

Existing law inadequate

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 president of Ekattorer Ghatok Dalal Nirmul Committee, which has been campaigning for war crimes trial for two decades.
 After the amendment, an investigation agency in August last year launched a probe into the war crimes allegedly committed by Jamaat-e-Islam as a party. The agency handed over the probe report to the prosecution in March this year.
 The agency has recommended banning Jamaat and six organisations, which were associated with the party in 1971, as the investigators have found involvement of these anti-liberation bodies in grievous crimes committed during the war.
 After receiving the probe report and other documents, a seven-member prosecution team started working to prepare formal charges for initiating trial and the work was at the final stage.
 But, the preparation for filing a case against Jamaat remained suspended since May 19 following an internal feud in the prosecution team.
 On the probe into Jamaat's alleged crimes, Anisul Huq yesterday said: "It is true that there is a probe report, but at this stage, I have to move forward considering other perspectives."
 Apparently raising a question

about the necessity of the trial, the minister said the bigwigs of the political party [Jamaat] had already been brought to the book for their war crimes.
 "We have to think at this stage that if you punish them [Jamaat leaders] for a second time, it might contradict with the punishment they have already received," he argued.
 The law minister however ruled out any negotiations between the Awami League and Jamaat.
 Asked why he was talking about the matter after 15 months of the amendment, Anisul, who became the law minister on January 12, said: "I am talking about the matter as you [journalists] have asked me today."
 The minister's statement however contradicts with his previous comment made to The Daily Star on March 25 and was published on March 26, a day after the investigation agency had completed its investigation into Jamaat's alleged crimes on March 25 this year.
 Asked about the absence of a provision in the Act stipulating punishment of any organisation if found guilty, Anisul Huq had said: "I will soon issue a statement explaining the issue."
 When this correspondent yesterday asked the minister if the government would bring further amend-

ment to the Act, he replied: "I would not make any further comment."
 Individuals, justice seekers and war crimes victims and their families have long been demanding trial of Jamaat as a party.
 The demand gained momentum in February last year when the youth occupied the Shahbagh intersection in the capital calling for the highest punishment to be handed down on war criminals and a ban on Jamaat and its associate student body Islami ChhatraShibir.
 Following the protests, the government amended the International Crimes (Tribunals) Act, 1973, allowing the state to appeal against inadequate sentencing and paving the way for trial of organisations on charges of war crimes.
 However, some legal experts say the Act has no provision to hand down punishment on any organisations and the law should be amended again before the trial starts.
 The investigation agency and the prosecution have, however, dismissed the view saying Jamaat can be punished for war crimes under the General Clauses Act.
 Asked about the new development, Tureen Afroz, who has been leading the seven-member prosecution team to prepare the Jamaat case, declined to comment.

Hasina ranks

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 second and third.
 Hasina has six other Asian women ahead of her -- top among them is South Korean President Geun-hye Park who came out 11th. Myanmar democracy icon Aung San Suu Kyi secured the 61st spot.
 Earlier in August 2010, Hasina ranked sixth on the Time's list of the world's top 10 women leaders.
 In this year's Forbes list, former US secretary of state Hillary Clinton became sixth while US First Lady Michelle Obama secured the eighth position.
 The list was prepared from a preliminary group of over 250 candidates from around the world, and the top 100 was selected from eight categories or power bases: billionaires, business, celebrity, finance, media, philanthropy and NGOs, politics and technology.
 To determine the rank within each category, as well as overall rank on the list of 100, Forbes applied four metrics -- the amount of money they control, the media presence they have and the influence and impacts they make.
 The 2014 Most Powerful Women list features, among others, nine heads of state, 28 corporate CEOs and 18 women who founded their own companies or foundations.

TIB wants to see effective ACC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
 Transparency International Bangladesh wants the Anti-Corruption Commission to be effective and credible and to refrain from doing anything that may prove it is politically motivated, TIB Executive Director Iftekharuzzaman said yesterday.
 His remarks came a day after ACC Commissioner Md Shahabuddin expressed doubts about the transparency of the Bangladesh chapter of the Berlin-based international corruption watchdog Transparency International.
 "The ACC can start an investigation [into the activities of TIB] today. Why take time? They can even file cases," Iftekharuzzaman said at a press conference organised at a city hotel to release a study.
 "But I would like to request them [ACC] to think twice if they do it with an intention to harass us [TIB]."
 Referring to a TI report, he added, "We have expressed our opinion. And none has the right to violate our fundamental rights."

Addressing a function organised at Shilpakala Academy in the capital on Wednesday, Shahabuddin said, "They [TIB] work with foreign funds. How much of it do they spend on research?"
 Responding to that, Iftekharuzzaman yesterday said that if the ACC was so critical about TIB's using foreign funds, why did it not ask the government to stop using foreign funds to implement any project?
 TIB does not spend money without the government's approval and all the accounting is clearly mentioned on its website, he said.
 It had a major role behind the birth of the ACC and wants to work in partnership with the anti-graft body the TIB official said, reiterating that there was political influence over the appointment of the ACC commissioners as well as the organisation's handling of cases.
 In a report released last week, TI observed that the ACC is "largely ineffective" in investigating and preventing corruption in the country.

BNP couldn't care less

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 which the president was assassinated in Chittagong circuit house on May 30, 1981.
 Shah Aziz, who had played an active role against Bangladesh's liberation war in 1971 and led the communal and anti-liberation forces in the BNP, said nothing about the investigation into the assassination.
 Opposition MPs, however, were very vocal against the killing. They demanded a thorough investigation into the murder to unearth the conspiracy behind it and to nab the conspirators and killers.
 On June 4, 1981, Shah Aziz made a long statement in the House defending the imposition of the state of emergency by then acting President Abdus Sattar on the day Zia was killed to avert any possible deterioration in the situation.
 He made the statement in the wake of the opposition parties' strong criticism of the state of emergency. The opposition parties had united against the president's killing.
 Again, the premier had remained mum about the demand for an investigation into the gruesome killing of the president.
 Though Zia had made Shah Aziz the prime minister, he did not trust him much.

Supreme Court. The commission was asked to submit its report in two months.
 But acting President Abdus Sattar, who had appeared as a fragile man in face of the then army chief's pressure, could not have his government ensure a fair probe.
 In a sudden move, his government changed the terms of reference of the judicial commission a week into its formation.
 In the original terms of reference, the judicial commission was also instructed to ascertain whether the assassination of the president was the result of any conspiracy and, if so, to identify the conspirators and their motives; to find out the plan of the conspirators and how it was organised; and to identify the persons who supported and assisted the conspiracy and to ascertain the manner and extent of their support and assistance.
 As the terms of reference were changed, the commission too confined its inquiry mainly to the security measures for the president during his visit to Chittagong. It refrained from looking for answers to the vital questions regarding the conspiracy behind the assassination of the president.
 The government's stance matched the move by army headquarters, dominated by then army chief General HM Ershad and some senior officers. Almost all of them, including Ershad, had been repatriated from Pakistan after the country's liberation war.
 Before the government had formed the judicial commission, the army headquarters hurriedly formed an inquiry court, led by Major General Mozammel Hossain, a repatriated officer from Pakistan, to probe the Chittagong mutiny in which the president was killed. But this inquiry committee was not assigned to probe the reasons behind the mutiny as Ershad was against it.
 Within a short period of time, the inquiry court had completed the stage managed inquiry. The army headquarters then formed a general court martial led by Major General Mohammad Abdur Rahman, again a repatriated officer, to hurriedly complete the trial before the judicial commission completed its inquiry.
 The judicial commission could neither summon any military officer, nor could it point fingers at anyone for the assassination. The commission submitted its report in September 1981 to the government. The report was never made public.

The judicial commission in its report held the two intelligence agencies -- DGF and NSI -- responsible for the failure to ensure security for the president during his visit in Chittagong. No action was taken in line with the commission's findings.
 As the opposition parties and human right activists strongly kept objecting to the camera trial before a completion of the judicial commission's inquiry, the BNP-led government on several occasions issued press notes defending the trial by court martial.
 The BNP leaders were in fact happy at the situation that the party-led government was still in power even after the assassination of the president.
ZIA MURDER CASE: HOW JUSTICE WAS BURIED
 The then Assistant Commissioner of the Detective Branch in Chittagong M Mokarram Hossain filed a case with Kotwali thana on June 1, 1981, accusing 10 army officers, including the then GOC of Chittagong cantonment Gen Manzur, of the assassination of the president.
 But the proceedings of the case were suspended on June 24, 1981 following an order given by the home ministry during the then BNP-led government.
 The then BNP government had portrayed the trial by court martial as the trial of the murder of the president in line with the army headquarters' strategy since the Sattar-led government had been influenced by the then army chief and his aides. The court martial was held on the mutiny alone and not on the killing of the president.
 Even when opposition parties and human right activists had kept on opposing the execution of the verdict delivered by the court martial and demanding that the acting president pardon the convicted officers, a section of BNP leaders and its front organisations brought out rallies demanding the execution of the verdict.
 Extending his wholehearted support to the court martial, Prime Minister Shah Azizur Rahman in the middle of July 1981, said the trial of the president assassination would be held under the army act. He claimed trial of such killings had been held under the army act for last 30/40 years.
 The then ruling BNP had faced severe internal conflict after Zia killing and the country was facing political

uncertainty as the Sattar-led government was very weak. Amid such a situation, Ershad overthrown the Sattar government, grabbed the state power on March 24, 1982, and imposed martial law, making the trial of Zia murder a far cry.
 After the fall of Ershad, the BNP, led by Khaleda Zia, widow of Ziaur Rahman, assumed power in 1991. But her government did not take any move to hold trial of Zia murder as she had not wanted it due to mysterious reasons.
 The case saw daylight after the Awami League, led by Sheikh Hasina, assumed office in 1996. It was revived as the suspension order was withdrawn on November 23, 1997 by the AL-led government.
 But the investigation did not get space. At one stage, investigation officer of CID police super M Abdul Quader submitted on September 12 the final report of the case to the court.
 In such a situation Chief Metropolitan Magistrate M Abdul Malek accepted the final report on October 24, 2001, disposing the case.
 The CMM, however, said the case could be revived any time if anyone wanted it to.
 Before the court had disposed of the case, the BNP again formed the government on October 10, 2001. Her government again remained indifferent to the case. The BNP that remained in power until October 2006 did not take any move to revive the case.
 It still remains as a mystery to BNP policymakers as to why Khaleda Zia was not interested in holding the trial of Ziaur Rahman. Some leaders have labelled it as their failure to hold trial of the Zia killing. Some of them think Khaleda might have not wanted to open a Pandora's box by beginning the trial of the Zia murder. She did not even comment on it for a long time. Breaking a long silence, Khaleda Zia has recently accused Ershad of killing Ziaur Rahman and promised to hold the trial in future.
 [The report was prepared on the basis of parliamentary proceedings, and the books, "Democracy and the Challenge of Development" by Moudud Ahmed, "Silent Witness of a General" by Major General (ret) Moynul Hossain Chowdhury, Assassination of Ziaur Rahman and the Aftermath by Ziauddin M Chowdhury, Zia and Manzur Murder and the Aftermath by ASM Shamsul Arefin and depositions of witnesses

Speed up probe

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 pending with different courts. We also aim at modernising the judiciary so that people get justice within the shortest possible time," Suranjit Sengupta, chief of the parliamentary standing committee on law, told reporters as he emerged from a meeting at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban.
 Suranjit, a ruling Awami League lawmaker, said the modern judiciary system of a country indicated how much that country had advanced. "Development of a country is also measured by how quickly people get justice there," he observed.
 Pointing to the sorry state of the judiciary system in Bangladesh, especially in getting justice in time, Suranjit said the committee had earlier made a recommendation to introduce double shifts at all courts to reduce the backlog of cases.
 "But the recommendation could not materialise due to the non-cooperation of judges and some other stakeholders. That is why we have stepped back from our earlier stance and come up with fresh recommendations," he added.
 Suranjit said the JS body had recommended increasing the number of judges in both lower and higher courts.
 He noted that the body had also recommended increasing facilities in

the lower courts alongside enhancing logistics support in the form of modern equipment and skilled workforce.
 The former minister added a section of judges did not attend their offices in time, contributing to a further delay in getting justice.
 "There are a number of judges whose families live in Dhaka. These judges leave their workplaces early on Thursdays to meet their families and attend office late on Sundays," observed Suranjit.
 He said attendance of the judges at 9:00am and their departure at 5:00pm would have to be ensured on each workday.
 Monitoring by the higher authorities must be expedited and monthly meetings of district judges and a conference of the district committees every three months have to be ensured, the committee recommended.
 The committee's other recommendations include taking initiatives to digitalise the overall judicial system as soon as possible and ensure the progress of the cases, if lawyers are absent by adapting necessary steps.
 Suranjit expressed the hope that their recommendations would be implemented for modernising the judiciary and overall development of the country.

Contractor shot dead

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 Police suspected that the murder had taken place centering on a row over business. The law enforcers, however, could not detain anyone in connection with the murder.
 Amir Hossain, driver of the microbus, told The Daily Star that he had dropped Sultan and his office assistant Quamrul Hassan Shammii in front of their office, SASI Private Ltd, minutes before the killing.
 "At the time I was parking the microbus, I heard a bang which sounded like gunshots," he said, adding that he immediately got down from the vehicle and found his employer lying in a pool of blood.
 Shammii claimed that he was several yards behind Sultan and after the sounds he saw two men running away.
 Saifur Rahman, senior assistant commissioner of Dhaka Metropolitan Police (Motijheel Zone), said the criminals had been waiting there for around 15 minutes before Sultan's arrival, keeping their motorbike a little distance away.
 They fired several rounds before riding off on the motorbike, he said, quoting witnesses.
 Police interrogated Amir and Shammii. "We are considering all possible aspects, including disputes

with other contractors, in the investigation," he added.
 Ali Ahsan Shamim, general manager of SASI Private Ltd, said Sultan had been abducted by some unknown criminals on September 24, 2011 and was freed near Khamarbari the next day.
 A senior official of the firm, preferring anonymity, told The Daily Star that Sultan had shared the work of a canal digging project with a sub-contractor in 2010.
 Later, a financial dispute arose between the sub-contractor and him and Sultan filed a case with Motijheel Police Station in this connection, the official added.
 Kazi Hasina Afroz, wife of the deceased, said she did not know anything about the killers.
SHOPKEEPER FOUND DEAD
 Police recovered the slaughtered body of a shopkeeper from in front of his tea-stall in the capital's Kafrul early yesterday.
 The deceased was identified as Mizanur Rahman, a resident of East Senpara Parbata.
 "We recovered the body around 5:00 am. We are investigating to find out the reason behind the murder," said Abdul Kaiyum, officer-in-charge of Kafrul Police Station.

Zia's death

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 by a group of disgruntled army officers at Chittagong Circuit House.
 Born on January 19, 1936 at Bagbari in Bogra, Zia was a sector commander during the Liberation War.
 He was awarded Bir Uttam, the highest gallantry award for a living officer for his wartime services.
 On the occasion of the death anniversary, the party flag will be hoisted at half-mast at the party's central office at Naya Palatan and all party offices across the country.
 Leaders and activists of the party including its Chairperson Khaleda Zia, will offer Fateha and place wreaths at Zia's grave at Sher-e-Bangla Nagar in the capital early in the morning.
 Khaleda will distribute food among the destitute and poor at different spots across the capital on May 30, 31 and June 1.

2 more arrestees confess crime

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 Ekram, who was president of the same AL unit, was first shot and then burnt alive in his car in Feni town on May 20.
 On Tuesday, Abidul Islam Abid, who according to the Rab shot Ekram from close range with a 7.62mm pistol supplied by Jihad, also confessed his crime in the court.
 The four, along with three others, were picked up by the Rapid Action Battalion from Helal's house in the capital's Bashundhara on May 23.
 Shanan told the Rab that Jihad gave him a pistol. After completing the killing mission, he returned the firearm to Jihad.
 He also said Abid and "Ruti" Sohel, another prime suspect in the killing, shot Ekram from close range. Jihad and councillor Shiblu oversaw the killing mission standing just 30 yards away from the spot.
 During primary interrogation, Helal told the law enforcers that Sifat,

another arrestee picked up from his house, was his school friend, but denied knowing much about the others.
ONE HELD IN KHAGRACHHARI
 Police on Wednesday night rounded up Belal Hossain Patwari, AL general secretary of Anandapur union unit in Phulgazi, from Khagrachhari in connection with the murder.
 The arrestee went into hiding in Matiranga of Khagrachhari following the murder of Ekram, said Feni police.
 Belal, according to locals, was once a close aide to Ekram, but their relations strained following the Phulgazi upazila polls early this year. Locals torched his house in Phulgazi on May 27.
 Law enforcers have so far arrested 22 people in connection with the murder, but some key suspects, including "Ruti" Sohel and Bakkar, are still at large.

The two were present at a meeting where Jihad, also known as Jahid, discussed the killing plan.
 Also yesterday, the family members of local BNP leader Mahtab Uddin Chowdhury Minar, the lone named accused in the murder case, at a press conference in Feni town claimed that Minar was innocent.
 Minar's wife Mahbuba Hasnat Naharin Chowdhury said Ekram was killed over an intra-party feud. She complained that her husband has been implicated in the case as part of a conspiracy and also to save the main culprits.
 Ekram's brother Rezaul Haque filed the murder case with Feni Model Police Station on May 20 against Minar and 34 unnamed people.
 In another development, Jubo League activist Ziaul Haque, who was arrested in Daganbhuiyan upazila on Wednesday, was placed on a five-day remand yesterday through a Feni court.

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