

Cattle markets

FROM PAGE 16

of the road from the DCC-approved space in Armanitola.

The court also conducted a raid on Chankharpu cattle market and evicted the traders from the illegally occupied land.

Contacted, Nazmul said, "I have conducted the drive in Lalbagh and Kotwali and will continue it. I have learnt that more mobile courts will carry out similar drives tomorrow [Monday] in other areas."

Traders of Golapbagh cattle market have captured the adjacent footpaths, parts of the main road

Scant security measures set Eid passengers to uncertainty

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Homebound passengers eager to celebrate Eid-ul-Azha with their families are not feeling adequately secured at the city's bus, launch and railway terminals and on their journeys as the government is not providing the similar measure of security as it was ahead of the last Eid-ul-Fitr.

Shortage of law enforcers and antiquated security techniques are leaving the home bound Eid-travellers alone to face troubles including unavailability of bus, train and launch tickets at the counters, scalping of tickets at exorbitantly high prices, nagging traffic jams, snatching and mugging. Incidents of extortion and mugging have significantly risen in the last few days.

Every year about five million people leave the capital on the eve of Eid.

Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) in a news release however said this year the government has deployed police, Rapid Action Battalion (Rab), Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) and other law enforcement agency members to prevent harassment of passengers, scalping of tickets and charging of extra fares. But the number of law enforcers deployed is much lower than what it was ahead of the Eid-ul-Fitr.

Five closed-circuit television (CCTV) cameras were set up at Sadarghat Launch Terminal, metal detectors were installed at all bus terminals, Kamalapur Railway station and Sadarghat Launch Terminal, people and their luggage were checked at all entrances during the Eid-ul-Fitr rush but none of the steps are taken ahead of the coming Eid-ul-Azha.

"It is impossible to provide security to such an unusually huge number of home bound passengers as the number of law enforcers is lower compared to the need," said a policeman at Kamalapur Railway Station.

A good number of passengers who were leaving the capital by buses, launches and trains yesterday expressed dissatisfactions over the government's decision to not install CCTV cameras and metal detectors at the terminals during the Eid rush this time around.

Fog blanket wrecks

FROM PAGE 1

to cross the rivers by ferry.

Our Manikganj correspondent reports: Fog disrupted the ferry and launch services for seven hours early yesterday at Paturia-Daulatdia. Several hundred buses and trucks were stranded on either side of the river.

Our Pabna correspondent reports: Hundreds of buses and trucks were at the Kazirhat ferry ghat.

Sources working in Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authorities (BIWTA) said some 500 water vessels were stuck in a long queue at different jetties, causing immense sufferings to the people.

Our Barisal correspondent adds: Some 50 watercraft carrying more than one lakh passengers from the capital were stranded in Meghna and its tributaries near Chandpur, beginning from 2:00am yesterday. They reached their destinations after delaying for up to eight hours.

In northern districts, foggy conditions prevailing for three consecutive days made life miserable, our Rangpur correspondent reports.

Thousands of poor people have been subjected to abject misery with the onset of extreme cold weather. The day labourers in the rural areas seem to be the worst affected by the cold wave-like situation.

The people living along the Teesta, Bhrammaputra, and Dharla rivers did not go out of their homes for work since the cold wave hit the region.

Azhar Ali, a rickshaw-puller at Kagzipara of Gangachara upazila, said he could not go to work in last two days.

"Me and my family members do not have warm clothes. It's hard to buy food for them let alone clothes," he added.

Marzia Khatun of Boro Rupai of the same upazila told The Daily Star that they would have had to starve for several days had they bought warm clothes for three daughters and two sons.

Meanwhile, Civil Surgeon of

and open spaces near Golapbagh stadium.

At Kamalapur market, the traders have occupied the side lanes and footpaths of the adjacent roads.

Sale of animals has so far been low in the capital, but the traders expect it may gain momentum today as the Eid is only one day away.

Market observers said both the traders and buyers are waiting for the last moment, one side for a hike and the other for a fall in prices.

Buyers, who have already visited different cattle markets, said the price is much higher this year than last year's.

Abdul Gafur Bepari, a trader who has come to Golapbagh on Wednesday with 28 cows, said, "Most people are coming as visitors. They don't even bargain for a reasonable price."

He asked Tk 45,000 for an animal but the customer left without bargaining.

Traders of Kamalapur market said they are also experiencing the same shying away of the buyers. However, the buyers alleged the traders are claiming too much prices.

Members of police, paramilitary Bangladesh Rifles and Rapid Action Battalion have been deployed in and around the city to maintain law and order. They are patrolling the streets to ensure safety of the homebound passengers and cattle traders.

The temporary cattle markets selected by the DCC are open spaces near Chitra Cinema in Armanitola, Khilkhet Tanpara, Jhigatala-Hazaribagh ground, Golapbagh ground, Ratnatgani playground, Dhupkhola ground, Hussaini Dalan Road (from Chankharpu crossing to Bakshibazar signal point) and Balur Math near the Brothers Union Club at Kamalapur.

Other sites are the open space of Rajuk at Uttara Sector 12, Meradia Bazar, Rayer Bazar playground, open spaces near Taltala bus stand, at Argarao, in front of Alam Market in Postogola, and Sunrise playground in Shahjahanpur.

Besides, sale is on at the city's only permanent cattle market in Gabtoli.

Millions of animals are sacrificed every year in the country marking the Eid-ul-Azha.

Minority

FROM PAGE 16

party cadres led by Barma Akram on Saturday directed enumerators not to list any minority workers, staff or owners of any business house, reports our CU Correspondent.

"The Muslims of my shops and other business houses were listed, while we were skipped," he alleged.

"The people of at least 800 shops run by the minority Hindus on Tamakimundi Lane were excluded," Zafar Alam of Chowdhury Boot House told The Daily Star.

The owners and employees of Poshaki Traders, Baro Awlia Store, Security Fashion, Baishali Traders and Rupraz Store, among others, were excluded, witnesses alleged.

Trucks with hide to be barred from going out of Dhaka

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In a bid to stop smuggling of hides during Eid-ul-Azha, a home ministry meeting on law and order yesterday decided not to allow any truck carrying hides to go out of Dhaka for a few days from the Eid-ul-Azha.

"What's the necessity of trucks carrying hides to go out of Dhaka when all the tanneries are in the city? The trucks will be allowed to move up to Aminbazaar as there is a tannery there," State Minister for Home Affairs Lutfuzzaman Babar told reporters after the meeting.

The hide traders and the customers who will carry large amount of money will be provided security if necessary.

The meeting was informed that police are escorting the cattle trucks coming to the capital to stop extortion and robbery on the highways and waterways.

Two control rooms will be set up at Aminbazaar and Hazaribagh to monitor management of hides and maintain law and order.

The deputy commissioners and police superintendents across the country will take necessary steps to ensure security at the cattle markets and Eid jamaats.

Law enforcers will sweep the eidghas before the prayers.

Eighteen mobile courts are working in the capital to ensure observance of law and order at the makeshift cattle markets and terminals. Mobile courts are also operating in Narayanganj and Gazipur.

Besides plainclothes and uniformed police and Rab, community police will work at the cattle markets to ease traffic movement and ensure security.

The meeting decided to clear a part of Nayabazar cattle market that is causing problem in the movement of traffic and people, especially on the way to Sadarghat launch terminal.

Bangladesh Rifles and police will work to stop harassment of passengers, realisation of extra money for tickets, scalping, mugging and look into problems at bus, train and launch terminals.

Hawkers have been evicted from the Sadarghat launch terminal to ease movement of people.

"We'll not allow overloading in the launches and passengers' travelling on the roof," the state minister told reporters.

Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authorities have arranged special launches for carrying home-bound passengers.

Asked about the government's steps to stop extortion, Babar said he did not receive any complaint of extortion.

"We're prepared to take immediate action in any such case," he added.

No uncertainty over Karnaphuli bridge, says Huda

Construction to start in April

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Ruling out uncertainty over the third Karnaphuli Bridge, Communications Minister Nazmul Huda yesterday said its construction will begin from April following the work order for the Kuwait government funded 900-metre bridge to be given in March.

Drawing attention to a Daily Star report that said four out of seven bidders had withdrawn from the tender for the bridge, the minister said four Chinese and one Korean pre-qualified firms are likely to participate in the January 15 bid. Two Japanese bidders have withdrawn citing shortage of time and personal reasons.

The communications secretary in a meeting with the pre-qualified bidders told them that 75 days is enough to submit bid proposals and this time frame will not be extended, the minister added.

The Roads and Highways Department has provided the bidders with all information related to geo-technical and river morphological data.

The minister claimed that there will be no compromise with the quality of the construction of the bridge.

The Daily Star on Sunday reported that engineers and the project's consultants for this bridge had suggested a time frame of six months for studying and launching of this scheme.

But Chittagong based ruling party MPs and policy makers pressured the communications ministry to cut it down to two months so that the bridge building can be utilised in the next general election campaigns in Chittagong to their advantage.

Such shortening of time will jeopardise the quality of the design for the bridge, officials told The Daily Star.

3 die

FROM PAGE 16 were later shifted to Pangu Hospital.

In another walk-collapse incident at Dhalkanagar in Shyampur, Fazlul Haque Raju, 35, a labourer from Jamalpur, died and another person was injured.

Police said a newly constructed wall collapsed on Raju and Shohidul Islam around 9:00am when they were working near the wall. Locals rushed them to Mitford Hospital where Raju died soon after admission.

Citizens' body slate

FROM PAGE 1

feet (icf) energy reserve-30tcf gas and coal equivalent to 70tcf gas-which can meet the country's requirement for "decades".

According to the consultant firm of Petrobangla, the present gas reserve ranges between 10.41tcf and 13.95tcf, meaning it can meet the country's demand until 2013 or 2015 only, the commission noted.

On the other hand, the country has a reserve of 258 million tonne extractable coal, equivalent to 6.7tcf gas, it said, terming the energy advisers' comment "information terrorism".

BEA President Qazi Kholiquzzaman Ahmad, who chaired the briefing, said a move is on to ink a deal with the Asian Energy beyond people's knowledge. "We don't want another Niko-like deal to be made with the Asian Energy," he asserted.

Comparing the Asian Energy with Niko in terms of technical and financial ability, commission member SK Abdullah said the Asian Energy has submitted a proposal of an open pit method for the Phulbari mine. "But (the Asian Energy) does not have any experience in the open pit method anywhere in the world," he pointed out.

Abul Barakat, general secretary of BEA, said the Asian Energy has proposed a royalty of only six percent to the government, which means "the country will get almost nothing if the proposal is accepted."

The Asian Energy has proposed to invest \$2 billion for the project and already raised more than \$2 billion from the London Stock Exchange, he added.

He regretted that although there is a parliamentary standing committee on energy, crucial issues are not placed before it.

Commission members Badrul Imam and Nuruddin Mahmud Kamal also spoke at the press briefing.

The commission agreed with the observation of the Anwarul Azim committee that held Niko responsible for the blowout of the Chhatak (West) gas field while it disagreed with the estimation of 8.9 billion cubic feet gas loss, claimed by the

EC meet on HC order

FROM PAGE 1

however, said yesterday they did not know anything regarding the release while sources at the Supreme Court registrar's office said a certified copy of the judgement was already dispatched to the EC.

The HC judgement reads: "The chief election commissioner should immediately call a meeting of the commission and the commission should decide and take all appropriate steps to implement the decision of the commission taken on 6th of August 2005 in its meeting for preparation of electoral roll in the light of this judgement."

But the EC secretariat could not yet fix the date for an EC meeting as the CEC was absent from his office yesterday.

Election commissioners M Munsef Ali and AK Mohammad Ali, who have repeatedly been speaking for carrying out the court directives, yesterday could not contact the CEC to ask him to convene a meeting.

"We are not told anything about the commission's meeting and the ongoing work of preparing the voter list," Mohammad Ali told journalists before leaving his office yesterday afternoon.

As the EC secretariat has yet to collect a certified copy of the judgement, Mohammad Ali himself communicated with the office of the Supreme Court registrar for the copy yesterday.

"I've requested a deputy regis-

Wasa loses crores

FROM PAGE 1

voltage supply.

According to the submitted report on fuel cost for the generators, Tk 1,48,38,000 was spent in July, Tk 45,49,000 in August, Tk 66,76,000 in September and Tk 1,47,76,000 in October. The estimate of the fuel cost in November is yet to be made, said a top Wasa accounts official said.

The dishonest Wasa staffs also have bagged lakhs of taka in overtime pays for operating the generators in the last few months.

Tk 3.80 crore is allocated for overtime bills in the current fiscal year. But, overtime bills for Tk 2.36 crore, or more than half of the total yearly allocation, have been submitted in just three months of July to September, Wasa officials said.

The Wasa bought the generators about four years ago to meet the power crisis, and the graft has been going on since the very beginning, said a top Wasa official, requesting not to be named.

The Wasa board discussed the issue several times but the situation remains unchanged.

However, Wasa Superintendent Engineer Syed Quamrul Hossain denied the grafts, saying there is no scope for inflating or deflating the fuel cost. He said if the generators work more time, the fuel cost will definitely rise.

On the other hand, sources said, the newly appointed Wasa chief engineer has started monitoring the daily operations of the generators and thus has checked the swindling. They said from December 17 to 21, the generators were shown to have worked for an average of 26 hours a day, which had been 500 hours previously.

Wasa Chief Engineer M Nurul Haque, however, expressed his reluctance to talk to the press on the issue and referred to Wasa

Tamim-committee in the two blowouts at Tengratila.

Terming the estimation "misleading and totally unacceptable", the commission said it thinks 115bcf gas worth Tk 1,500 crore was damaged in the blowouts.

10 killed

FROM PAGE 16

cash and gold ornaments from the victims before police arrived there.

Bogra Deputy Commissioner Abdul Mannan, Superintendent of Police Matiuur Rahman Sheikh and Chairman of Sherpur Municipality Jane Alam Khoka visited the spot.

PM

FROM PAGE 1

by a helicopter from Dhaka around 2:40pm for Sathkira but had to return due to lack of visibility in the upper atmosphere.

Khaleda was scheduled to address a public meeting at GKMK Pilot High School in Kolaroa upazila. She regretted the inconveniences caused to the local people for her not being able to be there due to the inclement weather, officials said.

According to the Prime Minister's Office, the revised schedule for her visit to Sathkira will be announced later.

Khaleda was scheduled to inaugurate the newly built buildings of Sathkira Polytechnic Institute and Kolaroa Poura Bhaban and lay the foundation stones of 50-bed Kolaroa Upazila Hospital and Upazila Parishad auditorium.

Khaleda

FROM PAGE 16

carried the PM's greetings card to Hasina's Sudha Sadan residence in the evening.

A personal staff of the Awami League chief received the card, Mohiuddin Khan told BSS.

India, Pakistan

FROM PAGE 1

and Pakistan, and the dates will be fixed based on mutual convenience," a high official said.

Though no formal response either from New Delhi or Islamabad has yet reached Dhaka, the officials are expecting that the foreign secretaries of the two countries will come soon with proposed dates for Khaleda Zia's tours.

A competent source told The Daily Star yesterday that the PM's tour to India may take place in early March because New Delhi is busy with formalising a tour in February by the US President George W Bush.

"Both India and Pakistan have long been eagerly waiting to welcome our prime minister because bilateral tours to the countries have become overdue," the source said.

Official sources said Dhaka was expecting a visit from Indian Foreign Secretary Shyam Saran this month to work out the details of the bilateral tours by the Bangladeshi and Indian premiers to each other's countries.

After Saran's visit Bangladesh Foreign Secretary Hemayetuddin will pay a similar visit to New Delhi, sources said.

"We want to follow the diplomatic norms and traditions ahead of any visit by a head of state or government. How can PM's visit to New Delhi take place unless the Indian foreign secretary comes and fixes the modus operandi of the visit," said a senior official on condition of anonymity.

Meanwhile, there has been a debate in the government over the prime minister's visit to India.

Some influential ministers and officials said the Indian PM should embark on his overdue visit to Bangladesh first while some others said Khaleda Zia could visit India first if the Indian PM confirms dates of his visit to Dhaka shortly after her visit.

An influential official at the Prime Minister's Office told The Daily Star that the Indian prime minister did not incorporate the much-expected bilateral tours aspect into the itinerary during his stay in Dhaka to attend the 13th SAARC summit.

He said Bangladesh wanted the Indian prime minister to combine the SAARC summit with his obligation to bilateral tours, even if for a day, but India refused to extend Dr Singh's stay in Dhaka during the November 12-13 summit. Dr Singh could have come a day earlier or stay a day extra after the summit.

"We are expecting Manmohan Singh to pay an overdue bilateral visit to Bangladesh first and our prime minister will visit India shortly afterward," he said.

A senior cabinet minister on condition of anonymity said the prime minister should not confirm the dates of her visit to India unless New Delhi schedules a reciprocal visit to Bangladesh by the Indian premier.

About Khaleda's trip to Pakistan, official sources said her tour to Islamabad has become long overdue because Pakistani premiers had already visited Dhaka.

Police, leading to a 15-minute shootout that left Sohul bullet-hit and dead.

Sub-inspectors Fazlul Karim and Kamal Hossain and three police constables received bullet wounds during the gun battle while the other outlaws fled the scene.

The injured policemen were undergoing treatment at Tangail Police Lines Hospital.

Police recovered a rifle with three bullets, one large dagger, and some used shells from the spot.

Sohel, the chief of the notorious Sohul group, was an absconder accused in nine criminal cases including eight of murder in different police stations under the district, police said.

Ershad, Rowshan get bail in CPB's theft case

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday granted bail to former president HM Ershad, his wife Rowshan Ershad and Jatiya Party (JP) presidium member Abu Hossain Babla in a theft case filed by the Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB).

Ershad, Rowshan Ershad and Babla along with their lawyer Sheikh Muhammad Serajul Islam appeared before the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court and prayed for bail while the prosecution opposed it.

After hearing both the sides, Metropolitan Magistrate Mohammad Shafique Anwar granted the bail upon a bond of Tk 10,000 with two guarantors.

General Secretary of Dhaka City unit of CPB Ahsan Habib Lablu filed the theft case against the three and a large number of unknown JP activists on January 1.

In the case it was alleged that a JP prosecution celebrating the party's 20th anniversary led by Ershad and Rowshan Ershad tried to march towards the Baitul Mukarram mosque and came face-to-face with a CPB rally in front of the CPB office.

The CPB leaders and the on-duty policemen asked the JP leaders to change their route but they did not pay heed to it. At one point, the JP activists started to hurl chairs and strike the CPB activists with sticks that left several members of the CPB central committee, including CPB President Manzurul Ahsan Khan, injured.

A number of JP central committee members, including a female member, also received minor injuries during the incident.

The JP activists set fire to at least a dozen vehicles, several book shops, a mobile phone shop and a rickshaw around Paltan Crossing and Bijoy Nagar during the sporadic bursts of violence between 4:30pm and 6:30pm. They also damaged furniture and other things of Mukti Bhaban worth about Tk 50 lakh, the first information report (FIR) alleged.

India, Pakistan

FROM PAGE 1

and Pakistan, and the dates will be fixed based on mutual convenience," a high official said.

Though no formal response either from New Delhi or Islamabad has yet reached Dhaka, the officials are expecting that the foreign secretaries of the two countries will come soon with proposed dates for Khaleda Zia's tours.

A competent source told The Daily Star yesterday that the PM's tour to India may take place in early March because New Delhi is busy with formalising a tour in February by the US President George W Bush.

"Both India and Pakistan have long been eagerly waiting to welcome our prime minister because bilateral tours to the countries have become overdue," the source said.

Official sources said Dhaka was expecting a visit from Indian Foreign Secretary Shyam Saran this month to work out the details of the bilateral tours by the Bangladeshi and Indian premiers to each other's countries.

After Saran's visit Bangladesh Foreign Secretary Hemayetuddin will pay a similar visit to New Delhi, sources said.

"We want to follow the diplomatic norms and traditions ahead of any visit by a head of state or government. How can PM's visit to New Delhi take place unless the Indian foreign secretary comes and fixes the modus operandi of the visit," said a senior official on condition of anonymity.

Meanwhile, there has been a debate in the government over the prime minister's visit to India.

Some influential ministers and officials said the Indian PM should embark on his overdue visit to Bangladesh first while some others said Khaleda Zia could visit India first if the Indian PM confirms dates of his visit to Dhaka shortly after her visit.

An influential official at the Prime Minister's Office told The Daily Star that the Indian prime minister did not incorporate the much-expected bilateral tours aspect into the itinerary during his stay in Dhaka to attend the 13th SAARC summit.

He said Bangladesh wanted the Indian prime minister to combine the SAARC summit with his obligation to bilateral tours, even if for a day, but India refused to extend Dr Singh's stay in Dhaka during the November 12-13 summit. Dr Singh could have come a day earlier or stay a day extra after the summit.

"We are expecting Manmohan Singh to pay an overdue bilateral visit to Bangladesh first and our prime minister will visit India shortly afterward," he said.

A senior cabinet minister on condition of anonymity said the prime minister should not confirm the dates of her visit to India unless New Delhi schedules a reciprocal visit to Bangladesh by the Indian premier.

About Khaleda's trip to Pakistan, official sources said her tour to Islamabad has become long overdue because Pakistani premiers had already visited Dhaka.

US helicopter crashes

FROM PAGE 16

The Black Hawk was part of a two-aircraft mission flying between bases in northern Iraq when communications were lost with the aircraft on Saturday night, the military said.

"Flight records indicate that eight passengers and four crew members were manifested for the flight. An immediate search and rescue operation was launched from nearby military installations."

The spokesman said he could not immediately give details about those onboard.

The plane was found at about noon (0900 GMT) on Sunday.

In the deadliest such incident, a US marine transport helicopter crashed in western Iraq in January last year, killing all 31 marines aboard.

There have been