

Why this hurry?

Dr Kamal on judge impeachment bill

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

More discussion should have been held before the bill was placed in parliament to restore its authority to impeach Supreme Court judges, said Dr Kamal Hossain yesterday.

"I don't understand why this constitutional amendment is being made at such a supersonic speed," said Kamal, one of the framers of the constitution.

He was speaking at BBC Bangladesh Sanglap, a debate programme on current affairs, held at the capital's Biam Auditorium.

Kamal said that since the general public still lack faith in parliament's neutrality, there should have been more discussion on the proposed amendment.

Over the last 40 years, everything happened in parliament on political considerations, he added.

The government on September 7 placed a constitutional amendment bill to restore the Jatiya Sangsad's authority to impeach Supreme Court judges on grounds of misbehaviour or incapacity.

Kurdish female fighters face jihadists in Iraq's north

AFP, Makhmur

Tekoshin stands on a mountain in north Iraq with a rifle slung over her shoulder and a grenade tucked into her belt, facing jihadists in "a struggle to liberate women".

Women have been fighting alongside men in the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) to wrest Mount Makhmur in northern Iraq back from Islamic State (IS) jihadists, whose treatment of women makes the fight especially personal for the dozens of female fighters on the mountain.

IS-led militants have overrun large areas of Iraq, and the group also controls significant territory in neighbouring Syria, enacting its harshly restrictive and brutal interpretation of Islamic law in both countries.

Tekoshin, 27, says she and other women are fighting the group not only because of the threat it poses to Kurds but because it "is against women's liberation".

"They don't allow women in areas under their control to go to the market" and force them to wear headscarves, she says. "Our struggle

against (the IS) is to defend women from them and from that kind of thinking."

Some 50 women are among the fighters on the mountain from the PKK, which launched an insurgency for self-rule in Turkey in 1984 and has been listed as a terrorist group by countries including the United States, but began peace talks in 2012.

At the entrance to the mountain town of Makhmur, "The Islamic State" was scrawled on a one-storey concrete house, but hastily painted over since the PKK took it back.

Tekoshin says women fought side by side with the men in the battle to force out the jihadists.

"We usually organise ourselves in groups of four women, and I command one of the groups," she explained, wearing traditional Kurdish clothing usually seen on men.

"But when it comes to fighting, we break up and we and the men deploy together on different fronts."

Kurdish women have fought alongside men for years in the PKK, its Syrian offshoot the People's Protection Units (YPG), and to a lesser extent, the Iraqi Kurdish peshmerga forces.

Youth stabbed to death in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A youth was stabbed to death and two of his companions were severely beaten up in the capital's Maniknagar last night.

The dead was identified as Md Sujon, 22, a worker at an engineering workshop in Nawabpur of Old Dhaka. The injured were Nabi, 20, and Tuhin, 19.

Tuhin's father Abdul Mannan said that a number of local Jubo League activists stabbed Sujon around 10:00pm. The attackers swooped on Nabi and Tuhin as they tried to save Sujon, he added.

Locals rushed Sujon to Dhaka Medical College Hospital where doctors declared him dead around 11:00pm.

Omar Faruq, officer-in-charge of Mugda Police Station, said they were not sure about the attackers' identity but were trying to find out who they were.

AL activist shot dead in Madaripur

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Madaripur

Masked men shot dead an Awami League activist at Madra village in Madaripur Sadar upazila last night.

The dead, Azizul Chowkidar, 32, is son of Sultan Chowkidar of the village.

Around 10 masked men intercepted Azizul on his way home around 9:00pm, said local union parishad Chairman Sirajul Islam.

As Azizul tried to flee, the attackers shot him from behind and left. The victim died while being taken to Madaripur Sadar Hospital by locals.

Azizul had been involved with the AL for many years.

Police could not identify the attackers and confirm the motive for the murder till early today.

Rab busts prostitution ring in capital

Two arrestees claim to be police personnel

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rapid Action Battalion yesterday detained 11 people, including six women, allegedly for running a prostitution and blackmailing ring in a flat on Babar Road in the capital's Mohammadpur.

Of the arrestees, Hassan claimed himself as the driver of a sub-inspector of the Detective Branch of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, Solaiman Kabir, said Rab officials.

The gang used to blackmail their clients with their indecent photos and videos for money, they added.

Kabir and Hassan used to collect bribe from the gang and different hotels for running prostitution, and also from illegal establishments claiming themselves as cops, said the officials, adding that they are not yet confirmed about Kabir being a policeman.

Of the arrestees, Sentu had been running the business for around four years. Bacchu, Jibon and Rana used to arrange clients.

Unaware of rights

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existence of family disputes and found dowry, family disputes, child marriage and polygamy as the main legal issues of their communities.

Forty-three percent respondents had faced one or more legal problems and women were often the main victims of these.

Again 43 percent people said local elected representatives were their first choice to get family disputes solved, followed by community leaders, formal legal system and the police.

Seventy-five percent respondents knew nothing about the legal process regarding divorce while 85 percent had very little idea about the dower law.

Though, nearly 92 percent respondents were familiar with ADR/Salish, as far as justice seeking behaviour is concerned, in 65 percent cases, family members did not seek any type of available legal options.

Addressing the programme, Law Minister Anisul Huq, however, said the current government undertook "extensive measures" for the development and promotion of legal aid programmes for the poor.

Terming it "a mammoth task" to provide the poor and marginalised people with free legal aid, he sought cooperation from non-government organisations, civil society members and donors in this regard.

Law Secretary ASSM Zahirul Haque; Richard Butterworth, senior governance adviser and governance team leader of the DFID Bangladesh; NLASO Director Syed Aminul Islam; and CLS team leader Hector D Soliman also spoke at the programme.

Canadian Islamist preacher to be deported from Philippines

AFP, Manila

A Canadian Islamic preacher detained for being a security threat in the Philippines has agreed to be deported, an immigration official said yesterday.

Jamaican-born Abu Ameenah Bilal Philips will be flown back to Canada as soon as possible, said immigration spokeswoman Elaine Tan.

"He voluntarily requested to be deported," she told AFP, allowing the government to fly him out without going through deportation proceedings.

Philips was detained by police in the city of Davao last weekend while on a

lecture tour in the south, where the country's restive Islamic minority is based.

"He was blacklisted (due to) information that he may conduct activities that are a threat to our national security," Tan said.

She said that the government hoped to fly Philips out quickly, but could not yet give a specific date.

In Davao, the regional police spokesman Superintendent Tony Rivera said they were ordered to hold Philips due to security advisories from several countries, adding he may have ties to extremist groups and labelling him as "dangerous".

Report refuted

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Bangladesh, following publication of news in Kolkata's top Bengali newspapers that All India Trinamool Congress (AITC) funded Jamaat-e-Islami in Bangladesh "to destabilize the Awami League government in Bangladesh".

The report claimed that Bangladesh foreign ministry sources in Delhi confirmed Islam's meeting with Mamata.

"Attention has been drawn to some media reports about the matter. The news is not based on fact," said the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in a prompt response to media reports in India.

The FM statement also said, "...upon request from the deputy high commissioner, the chief minister of West Bengal has given time for her to pay a courtesy call on September 15."

The Hindu report, headlined "Mamata summons Bangladesh Deputy High Commissioner", says, "The Deputy High Commissioner, Abida Islam will meet Ms Banerjee on Saturday. Historically, Awami League is considered as a pro-India political party in Bangladesh."

Quoting a senior leader of AITC, it further says, "Ms Banerjee will give a 'piece of her mind' to the Deputy High Commissioner for 'selective leaks in media violating protocol' against a ruling party in the State."

Meanwhile, State Minister for

Foreign Affairs Shahriar Alam yesterday said that the government is investigating claims, made by Indian media reports, that Jamaat-e-Islami has links with AITC.

"We have taken the issue [funding] seriously," Shahriar told reporters after a programme on non-resident Bangladeshis (NRB) at Sonargaon Hotel yesterday afternoon.

Top Bengali newspapers in Kolkata alleged crores of Saradha scam money had been funnelled to Jamaat leaders in Bangladesh in 2012-13 through Ahmed Hassan Imran, a Rajya Sabha member from West Bengal's ruling Trinamool Congress.

Meanwhile, Rahul Sinha, the president of West Bengal state unit of Bharatiya Janata Party, has requested Indian Home Minister Rajnath Singh to enquire into the alleged links between Jamaat and AITC, reports our Delhi correspondent.

"We have recently seen various media reports that money from Saradha chit fund was used to fund terror in Bangladesh and for anti-India activities. It is a matter of national interest and security. So we have requested the home minister to enquire into the matter," Sinha told reporters in Kolkata today.

Sinha also refuted allegations by West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee that BJP was carrying on a vilification campaign against AITC.

She lives with

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It is located at the base of the skull and contains around half the neurons - cells that transmit information - in the brain, and represents around 10 percent of the brain's mass.

It emerged the woman had experienced problems, not learning to talk until she was six and failing to walk until she was seven.

While it is not unknown for a person to lose partial function of the cerebellum due to an injury or disease, completely lacking the region in the first place is extremely rare.

Physicians believe the woman is only the ninth known case of a living person suffering the condition cerebellar agenesis.

Doctors learned the woman had never played or jumped like other children her age, and is unable to walk steadily without support.

Tests revealed she had no problem understanding words but living without a cerebellum meant she had difficulties with pronunciation.

Her voice trembles, her words are slurred and the doctors treating the 24-year-old described her voice tone as "harsh".

Specialists discovered the space where the cerebellum should be was

empty. Instead, the black space was filled with cerebrospinal fluid, which cushions the brain, providing defence against disease.

Doctors treated her with a dehydration treatment to remove some of the water pressure building up in her brain.

Mario Manto, who researches cerebellar disorders at the Free University of Brussels in Belgium, told the New Scientist: "These rare cases are interesting to understand how the brain circuitry works and compensates for missing parts."

The doctors looking after the patient, said they believe the normal cerebellar function may have been taken over by the cortex.

At a follow-up appointment four years later she was showing signs of doing well, it was reported in the journal Brain.

The woman married, and gave birth to a daughter with no neurological abnormalities.

While the majority of people born with the rare condition will die in infancy, the patient represents a new opportunity to study the effects of living without the cerebellum.

Dhaka heading for disaster

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BIP President Golam Rahman said nearly 80 percent of the structural plan (first part of the master plan) formulated in 1997 for a planned Dhaka city remained unimplemented.

The final part of the master plan, called Detailed Area Plan (DAP), was made 13 years later. The government has taken a position to compromise on it too, he said.

Dhaka now faces an existential crisis due to the unplanned development, said BIP General Secretary Md Akter Mahmud. Some actions taken by the government allowing destruction of conservable flood flow zones, wetlands and rivers are set to foil the very purpose of the master plan, Golam said.

While researchers for the past several decades have been recommending healthy urbanisation, economic development and environment conservation, unplanned activities have continued in the name of development, said noted urban researcher Prof Nazrul Islam.

Prof Shamsul Alam, a member of the Planning Commission, said planned urbanisation was the driving force for national development, since 60 percent of our gross domestic prod-

uct came from the urban economy while the rest from the rural economy.

CDC Executive Director Muhammad Jahangir, who moderated the discussion, said teams of experts for the next two months would seek recommendations from all concerned on city governance, urbanisation, population and housing, transportation, utility services, public spaces, disaster management, urban economy and conservation of heritage.

The recommendations will be submitted to the government, he said, which would be followed by a civic movement to press home their implementation.

The biggest challenge is how to involve government decision-makers in implementing the recommendations, said Mahfuz Anam, editor and publisher of The Daily Star, adding that the government, instead of addressing serious public interest issues like rampant food adulteration and deaths in road crashes, was more interested in enacting new laws to gag the mass media.

Architect Mubasshar Hussain and Sujit Chowdhury, climate change expert of the German Embassy, also spoke.

US hopes training local forces will work -- this time

AFP, Washington

The United States has often struggled to turn rag-tag foreign forces into professional armies, but President Barack Obama is gambling that this time the training effort will succeed in Iraq and Arab allies.

Eager to avoid sending US combat troops to fight against Islamic State jihadists, Obama is touting a renewed effort to bolster Iraqi government forces and "moderate" opposition fighters in Syria with weapons and advice from seasoned American officers.

But there are doubts in Western capitals that Washington can ensure a rebuilt Iraqi army will not fall prey once again to a Shiite sectarian agenda, or overcome in-fighting and extremism among rival Syrian rebel groups.

Until now, Obama has kept the Syrian civil war -- and its confusing array of rebel factions -- at arm's length, approving only limited sup-

port for some "moderate" opposition forces.

That effort, in which a couple of thousand rebels have been reportedly trained by the CIA in Jordan, has been blasted as timid and grossly inadequate by hawks in Washington and Arab allies.

The US president vowed this week to ratchet up support for the rebels, but it remains unclear how much help Washington is ready to provide and whether the West can even identify reliable partners who could form a viable fighting force -- at a time when Islamist hardliners are ascendant.

There are hundreds of rebel groups in Syria, riven by ideological and power rivalries, manned by fighters lacking basic military skills and often dominated by Islamist radicals.

Obama has asked Congress for \$500 million to train as many as 5,000 rebel fighters over the next year, using US special forces instead of CIA offi-

cers. The plan got a boost this week with Saudi Arabia offering to host the training.

But US lawmakers have been less than enthusiastic, complaining Obama has failed to explain exactly what the plan will involve.

Senators also insist the US government must find secular-minded rebels to back, though experts who monitor the Syrian conflict say the debate in the United States is "naive."

The issue "is not being discussed at a realistic level," said Aron Lund, editor of Syria in Crisis, a report published by the US-based Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

"Most of the insurgency is either opportunistic or Islamist to some extent," he told AFP.

The United States will likely have to demonstrate a pragmatic approach, as it has in the past in Iraq, and accept that it will have to work with rebels with an Islamist bent, according to Lund.

Surprising indeed

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Dr Kamal Hossain and Barrister Amir Ul Islam, two of the framers of the constitution, of changing their previous stance on parliament's power to impeach SC judges.

But interestingly, the AG himself in 2011 was opposed to the empowerment of parliament to this effect.

At a meeting of the parliamentary body for constitutional amendment on April 24, 2011, AG Mahbubey Alam along with some former chief justices and jurists strongly opposed the move to restore parliament's said powers. His concern over it was more significant.

He had said: "All of my friends and my juniors who have become judges have already expressed their concern over the matter and many of them are in panic."

The attorney general suggested retaining the current constitutional provision for the chief-justice-led Supreme Judicial Council to impeach an SC judge. He, however, suggested reforms to the SJC, according to the proceedings of the committee meeting.

But after three years, he not only changed his stance on the issue. On Thursday, he also strongly blasted

eminent jurist Dr Kamal Hossain and Barrister Amir-Ul Islam for their criticism against the proposed constitutional amendment.

Dr Kamal, Barrister Amir and some more leading jurists, on Tuesday at a discussion organised by Bangladesh Ganotantrik Ainjibi Samity on the SC premises, also called for a dialogue between all concerned before the constitution is amended to empower parliament.

The attorney general at the pro-AL lawyers' showdown blasted Kamal and Amir for what he said changing their stance on parliament's impeachment powers it had in the constitution of 1972.

He said Kamal and Amir were among the framers of the 1972 constitution and they had empowered parliament with the authority. "Why did they now flip flop on their stance," questioned the attorney general.

Barrister Amir on Tuesday, two days before the attorney general raised the question, explained the reasons for empowering parliament with the authority in 1972. In his view, the 1972 charter gave powers to parliament to remove judges because the SC was in a formative stage then.

The attorney general, however, did not explain why he has reversed his

position by making the statement in support of the proposed constitutional amendment at the pro-AL lawyers' showdown.

By joining the pro-AL lawyers' gathering, he also brought down the constitutional office to the level of partisan politics. And he sided with partisan politics though he is supposed to act as the ex officio chairman of the Bangladesh Bar Council and is the leader of the entire Bar of the country.

In his authoritative book, "Constitutional Law of Bangladesh", former attorney general Mahmudul Islam explained the significance of the functions of the attorney general, the highest law officer of the country.

He writes that the attorney general is a link between the executive and the judiciary. He has no specific role to play in the formation of the policies of the government. He is required to render opinions whenever asked, on important constitutional and legal issues.

In Mahmudul Islam's view, it cannot be said that the office is a political one.

But the way Mahbubey Alam acted on Thursday turned his office into a political one, working in the interest of narrow partisan politics.

Pro-BNP teacher assaulted

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venue after attending the launching of a book titled "Bangladesh: Emergency and the Aftermath 2007-2008," written by BNP leader and former law minister Moudud Ahmed.

Mahbubullah said he could not identify the attackers.

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia, however, accused the "cadres" of the Awami League and the Chhatra League for the attack.

Following the attack, Mahbubullah, who now teaches at a private university, went to a programme attended by Khaleda at the nearby Institution of Engineers, wearing the shirt torn in the attack.

There, he recounted the attack.

"As I came out of the auditorium, four to five men surrounded me. They punched me heavily, hit me on the upper part of eyes and knocked me down. They fled the scene once our

people reached there.

"I am a teacher. To the best of my knowledge, I have no enemy ... After being attacked on the Supreme Court premises, I realise no civilised person can live in this country," he said, adding, "This is a criminal attack ... I want justice."

Later, he was admitted to Labaid Specialised Hospital in the capital. From there, one of his relatives told The Daily Star over the phone that Mahbubullah was shifted to the Coronary Care Unit to determine whether he had suffered any heart attack following the attack.

"He suffered injuries in the upper part of right eye and head," said the relative, declining to specify his relation with the professor or give his name.

Before Mahbubullah's speech at the pro-BNP Association of Engineers' programme, Khaleda Zia said, "Crimi-

nals attacked Professor Mahbubullah a few minutes ago ... The incident proves there is no security of people's life in our country. We condemn it and demand immediate arrest of the attackers."

She added, "We want to see the government taking proper steps to arrest those who attacked Professor Mahbubullah. Otherwise, we will assume that the attack was carried out on instructions of Sheikh Hasina."

Meanwhile, SCBA Superintendent Nimesh Chandra Das lodged a general diary with Shahbagh Police Station in connection with the attack.

SCBA President Khandaker Mahbub Hossain and Secretary AM Mahbub Uddin Khokon, in a release, described the incident as a "pre-planned and political attack" and demanded immediate arrest of the perpetrators.