

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.

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 Hallmark 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 WB panel.

WB Country Director Ellen Goldstein, who accompanied

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 Faroque 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."

Terminating the report accurately, 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 insurrections.

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 group's 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 Nagarkanda in Faridpur yesterday afternoon.

The dead are Nandal 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 -- Nandal'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 Nandal and his five family members, collided head-on with a truck in Jadurdia area, leaving Nandal, 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 journalists 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 Dainik Bakkali, its chief editor Zaber Ahmed, 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 their role in instigating the violence in Ramu, Ukhia and Teknaf.

US meningitis outbreak death toll rises to 15

APP, Washington

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 loan.

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 Bangladeshi 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 by the Al-Badr.

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