

# Out of control

## House rent in Dhaka going up by about 15pc every year; owners arbitrary for lack of proper law, specific authority

HELEMUL ALAM and MARTIN SWAPAN PANDEY

Capital Dhaka is home to some 150 million people. One study shows nearly 80 percent of them live in rented houses, and they do so, as it looks, at the mercy of the house owners. It hardly occurs to most owners that tenants too have some legal rights.

Tenants do have rights. Under the law that regulates house rent, owners cannot let their houses without written agreements; cannot take more than one month's advance; and cannot increase rent before two years.

But these are all in the book. In practice, these rules are violated by most, if not all, building owners as there is no designated body to implement the law.

This has been a boon for owners, a bane for tenants. Over the past 22 years, house rent in the city has gone up by about 15 percent on an average every year, far outpacing the tenants' income, according to a recent study by the Consumer Association of Bangladesh (CAB).

Such an increase in house rent, coupled with high inflation, has cut deep into the pockets of middle and lower income people. The overall inflation stood at 7.68 percent in July. It was 10.62 percent in the 2012-13 fiscal year and 8.8 percent in the previous fiscal year.

It is as puzzling as it is ghostly that house owners hike the rent whenever they like and how much they like and the tenants have no say at all, says CAB President Quazi Faruque.

Under the House Rent Control Act, 1991, tenants can go to the court of rent controllers should they feel deprived of their rights. But about 90 percent of tenants are unaware of the law, and this lack of awareness is a perfect tool for the owners to exploit tenants, he adds.

MORE ON PAGE 16

SEE PAGE 17 COL 1



To-let ads pasted on the boundary wall of a house at West Tejtipurpara in the capital's Farmgate. Out to rent a room in the area, a bachelor calls a landlord on his phone number yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR



## WHAT THE LAW SAYS

- There must be a written agreement
- Owners can take only one month's advance
- Owners can be fined for taking more than one month's advance
- Owners must provide tenants with receipts
- House rent cannot be raised before two years
- Tenants can sue house owners for violating the law
- During case proceedings, owners cannot evict tenants

## PMO's DISTORTION CLAIM REFUTED

### Special JS body's proceedings back Star editorial

Yesterday we published the full text of the PMO's response to two items in this newspaper, one a report and the other an editorial.

Our report was based on a public pronouncement of the PM, at a press conference telecast live on most channels, where she remarked, "It is The Daily Star! No matter what I say it will be distorted and that is the character (of the paper)."

We urged the PMO to produce examples of distortion, if any. On the following day we received the "PMO's response", which we published yesterday in full with far greater importance than our original news.

As our readers must have noticed, there appears to be confusion over the PMO's understanding of reports and editorials. While the PM claimed we

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

## Committee crosses line

### Recommends dropping around 10 murder cases along with 62 'politically-motivated' ones

M RAHMAN

The national committee for recommending withdrawal of "politically motivated" lawsuits yesterday proposed dropping 72 cases, including around 10 murder cases against Bangladesh Chhatra League and Awami League men dating back as far as 1988.

The 72 recommended cases also included cases against two ruling party lawmakers -- Amanur Rahman Khan of Tangail and Maj Gen (ret'd) Subid Ali Bhuiyan of Comilla.

Even though the committee was formed in February, 2009, to recommend withdrawal of "politically motivated" cases filed between 2001 and 2008, the committee went out of its way yesterday and proposed

dropping of at least two murder cases filed in 1988 and 1996 against Chhatra League men.

The withdrawal recommendations were made at the committee's 31st meeting held at the home ministry with State Minister for Law Qamrul Islam in the chair.

Following the meeting, Qamrul told reporters that a total of 277 cases -- 166 new cases and 111 old cases -- had been tabled for withdrawal recommendations. He said they recommended that 42 new cases and 30 old and pending cases be withdrawn.

Asked, he said no narcotics related cases were recommended for withdrawal and that "one or two murder cases were recommended [to be dropped]".

SEE PAGE 17 COL 1

## JS Coverage

### Bill seeks media immunity

SHAKHAWAT LITON

A private member's bill was submitted to the Parliament Secretariat yesterday seeking to introduce a provision for providing the print and electronic media with immunity from prosecution for airing or publishing reports on parliamentary proceedings.

Ruling Awami League lawmaker Saber Hossain Chowdhury submitted the bill with a notice to place it in the House on September 19 as the Jatiya Sangsad goes into session on September 12.

Saber yesterday at a programme drew the attention of Speaker Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury to place the bill in parliament.

If the bill is ratified by the JS, it would be a major breakthrough for media freedom to ensure better coverage of parliamentary proceedings.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 7



Teachers of Jahangirnagar University sitting in front of the office of the university vice-chancellor yesterday. They have kept the VC confined to his office since 11:00am Wednesday.

PHOTO: STAR

## JAHANGIRNAGAR UNIVERSITY

### Crisis deepens

#### No classes, exams held; VC still confined to office by some teachers

WASIM BIN HABIB and SM NAJMUS SAKIB

The crisis at Jahangirnagar University worsened yesterday as a faction of teachers kept the vice-chancellor confined to his office for the second day despite the education minister's request to resolve the problem through talks.

Under the banner Sadharon Shikkhak Forum, some 50 teachers of the university have confined Prof Anwar Hossain to his office since 11:00am Wednesday demanding his removal.

They allege that the VC did not expel JU unit Chhatra League general secretary Rajib Ahmed Rasel even after "he had assaulted" a teacher on April 6.

They also accused the VC of anomalies in the admission process and teachers' appointments, ruining the campus by taking up unnecessary projects, and misusing university funds.

Prof Hanif Ali, convener of Sadharon Shikkhak Forum, said the VC had lost the moral right to hold the post.

The agitating teachers vowed to continue the confinement and their sit-in in front of the VC's office until their demand is met. They also blocked the two entrances of the VC office.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4

## Non-partisan govt a must

### Yunus on polls-time admin; Muhith blasts him again

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Nobel Laureate Prof Muhammad Yunus said yesterday the next parliamentary election must be held under a non-partisan government to rid the country of the ongoing volatile situation and ensure its progress.

"There is no scope to hold the parliamentary election peacefully without a non-partisan government," Prof Yunus said in his first ever public comments on a polls-time government.

"So, the election must be held, and it has to be held with the participation of all

SEE PAGE 17 COL 3



## RAJSHAHI UNIVERSITY

### BCL leader hacked by 'Shibir men'

#### Another shot

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Shibir cadres cut the tendons of a Chhatra League leader and shot another on Rajshahi University campus last night, police said.

Tawhid al Tuhin, general secretary of the BCL's RU unit, was undergoing surgery at Rajshahi Medical College Hospital.

The tendons of his left hand and right leg were cut, doctors said, adding that the victim also suffered several other

SEE PAGE 17 COL 6



## Speaker for dialogue to end crisis

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speaker Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury yesterday said she would play her "due role" if the government and the opposition took any initiative inside parliament to resolve the ongoing political crisis over the polls-time government system.

"As Speaker, I can facilitate, if they [the govt and

SEE PAGE 2 COL 8

## Schoolgirl forced into sex trade

### Three arrested

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Manikganj

A schoolgirl of Manikganj has been forced to lead a life of a sex worker at a house in Savar on the outskirts of the capital for the last two months.

The victim disclosed the horrific story of her confinement to the press at the office of the superintendent of police of Manikganj yesterday, a day after she fled the place.

The girl, a student of class seven, alleged that her private tutor Mosharraf Hossain, also a clerk of Kafiluddin Dorji High School under Ghior upazila in the district, took her to Savar on June 21, promising to marry her.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4



**Justice Kemal Uddin Hossain Former Chief Justice of Bangladesh passed away in the early hours of 21st August 2013 wednesday (innanillaha wa innanillahay Rajiun), he was 90.**

**His qul khani will be held on Friday the 23rd of August after magrib prayers at 7:00 pm at his residence: House No. 7-B, Road No. 74, Gulshan-2, Dhaka. We request all our friends and well wishers to join us in praying for his departed soul.**

**We express our heartfelt thanks to all who have extended their support to our family during this period of bereavement.**

**Mrs. Sultana Begum, Dr. Ijaz Hossain & Dr. Tasnim Azim, Istiaq Hossain & Dr. Farmin Islam, Fiaz Hossain & Seema Hossain, Amer Azim Hossain, Zaheen Iram Hossain & Zafirah Hossain**