and-file soldiers of the 12,000-strong MILF, as well as the groups' leaders and independent security analysts, have warned that many obstacles could still derail the peace process.

Ebrahim, an ageing warrior in his 60s who has spent most of his life in the southern Philippine region of Mindanao, is making his first official trip as MILF leader to Manila.

The signing will be at the presidential palace, so Ebrahim will also become the first MILF chief to get inside the country's inner sanctum of power.

4 of family killed in road crash

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Madaripur

Five people, including four of a family, were killed and two others of the same family injured in a road accident at Nagorkanda in Faridpur yesterday afternoon.

The dead are Nandalal Karmakar, 50, a gold trader in Madaripur, his son Sourabh Karmakar, 15, son-in-law Piyush Karmakar, 35, four-month-old grandson Pritom Karmakar, and Imran, 20, driver of their rented car.

The injured -- Nandalal's wife and daughter, Soma -- were taken to Faridpur Medical College Hospital.

Nowsher Ali, officer-in-charge of Rajoir Police Station, said the car, carrying Nandalal and his five family members, collided head-on with a truck in Jadurdia area, leaving Nandalal, Piyush and Imran dead on the spot.

The family on the car was going to Faridpur for Puja-shopping and also to see a doctor.

Sourabh and Pritom died at the hospital.

The OC said bodies of Piyush and Pritom were sent to Piyush's village, Ujirpur in Barishal. The three other bodies were sent to their own families.

The truck driver along with the vehicle escaped.

RAMU VIOLENCE

Four journos sued for instigation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police yesterday filed a sedition case against four journalists and the owner of a local newspaper in Cox's Bazar for their alleged role in instigating the attacks on Buddhists.

The accused are GM Rahim Ullah, owner of Dinik Bakkhali, its chief editor Zaber Ahammed Chowdhury, editor Siddique Ahmed, news editor Mostafa Sarwar and Teknaf correspondent Saiful Islam Sayeedi.

Talking to The Daily Star last night, Home Secretary CQK Mostak said "We have ordered the officer-in-charge of the Cox's Bazar Sadar Police Station to record the case."

A gazette notification to that end had been issued yesterday, he added.

In the gazette notification, the four journalists and owner of the newspaper have been made accused because of the role in instigating the violence in Ramu, Ukhiya and Teknaf.

US meningitis outbreak death toll rises to 15

AFP, Washington

The death toll from an unprecedented US meningitis outbreak tied to a tainted steroid jumped to 15 after another person died from a fungal form of the disease, health authorities said Saturday.

The total number of cases stood at 198 across 13 states, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said on its website.

That figure includes 197 cases of fungal meningitis and one case of a "peripheral joint infection," affecting joints such as the knees, hips, shoulders or elbows, the CDC said. Illinois also saw its first case included in the count.

Chittagong

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when mobs carried out attacks on Buddhists temples and homes on September 29, sources said.

It is alleged that Jaynul, though he was in charge of the Cox's Bazar district administration at the time, did not take any steps to quell the violence.

He also participated in a farewell programme at Cox's Bazar DC office even a day after the violent attacks, they added.

Mojaheed was the key man

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leading newspapers of the country published news and photos of the killers of intellectuals.

"They [killers] were members of Al-Badr Bahini," said the 58-year-old, adding that the Al-Badr was formed with the leaders and activists of Jamaat-e-Islami's then student wing Islami Chhatra Sangha.

Mojaheed was its East Pakistan president between October and December 1971.

Narrating the abduction of his father from their home in Chamelibagh, Dhaka, on the night of December 10, 1971, (in the small hours of December 11), Shaheen appealed for justice from the tribunal.

Sirajuddin Hossain was one of many Bangalee progressive intellectuals who were abducted and killed by the Al-Badr.

During his one-hour-and-50-minute testimony, Shaheen said in the early part of April 1971, leaders of pro-Islamic political parties like Pakistan Democratic Party, Jamaat-e-Islami, Muslim League and Nezam-e-Islam met the then East Pakistan governor and martial law administrator Gen Tikka Khan, the infamous "Butcher of Baluchistan", and extended their support to the junta for the "crimes against humanity" committed after March 25.

The Central Shanti Committee was formed as the collaborator force of the Pakistani army after the meeting.

District, sub-division, police station and union level committees of the anti-liberation force were formed subsequently, he added.

"Afterwards, Razakar, Al-Badr and Al-Shams forces were formed as the collaborator force of the Pakistani army in embattled Bangladesh and Prof Ghulam Azam, then ameer of East Pakistan Jamaat-e-Islam, played a vital role in this regard," said Shaheen.

The Razakars, formed with the leaders, activists and supporters of these pro-Islamic political parties, tortured and killed Bangalees and violated women during the Liberation War, he added.

"Later, another collaborator force of the Pakistani army, was formed comprised of the leaders and activists of Islami Chhatra Sangha, ideological student wing of Jamaat-e-Islami," said the witness.

"The name of the force was Al-Badr, which was known as a killer force or Gestapo force."

Leaders and activists of Islami Chhatra Sangha led the "crimes against humanity" committed at district and local levels during the war.

According to a probe on

the alleged crimes against humanity of Chowdhury Mueen-Uddin, Motiur Rahman Nizami was chief of the Al-Badr high command of the whole of Pakistan while Mojaheed was chief of East Pakistan Al-Badr.

Shaheen said his father went into journalism with the Daily Azad during his student life and joined the progressive Daily Ittefaq as news editor in 1954.

In September 1971, the witness' father wrote some articles in the daily and one of these was "Thak Bachte Ga Ujar", which was mainly a criticism of the Pakistani military forces and their supporters, said Shaheen.

On September 16, 1971, an article was published in Daily Sangram, the mouthpiece of Jamaat-e-Islami, countering his father's article, titled "Atoeb Thak Bachio Na".

"The article, which was actually a threat, attacked my father terming him a collaborator of India and favouring Brahmanism," said Shaheen.

Shaheen said "Shironamer Karchupi", published in the Sangram, condemned his father for his pro-liberation journalism.

He said between midnight and 12:30am on December 11, 1971, someone knocked on their door but when the door was opened after sometime, none was there.

"Between 3:00am and 3:30am, someone knocked on our door vehemently and I woke up," said Shaheen, adding, "I could hear the voice of our house owner Dr. Shamsul Huda, who asked me to open the door."

"When I opened the door, five or six gun barrels came through. Then seven or eight armed people stormed into the room yelling, 'Hands up'," said the witness.

"I raised my hands and my younger brother and a brother-in-law of the doctor, who was in our house that night, also raised their hands over their heads."

"Almost all the faces were covered with monkey caps and scarves. They were wearing shirts, trousers, jumpers and had tennis shoes on," he said.

"They were speaking in Urdu but were not fluent."

At gun-point, they took them to the bedrooms, he said.

They asked the witness's father to raise his hands after finding him in a room.

"In Urdu, they asked my father, 'What is your name? What do you do?' and my father replied, 'Serajuddin Hossain and Executive Editor of Daily Ittefaq.'"

"Pointing a gun at my father's back they said, 'Come with us'... they took my father."

As they went out with Serajuddin, they asked the witness to close the door

behind them.

Shaheen said the family after a few seconds understood that his father was being taken away on a microbus.

"Everyone started crying," he said.

Shaheen said he informed barrister Mainul Hossain, who was the editor of Daily Ittefaq at the time, of the matter.

"I told him that they [the abductors] were not from the military force as they were not in any uniform," Shaheen.

Shaheen also informed the then chief reporter of the newspaper Asafudowllah Reza.

Shaheen said they all tried to find Serajuddin. They called all police stations, and even talked to the then governor and top army officials but they could not get any information about his father.

He said over the next few days they learnt that many intellectuals had also been abducted like his father.

Journalist Najmul Haque, ANM Golam Mostafa, Shahidullah Kaiser, Nizam Uddin Ahmed and Selina Pervin, and Prof Munier Chowdhury and Mofazzal Haidar Chowdhury, Rashidul Hasan, Giasuddin Ahmed, physicians Abdul Alim Chowdhury and Fazle Rabbi were among them, he said.

"We could not search thoroughly as pitched battles were going on and after liberation on December 16, we tried to get information about my father from many people," he said.

On December 18, 1971, a friend of his father's, Aminul Haque, asked him to go to Rayerbazar.

"On that day, I went to Rayerbazar and I saw the horrific scene. Many bodies were there," said the witness.

"The bodies of Selina Pervin and Fazle Rabbi were identified."

"But we could not find the body of my father. It was not possible to identify all the bodies as 10-15 bodies were dumped in a hole," he added.

"After the Liberation War, leading newspapers published photos and news of the killers [of intellectuals] quoting sources who had knowledge about the incidents," he said.

"They [killers] were members of Al-Badr Bahini."

Among the killers was Chowdhury Mueen-Uddin, who was also a journalist of daily Purbadesh. A case was filed against him in connection with the killing of one of his colleagues, ANM Golam Mostafa, said the witness.

"Chowdhury Mueen-Uddin was the operation in charge of Al-Badr and Ashrafuzzaman Khan was one of the active members of the force," said the witness.

"Mueen is now living the UK while Ashrafuzzaman is

in the United States," he added.

On October 9 this year, the investigation agency of the international crimes tribunal completed probes against Mueen-Uddin and Ashrafuzzaman and found evidence linking the two with the torture and killing of at least 18 intellectuals.

Nine of them were Dhaka University teachers, six were journalists and three were physicians.

Shaheen said, "Under Mojaheed's supervision direction and order, the intellectuals' killing mission was launched by the Al-Badr."

On June 21, the tribunal indicted a former minister of the former BNP-led coalition government with seven charges of crimes against humanity, including murder, genocide, and hatching a conspiracy to kill intellectuals during the Liberation War.

The three-member tribunal headed by Justice ATM Fazle Kabir with members Justice Obaidul Hassan and Judge M Shahinur Islam recorded Shaheen's testimony before adjourning the case proceedings until October 16, when he would be cross-examined.

Tribunal-2 yesterday completed recording the cross-examination of the 12th prosecution witness in the case against Jamaat leader Muhammad Kamaruzzaman behind closed doors.

The tribunal today will record the 13th witness' cross-examination behind closed doors.

AGENCY GIVEN TIME
Meanwhile, Tribunal-1 yesterday gave 48 more days to the investigation agency for investigations into the alleged crimes against humanity committed by detained Jamaat-e-Islami acting secretary general ATM Azharul Islam.

The tribunal issued the order following a petition by the prosecution seeking more time.

The tribunal fixed December 2 for the submission of the probe report and asked Azharul to be produced in court on that day.

The prosecution yesterday submitted a progress report of the investigation going on against Azharul.

Lawmaker's car

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wife Jharna Begum and a domestic help -- were unhurt.

The youth, Rafiqul Islam, 25, broke a wing mirror and the windscreen of the car with a stick, said Shamim.

They had started from Tangail's Mirzapur upazila and were heading to the capital. They were attacked at Chandra in Kaliakoir upazila around 10:00am, Shamim added.

On information, police hurried to the spot and arrested the attacker, said Omar Faruq, officer-in-charge of Kaliakair Police Station.

Shamim filed a case under Speedy Trial Act against the youth with the police station.

JS team

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Corporation (BCIC). After visiting the CUFL jetty, the team held a meeting with officials of BCIC and CUFL.

Apart from lawmaker Mazumder, the investigation team comprises two MPs, an additional secretary of the industries ministry, chairman and director of the BCSIR and a Buet expert.

Sirajul Haque Khan, a member of the team and also an associate professor of Buet's chemical engineering department, said that the team had collected a sample from the fertilisers and would send it to two laboratories for examinations.

Sources said that in order to meet the demand for fertiliser in the country, the BCIC had imported 41,000 tonnes of it worth Tk 193 crore. But questions were raised regarding its quality.

However, 16,000 tonnes of the consignment have already been distributed to dealers.

The rest, after being exposed to rain, has become solid and unusable, added the sources.

Sonali Bank

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around 9:00pm from a street in Rampura area. "We arrested him at the request of the Anti-Corruption Commission."

Azizur would be handed over to Ramna police through the ACC authorities, he added.

The Sonali Bank higher authorities suspended Azizur Rahman on June 6. He is said to have been the key person behind the loan scandal.

Bangladesh Bank on May 21 gave Sonali Bank a 17-point directive, along with an inspection report, on the measures to be taken against the guilty parties.

On August 26, the central bank directed Sonali Bank to suspend 31 of its officers, including two deputy managing directors, for their involvement in the scam.

The ACC conducted an enquiry and later filed 11 cases against 27 people, including Sonali Bank's 20 former and present officials and seven officials of the Hall-Mark Group.

The Rab on October 7 arrested Hall-Mark Group Managing Director Tanvir Mahmud and General Manager Tushar Ahmed from a hideout in the capital's Mirpur.

WB panel starts

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The global lender had cancelled its \$1.2 billion credit for the \$2.9 billion project on June 29, saying it had credible evidence of a corruption conspiracy involving Bangladeshi officials, executives of a Canadian firm and some private individuals.

The panel, headed by Luis Moreno Ocampo, former chief prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, also wanted to know the definition of corruption according to Bangladesh laws, said Huq.

The lawyer said both sides agreed that the probe into the corruption allegations over the project would be conducted in line with Bangladesh laws.

ACC Chairman Ghulam Rahman said the team inquired about the process of investigation and trial in Bangladesh.

"We briefed them accordingly," said Rahman.

Asked whether the panel had made any suggestions to the ACC, he said it did not give them any advice.

The panel met top ACC officials after it arrived in Dhaka yesterday to assess the conduct of the ACC probe into the alleged corruption in the project.

WB Country Director Ellen Goldstein, who accompanied

the panel, said they had a "very productive" initial meeting with the ACC.

"They [the ACC] have shown us their full collaboration and the topic of the discussion was the way in which the panel and the ACC will work together so that the panel can provide advice and also assess the characteristics of the investigation," said Goldstein.

The team will submit a report to the WB with its findings. A positive report on the Bangladesh government's handling of the corruption allegations in the project is likely to pave the way for an early release of its \$1.2 billion credit.

Timothy Tong, former commissioner of the Independent Commission Against Corruption of Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, and Richard Alderman, former director of the UK Serious Fraud Office, are the two other members of the WB panel headed by Ocampo.

The WB, which decided to revive its loan on September 21 after the Bangladesh government agreed to its terms and conditions, appointed the external panel early this month to assess the conduct of the ACC investigation.