

## Urban uplift

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as well as better coordination among people's representatives and the administration for ensuring good urban governance.

Adoption of a national urbanisation policy may lead to a better future, they said in their speeches to the event on 'Urban Management' organised by the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), The Daily Star and the Prothom Alo at Hotel Palash.

The dialogue was held as part of a series of regional consultation on National Policy Review Forum-2003.

Mayor of Sylhet Badar Uddin Ahmed Kamran attended the function as the chief guest with former vice-chancellor of Shahjalal

University of Science and Technology Professor Mohammad Habibur Rahman in the chair.

Dr NI Nazem, associate professor of geography and environment at Dhaka University, presented the keynote paper.

Professor Aminul Islam Chowdhury, former VC of Jahangirnagar University; Dr Nazrul Islam, professor at geography and environment at Dhaka University; Mahfuz Anam, editor of The Daily Star, Debopriya Bhattacharya of CPD, Rasheda Newaz, a member of urban management task force, AHNA Chowdhury, ex-joint secretary and a task force member; Professor Syed Akmal Mahmud of Sylhet International University; Dr Akhtarul Islam of SUST, Jamil Ahmed Chowdhury, registrar of SUST; Professor Jainal Abedin of SUST and Faruque Mahmud Chowdhury, vice-president of Sylhet Chamber spoke on the occasion.

It was also addressed by Azizul Haque Manik, ward commissioner; Brigadier Jubayer Siddiqui of Scholars Home College, Aziz Ahmed Selim, acting editor of the

## Ruling on arrest

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on the matter is scheduled to take place today, court sources said.

The government argued in the appeal that Section 54 and Section 167 (applied to remand a person) of the CrPC were not inconsistent with the fundamental rights guaranteed by the constitution.

The High Court in a 15-point directive on April 7 had set out to ensure that human rights of a person under arrest or detention or on remand are not curbed. It had observed that some of the provisions of the Section 54 and Section 167 were not consistent with the fundamental rights of the citizens.

It had asked the government to amend the relevant sections of the CrPC within six months from the date of the ruling.

The High Court ruling had also made it mandatory for a police officer to produce a person before the nearest magistrate within 24 hours of his/her arrest.

Arrest on suspicion under Section 54 had been used by subsequent governments as a tool to quell political dissidents. The directives were meant to effectively put a cap on such harassment.

However, the police and the authorities concerned rarely complied with the directives. Now the government has gone to the court to challenge the directives.

Daily Jugabheri, Safwan Chowdhury, vice-chairman of Bangladesh Cha Sangsad, EU Shahidul Islam, secretary of Sylhet Bar; Abul Foteh Fattah, general secretary of the Sylhet unit of College-University Teachers' Association; Dr Kamal Ahmed Chowdhury, association professor of SUST, Murshed Chowdhury, Zayed Sharmin, Farzana Siddiqi, Akhtaruzzaman, lecturers of SUST, Muhibur Rahman, Chamber leader, Lokman Ahmed, general secretary of JSD (INU) and Barrister Arash Ali, president of Amnesty International, Bangladesh chapter.

Professor Syed Akmal Mahmud said greater empowerment of elected local government bodies was a must for fulfilling people's hopes and aspirations.

Without better coordination between people's representatives and the local administration, local government bodies cannot be effective, he observed.

Safwan Chowdhury stressed the need for private sector investment in urban development programmes like in many Asian countries.

District Bar Secretary EU Shahidul Islam demanded recovery of natural falls and canals which have fallen into squatters' hands in major cities.

Professor Aminul Islam Chowdhury called for raising revenue from municipal taxes.

## Dumuria double murder: 30 arrested

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Thirty people have so far been arrested in connection with the killing of two New Biplobi Communist Party (NBPC) activists at Dumuria Friday evening.

NBPC activists -- Yunus Gazi and Khokan Biswas -- were gunned down by some cadres of Biplobi Communist Party at the home of one Khalilur Rahman at village Rajapur in presence of a large number of people attending a marriage ceremony there.

Meanwhile, hundreds of people of several outlawed -- dominated unions in Dumuria Upazila were seen leaving their homes yesterday, fearing armed struggle between New Biplobi Communist Party and Biplobi Communist Party.

Another outlawed organisation, Purbo Banglar Communist Party, is reportedly taking preparations to recapture Dumuria Upazila which was its well fortified belt from 1990 to 2001.

## Sirajganj declared illiteracy free dist

UNB, Sirajganj

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday warned against wastage and misuse of public funds allocated for various educational programmes.

"Irregularities and negligence won't be tolerated in implementation of development programmes funded by the taxpayers' hard-earned money," she told a function at Sirajganj University College, marking the declaration of Sirajganj as the country's 7th 'illiteracy-free district' under the government-sponsored Total Literacy Movement (TLM).

Khaleda Zia unveiled the plaque of 'illiteracy-free Sirajganj' and offered munajat with ministers, local MPs, teachers and students under TLM, government officials and local elite.

Under a Tk 14.36-crore TLM programme titled 'Prodipto Sirajganj', 5,92,077 unlettered people of 11-45 years of age were taught how to read and write.

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## 3 of a family burnt alive in Bagerhat

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Three members of a family were burnt alive as fire gutted their thatched house at village Gazalia Sunakanda in Kachu upazila of Bagerhat district in the early hours of yesterday.

The dead were identified as Shefali Begum, 22, her two-year-old son Russel and brother-in-law Nazrul Islam, 30. They were asleep at the time of incident.

The cause of the fire could not be ascertained till yesterday evening. A GD (general diary) was recorded with Kachu police station.

Deputy commissioner and police super visited the spot, 25 km off Bagerhat town.

## India names its envoy

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high commissioner to Britain but no official announcement was made.

"Maleaha will definitely prefer India to Britain as her assignment in New Delhi would be more challenging," said the PML-QA leader, who did not wish to be named.

He said on Thursday Lodhi had a "long" meeting with PML-QA chief Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain, widely considered to wield considerable clout in the government.

Riaz Muhammad Khan is currently ambassador to China.

Pakistan's former high commissioner to India Ashraf Jehangir Qazi had also served in China before his assignment in New Delhi. Likewise, India's former envoy to Islamabad Vijay Nambiar had also come after a stint in China.

One other person being considered is Akram Zaki, former secretary-general in the foreign ministry. He was an MP in the previous parliament and is now a senior member of PML-QA.

However, sources in Islamabad said that there is no timeframe for the envoys to take up their duties in Islamabad and New Delhi.

The resumption of full diplomatic relations would be the first major step taken by the two countries following Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's dramatic offer of a "hand of friendship" to Pakistan last month.

The diplomatic links had been

downgraded after the terrorist attack on the Indian Parliament in December 2001 that New Delhi blamed on terrorist groups backed by Islamabad.

Also on the cards are the resumption of rail, road and air links and meetings between senior officials of the two countries before a possible summit meeting later this year.

Meanwhile Pakistan's Foreign Minister yesterday called for "unconditional" talks with India, saying that was the only way discussions would be fruitful.

He said also that the only way to end violence in the Kashmir region claimed by both nations was to give hope to its people.

## Energy reserve

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time spent in collecting bio mass as fuel for household use and boost productivity and income of small home-based businesses.

The Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) organised the consultation titled 'Development and Governance of the Energy Sector' in collaboration with The Daily Star and the Prothom Alo at Hotel Palash in Sylhet yesterday afternoon.

It was held under the regional consultation meeting of the National Policy Review Forum 2003.

Dr Professor Jainal Abedin, head of the Department of Chemical Engineering and Polymer Science, Shahjalal University of Science and Technology (SUST), chaired the meeting while Vice-chancellor of the Sylhet International University Professor Dr Sadrudin Ahmed Chowdhury was the chief guest.

Nuruddin M Kamal, member-secretary of a taskforce on the issue, presented a keynote paper.

Vice-chairman of the Bangladesh Cha Sangsad Safwan Chowdhury stressed the need for raising per capita energy consumption.

He also called for immediate, effective measures to reduce systems loss in power sector and stressed formation of a renewable energy development agency.

Murshed Chowdhury of the SUST suggested review of the production sharing contracts (PSCs) with international oil companies and working out new ones.

Brigadier (rt) Jubayer Siddiqui, principal of Scholarshome College, said alternative sources of energy should be tapped as the proven reserve of natural resources is too limited.

Private sector power generation is also to be increased immediately, he added.

The session was also addressed, among others, Dr Kamal Ahmed Chowdhury, associate professor, Department of Sociology, the SUST; Dr Akhtarul Islam and Farhana Siddiqi of the SUST and Professor Syed Akmal Mahmud and Khaled Ahmed, lecturers of the International University.



PHOTO: STAR

Awami League General Secretary Abdul Jaill addresses a rally at Bangabandhu Avenue organised to protest the switching off of the microphone of opposition leader Sheikh Hasina at parliament on Thursday.

## 152 judicial staff Govt to net jhatka catchers

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which banned such appointments.

"It is declared that the creation of BCS (Judicial) cadre along with other BCS executive and administrative cadres by Bangladesh Civil Service (Reorganisation) Order 1980 with amendment of 1986 is ultra vires the Constitution."

"It is also declared that Bangladesh Civil Service Recruitment Rules, 1981 are inapplicable to the judicial service," the ruling read.

Following the verdict, the government stopped recruitment of judicial officers through BCS examinations.

But it tried to recruit some judicial officers through the 24th BSC examinations last year, but faced restrictions by the High Court.

The government later cancelled the 24th BCS examinations.

In its petition yesterday, the Attorney General's Office submitted that the law ministry had sent a demand letter to the PSC prior to holding of the 22nd BCS examinations.

The result of the examinations is likely to be published soon and PSC argues the vacant posts of assistant judges might be filled up on the basis of the result if the court approved.

The government in its petition said if the vacancies were not filled up, the sufferings of the people would compound due to delay in disposing of cases.

The posts of 152 assistant judge stand vacant now and 50 more will be added to the figure soon.

Of the 876 judicial officers, 92 are engaged in executive activities

on deputation.

"This is a ruse of the executive to make the judiciary budge on its directive," said a legal expert.

"No judicial officer can discharge executive duties," he said, referring to the 12-point directive of the Supreme Court.

But six posts of district level judges stood vacant now at a time when 29 judges were assigned with executive duties on deputation.

Such a situation exists in all tiers of the lower judiciary -- from district judges down to assistant judges, sources said.

## Tk 12 lakh robbed from garment staff

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Armed miscreants reportedly snatched Tk.12 lakh from garment employees at East Shewra, Kafurl yesterday afternoon.

The incident occurred when the employees of All Right Garments were carrying Tk. 11.90 lakh in a bag to pay wages to the workers of Outfit Garments. Both factories are owned by the same person, police said.

When the employees reached in front of the garment factory, three miscreants riding in a motor bike snatched the bag and left the spot immediately, police added.

Police could neither arrest any suspect nor recover the stolen money till last night.

## Gas may turn dearer

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small-scale private power plants will fall to Tk 93 per unit, down from the current rate of Tk 100.

Price for captive power generation will come down to Tk 99.24 per unit from the present Tk 100.

Fertiliser factories will buy gas at Tk 84.41 per unit instead of the current price of Tk 60 per unit. As a result, fertiliser price will soar to Tk 5,752 per tonne, up from Tk 4,800.

However, gas price for industries will drop to Tk 99.24 per unit from Tk 140.

Commercial consumers will pay Tk 177.38 for per unit of gas down from the present rate of Tk 220.

Brick kilns will enjoy the biggest price cut. They will pay Tk 104.37 for an unit of gas instead of the present Tk 220.

Energy ministry officials hoped

that reduction in gas prices for industrial and commercial consumers would perk up industrialisation and dissipate gas theft.

Industrial and commercial sectors, key areas of the theft, use about 12 per cent of total gas production.

Analysts say fertiliser and power price spiral will directly raise the cost of living, affecting most people. The sectors consume 80 per cent of the country's total gas production.

Domestic users, who constitute 8 per cent of gas consumers, will find a higher rate slapped on them.

Sources said Titas will come up with a new rate once the ministry settles its plan.

A committee comprising officials from the Hydrocarbon Unit and Petrobangla worked out the formula for price hike, which would remain in force for the next

six years.

Sources said the committee took stock of weighted average gas production cost of Petrobangla and the international oil companies (IOCs), gas transmission and operation costs, supplementary duty and VAT in devising the formula.

The committee, however, skirted the issue of profit margin for the gas production, distribution and transmission companies under Petrobangla in the formula, a source said.

"In other words, this gas price would not benefit Petrobangla and its nine affiliates," he explained.

The gas prices of IOCs include profits.

The country uses about 1,200 million cubic feet of gas per day, contributing over Tk 1,500 crore to the exchequer every year.

## Shazneen case

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Dhaka.

After the cross-examination for about three hours, Judge Kazi Rahamat Ullah adjourned the hearing till May 19.

During the cross-examination, Moslem told the court that guard Humayun (now dead) was on duty at the gate of Latifur Rahman's (Shazneen's father) Gulshan residence during the incident on April 23, 1998.

"On April 1, 1998, I saw Hasan coming out of Chhoto Baby's (nickname of Shazneen) room in a bad mood", Moslem said while replying to a question by the defence lawyers yesterday.

The witness also told the court that he saw Hasan at Latifur Rahman's house on April 23, 26 and 30, 1998.

Earlier 12 prosecution witnesses, including the victim's father Latifur Rahman, were cross-examined.

Shazneen Tasnim Rahman, 15, the youngest daughter of Latifur Rahman, Chairman of Transcom, was raped and murdered at their Gulshan Residence on April 23, 1998.

Special Public Prosecutors (PPs) Arfan Uddin Khan, ABM Sharfuddin Khan Mukul and Saima Khanam appeared for the state while advocates Mosharruf Hossain Kajol and Mizanur Rahman defended the accused.

All the six accused -- Shahid, Hasan, Badal, Shanirun, Minu and Farvin -- now in the jail custody, were produced in the court yesterday.

## Saddam

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Do not give up your petrol and your wealth. Fight against the occupier and his agents, boycott them. It is a religious and patriotic duty."

The letter bitterly attacked all Iraq's neighbours.

It accused "the Syrian regime of welcoming the opposition, traitors, who it allowed to contact the CIA and Britain while refusing to allow militants to stay a few days" in Syria.

"The Saudi regime allowed the invaders to sully the soil of the Prophet Mohammed," while Kuwait was branded "a liar and a traitor."

Iran was charged with "hypocrisy and plotting against Arabs and Islam."

Jordan was accused of "making propaganda for the Zionist regime" and Turkey of "allowing American and British planes to kill Iraqis" by hosting the aircraft which patrolled a "no-fly" zone over northern Iraq.

Al-Qods Al-Arabi published a similar message on April 30 in which Saddam purportedly called on Iraqis to fight against US troops.

## Rapists

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residence of the officer in charge (OC) of Tanore thana was ransacked and he was threatened for recording the case.

The next day OC Nurul Amin complained to his seniors in Rajshahi that Tanore pourasabha Chairman Emran Ali Mollah, upazila BNP Joint Secretary Jamal Uddin, Saranjai upazila parishad Chairman Mofiz Uddin, the pourasabha BNP President Omar Faruk and worker Moniruddin had all allegedly attacked his residence.

The victim was handed over to her family on April 24 after medical examinations at Rajshahi Medical College Hospital. Since then she has been kept confined in a room away from the villagers' unfavourable comments.

"It will be a sin to look at your face. Why did you have to go to school?" the victim's mother was heard scolding when a group of journalists went there.

A section of villagers led by Abdul Jali and Atar Ali allegedly offered the victim's family Tk 60,000 to withdraw the case. They threatened to further humiliate the victim if they did otherwise.

OC Nurul Amin denied allegation that the rapists were moving freely. "They are in hiding and we are trying hard to nab them," Amin told The Daily Star.

He said police would seek the court's permission to attach property of the accused and that charge sheet of the case would be presented shortly.

## Bad loans

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Tk 5,000 crore has turned bad.

As per the BB order, this full amount is supposed to be written off. But the NCBs cannot do it because of the huge Tk 4,257 crore provision shortfall.

Right now, they have only Tk 1,893 crore loans provided for and they will write off Tk 1,300 crore against this. Before the loans are written off, the banks will have to file cases against the defaulting borrowers.

The bank boards are meeting frequently and approving proposals for write-offs. Notices are being sent to the defaulters to repay the loans or face legal actions.

Sonali has Tk 5,217 crore in classified loans and Tk 757 crore is provided for. It still faces Tk 2,205 provision shortfall.

Similarly, Janata has Tk 2,548 crore in classified loans and Tk 325 crore provision, leaving a shortfall of Tk 824 crore.

Agrani has Tk 3,143 crore in classified loans and Tk 470 crore provision, leaving a shortfall of Tk 918 crore.

Rupali has Tk 1,270 crore in classified loans and Tk 340 crore provision. Its shortfall stands at Tk 309 crore.



PHOTO: STAR

Voters stand in queue at a polling centre in the Kanchan municipality elections yesterday.