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## 31,000 criminal cases pile up a year

Slow investigation, lengthy disposal blamed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Slow-paced investigations, lengthy disposals of cases and undersized judiciary result in a backlog of 31,000 criminal cases on average every year.

While the number of cases awaiting disposal at the courts was 1,17,295 in 2000, it shot up to 2,66,172 at the end of 2004, according to the statistics prepared by the Criminal Investigation Department (CID).

Concerned over the growing backlog, the home and law minis-

tries have decided to sit down and work out a mechanism to address the problem immediately.

"We need to work towards a solution to this problem as the number of backlogged cases is growing every year," State Minister for Home Affairs Lutfozzaman Babar said yesterday.

In 2004, 1,18,921 cases were filed across the country while charge sheets in 85,685 cases were submitted. But the courts in that year disposed of only 44,157 cases.

About 31,000 cases build up every year, the minister said, com-

ing out of a meeting of the home ministry's monitoring cell on sensational cases yesterday.

"The number of charge sheets submitted does not agree with the number of cases filed every year and the cases are not disposed of at the rate charge sheets are submitted," Babar said.

On the reasons for backlogging, he noted that delay is made in investigation and submission of charge sheets. "It takes a long time for a case to be settled as the number of courts is too small to deal

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## 17 students hurt in fights among Shibir, JCD, BCL

DU CORRESPONDENT

At least 17 students of Jagannath University were injured in a triangular clash between Islami Chhatra Shibir (ICS), Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) and Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) activists yesterday.

Eight of the injured Shibir activists were admitted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH). They are Nahibullah Zihadi, Mahmudullah, Ziaul Haque, Masud Chowdhury, Kamal, Ashraf and Nahibul Islam Tanvir.

Seven of BCL leaders and workers and two JCD men were also injured during the clash. The

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An Israeli soldier with an artillery shell in hand heads to reload a mobile artillery unit as it fires a 155mm shell towards the Hezbollah targets in south Lebanon yesterday.

## Bangladeshi nationals in Lebanon safe

Says foreign office

UNB, Dhaka

Bangladeshi nationals living in Lebanon, especially in Beirut, are safe, a foreign ministry spokesman said in Dhaka yesterday as Israel continued military strikes on the neighbouring country.

"We are closely monitoring the situation in Lebanon," Zahirul Haque, director general of the ministry, said.

He said the Bangladesh ambassador to Jordan is in close touch with the honorary consular general in Beirut and the leaders of Bangladeshi community there to monitor their welfare.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is coordinating with the Ministry of Expatriates Welfare and Overseas Employment for taking appropriate steps, where necessary, Haque said.

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## Draft law proposes to make national ID card mandatory for all

Home ministry seeks purchase body nod today for NID, machine-readable passport scheme

SHARIF KHAN

The home ministry is seeking approval of the cabinet purchase committee today for a Tk 1,561 crore programme on machine-readable passport (MRP), visa and national identity card (NID) along with a draft law on registration and NID.

Sources said the draft law, first of its kind, seeks to make NID mandatory for every citizen when

they apply for a passport, open a bank account, obtain Tax Identification Number (TIN) or while dealing with similar issues.

However, this draft was hurriedly made as a supporting draft legal document for the massive MRP and NID programme.

"The draft law borrows the concept of social security card used in the western countries. But this law was not based on any

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## Voter listing to begin with no funds ready

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The field level task for updating the voter list by visiting door to door is set to begin after completion of recruitment of over one lakh assistant officers by July 20.

But, when it begins, the task will see no funds for purchasing some necessary materials as the Election Commission (EC) Secretariat remains rigid about preparing the budget for the voter list updating task after completing the recruitment.

"We will prepare the budget for the task after the recruitment," Abdur Rashid Sarkar, secretary of EC Secretariat, told reporters yesterday at his office.

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Many election officers feared that the field level task might be hampered due to lack of funds as the EC Secretariat will have to wait for some days after sending the budget to the finance ministry.

A number of district election officers said they will face difficulty as some materials to begin the field level task have to be purchased.

Meanwhile, the assistant registration officers who spent money from their pockets during work for preparation of the controversial fresh voter list have not yet been paid the dues although the EC Secretariat had received a significant amount of its Tk 146 crore budget for the task.

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## Workers, cops clash at DEPZ again, 15 hurt

JU CORRESPONDENT

At least 15 people including two policemen were injured in a clash between garment workers and police at Dhaka Export Processing Zone (DEPZ) yesterday.

About two thousand workers of Paddocks Jeans Ltd (PJT) began a work stoppage at 10:00am yesterday, calling for immediate implementation of their eight-point demand including higher wages and lunch.

They continued agitation on the factory premises, keeping the officers confined to their rooms. Then at around 1:00pm, the law enforcers made an attempt to storm the factory to free the officials.

To prevent the police from SEE PAGE 15 COL 5

## Hezbollah rockets Haifa, Israel bombs Beirut

16 Lebanese civilians, 4 Palestinians killed in fresh offensive

REUTERS, AFP, Beirut

Rockets fired by Hezbollah guerrillas killed eight people in the Israeli city of Haifa yesterday and bombs shook Beirut as Israel pursued a five-day-old assault in Lebanon killing 16 more civilians.

It was Hezbollah's deadliest rocket strike in at least 10 years and the highest death toll in Israel since 11 people were killed in a suicide bomb blast in Tel Aviv in April.

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert said Hezbollah's actions would have "far-reaching" consequences for Lebanon.

Hezbollah said the attack was retaliation for Israel's killing of civilians and destruction of Lebanese infrastructure.

"After the Zionist enemy exceeded all limits killing and destroying... the Islamic Resistance announces that it bombarded the city of Haifa with dozens of Raad 2 and Raad 3 rockets at 9 a.m. (0600 GMT)," Hezbollah said in a statement.

At least 16 civilians were killed and 33 others wounded yesterday when Israeli warplanes struck residential areas in southern Lebanon, medics and police said.

Their deaths bring to 119 the number of people killed in the Israeli offensive which began last Wednesday, according to an AFP tally based on official and medical sources. Another 313 have been wounded.

Israel's military urged residents to flee villages in southern Lebanon Sunday, warning of air and artillery operations following the deadliest cross-border rocket attack on Israel in decades.

Internal Security Minister Avi Dichter said the move was aimed at forcing an exodus of tens of thousands of civilians in order to put pressure on the Lebanese Shiite Hezbollah militia.

"Tens of thousands of Lebanese who will flee towards the north will create the right pressure on Hezbollah" whose military controls southern Lebanon, Dichter told ministers during the weekly cabinet meeting.

An army spokesman said the military had "asked people in

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A bird's eye view of the Karwan Bazar kitchen market yesterday. Vendors are seen waiting with plenty of vegetables to sell but the presence of customers is thin as prices soar.

## Gas tariff for Tata won't be lesser than prices offered by IOCs

Govt negotiation body finalises report

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government negotiation committee on Tata's proposed plants in the country recommended yesterday that the gas price at no point of time will be less than the prices offered by international oil companies (IOCs).

Energy Adviser Mahmudur Rahman told newsmen yesterday that the committee has finalised the report on the basis of the revised proposal offered by the Indian industrial giant, Tata.

"By the end of this month, the report will be submitted to the high-powered ministerial committee which would then put forward it to the cabinet for final consideration," he said. "The negotiation committee did a great job by keeping the country's interest on top,"

Mahmudur said, refuting the criticism that the government lacks skills to deal with such a huge investment offer.

Mahmudur Rahman, also executive chairman of Board of Investment (BoI), was briefing newsmen after a meeting with the negotiation committee headed by Communication Secretary Shaiful Islam at the secretariat.

He said the committee continued to work on Tata's revised proposal since neither the government nor the Indian conglomerate has formally cancelled the proposal. "The Tata told us that they are ready to reinstate the negotiation," he said.

"We will convey the cabinet decision to Tata," which will then decide whether they will invest or SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

## DHAKA-DELHI BORDER ISSUES Talks start in city to smooth tension

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh and Indian officials started their deliberations in Dhaka yesterday to settle longstanding issues of border demarcation, exchange of enclaves and adversely held territories and some other related matters under the 1974 boundary agreement.

Fourth of its kind, the two-day Bangladesh-India Joint Boundary Working Group (JBWG) meeting expects to settle the issues that caused fierce clashes and tension between the bordering forces of both the countries on several occasions.

"The joint working group is meeting after over four years with an aim to settle the matters," Home Ministry Joint Secretary (Political) Akhtar Ahmed, who is leading the 19-member Bangladesh delegation, told reporters yesterday on

the sidelines of the meeting. "We have some specific proposals while they [Indian delegation] have their own. We will make our deliberations to settle the matters at this meeting," he said, without detailing further Bangladesh's proposals.

Mohan Kumar, Joint Secretary, Ministry of External Affairs, is leading the 16-member Indian delegation at the meeting that began at state guest house Meghna.

Officials concerned of both the countries met thrice earlier to settle the longstanding issues since the fierce clashes between Bangladesh Rifles and Indian Border Security Forces on Roumari in Kurigram bordering Mankerchar town of Assam that began on April 18, 2001.

Fifteen BSF members and two SEE PAGE 15 COL 8

## Rejoinder and our reply

The communication ministry in a rejoinder differed on some points in The Daily Star report headlined "Karnaphuli Bridge: Ministry forcing RHD to sign construction deal despite faulty design" published on July 13.

The rejoinder said the actual width of waterway at the bridge site is about 800m; the total length of the proposed bridge is 830m comprising three spans of 200m each with two end-spans of 115m SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

## TIB clarifies its source of fund

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Against the backdrop of adverse comments and questions about the source of funding following publication of corruption index by the Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB), the organisation has come up with clarification to "put an end" to any further confusion regarding the matter.

Several ministers and a section of journalists in a press conference made comments and raised questions following TIB's publication of SEE PAGE 15 COL 1

## Foods turn costlier over a week

Traders blame high transport cost, reduced smuggling across border

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prices of essentials including egg, green chilli, potato, salt, lentil, onion, and tomato have shot up over last week, causing sufferings for the people of lower and middle income groups.

"Prices are rising astronomically and it is getting harder for the common people to cope with the situation. It seems the government has no control over the market situation," Mollah Mohamed Sameer, a resident of city's Kathalbagan, said yesterday.

"The price of lentil has increased by Tk 6 a kg while salt by Tk 2 a kg over the last five days," Mollah added.

The traders and wholesalers said reduced smuggling from India and increasing transport fare are responsible for the price hike.

"Prices of essentials have risen because of rising price of fuel," Abdul Latif, president of Karwan Bazar Kachamal Arot Bhaban, said.

He said the increased wage of day labourers is another reason for the price hike.

In the wholesale markets, locally grown tomatoes were selling at Tk 30 a kg yesterday while it sold at Tk 16 last week. Indian tomatoes sold at Tk 30 per kg last week but the price has gone up to Tk 60 this week. In the retail markets, the price of tomato ranges between Tk 40 and Tk 70, the traders said.

"This is off-season for the tomatoes, so price is higher than usual," said a trader at the Hatirpool market.

The price of green chilli was Tk 60 to Tk 80 in the wholesale markets yesterday. In the retail stores, it was Tk 80 to Tk 100. But it was selling at not more than Tk 30 per kg in the wholesale markets last week.

The traders blamed inadequate supply and production against the demand for the hike in price of green chilli.

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# We are ahead

Taka in Crore

Particulars	30.06.2005	30.06.2006	Growth	Growth Rate
Total Deposit	9,619.87	11,768.62	2,148.75	22.34%
Total Investment	9,481.36	11,705.22	2,223.86	23.46%
Import	3,566.90	4,450.90	884.00	24.78%
Export	1,628.70	2,306.70	678.00	41.63%
Remittance	1,654.70	2,318.90	664.20	40.14%

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