

## Road march in Tangail comes under JCD attack 10 injured

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Ten people were injured as the Awami League (AL)-led 14-party opposition combine's third day road march came under attack by armed cadres of ruling BNP's student front Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) in Madhupur upazila headquarters under Tangail district yesterday.

However, no untoward incidents were reported in other parts of the country during the opposition combine's road march from union parishads to upazila headquarters.

The opposition combine will organise road marches from upazilas to district headquarters today, from Nayabazar (Second Buriganga Bridge) to Muktangon in the capital on July 29, and finally from Amin Bazar to Russell Square in Dhanmondi on July 30.

The opposition's six-day march programme that started on July 25 aims at mobilising people in the street agitation to force the BNP-Jamaat coalition government to bring reforms in the caretaker government and the Election Commission (EC).

SEE PAGE 19 COL 4

## JESSORE ARRESTEE 'MISSING' HC issues suo moto rule on govt, Rab

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday issued a suo moto rule on the government, police and Rapid Action Battalion, asking them to explain in two weeks why they should not be directed to produce Kishore Kumar before the court to prove that he is not being held unlawfully. Kishore was arrested by Rab nine days ago.

The rule came following a report published in a Bangla daily Janakantha on July 24 under the headline 'No whereabouts of youth for four days after arrest by Rab in Jessore'.

The High Court division bench that passed the rule said in its order that its attention was drawn to the news item.

Rab arrested garage worker Kishore Kumar, son of Kalipada Das, and took him away from his house at Jail Road in Jessore town at 9:00pm on July 19 and since then his whereabouts are not known to

his nearest relations, the court said.

It later issued the suo moto rule on the home secretary, inspector general of police, Rab director general and Rab-in-charge of Jessore Major Shahin. The court directed the office concerned to communicate its order at once and fixed August 13 as the date for issuing an order regarding the matter.

According to the Janakantha report, Rab did not even admit arresting Kishore, 32. When his brother Dilip went to the Rab office at Police Lines in Jessore on July 20 and 21, Rab men told him that they had not arrested anyone named Kishore. Kishore's family is at a loss about what to do since he is the lone wage earner in the family.

Since Rab started its operation in June 2004, the elite battalion has earned strong condemnations and criticisms from rights organisations home and abroad for its

SEE PAGE 19 COL 7

## POWER SECTOR State minister blames graft, unaccountability for failure

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Unbridled irregularities, misuse of funds and lack of accountability are some of the reasons why the power sector of the country is in a vulnerable state, State Minister for Power Anwarul Kabir Talukdar said yesterday.

He was speaking at a workshop on 'power sector financing restructuring and recovery plan: major findings and immediate action', organised by Power Cell at Sarina Hotel in Dhaka.

"Money spent in the name of overhauling and repair of power plants were not utilised properly and a major portion of funds allocated for these purposes were misused," he said.

Citing a recent example, Talukdar said an official of a particular power project informed him that the project had incurred a loss of Tk 18 crore. "But after an investigation it was found that the actual loss was Tk 183 crore. Unfortunately, it is the reality on the ground," he noted.

The state minister also referred to Tongi power plant, saying it is not working because of irregularities in implementing the project.

SEE PAGE 19 COL 3



Smoke covers the devastation at the camp for stranded Pakistanis at Pallabi in the city after a fire swept through the slum gutting 250 shanties.

PHOTO: STAR

## EC secy admits slow pace of voter list update

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Seven days after the start of the task of updating the voter list by door to door visits, the Election Commission (EC) secretary yesterday admitted that the task is yet to begin in some areas.

At a meeting with the officials of the EC Secretariat, EC Secretary Abdur Rashid Sarkar expressed dissatisfaction over the slow pace of the ongoing task of updating the voter list.

"People whom I meet at different places every day say the staff engaged in updating the voter list did not visit their houses. The staff did not visit even my residence," meeting sources quoted the secretary as saying.

"It is not possible for me to communicate with 83 district election officers daily to expedite the task. There should be a monitoring system," the secretary said.

The meeting decided to assign officials with the task of communicating with the district election officers daily and submitting progress reports.

The secretariat also directed the district election officers to send the progress reports of the task.

The chief election commissioner and the EC secretary in last couple of days repeatedly claimed that the task of updating the voter list had started everywhere in the country.

Even after yesterday's admission that the work had not started in many areas, the EC secretary said it will not take much time after the beginning if the staff do their duties sincerely.

In a bid to gear up the task, the EC Secretariat sent letters to the ministry and departments concerned requesting them to grant leave to their officials who have been temporarily engaged in updating the voter list.

In last six days, only 25 per cent task was completed in the capital while it was around 30 per cent on average in other districts.

Considering the progress, the election officials said it would not

SEE PAGE 19 COL 3

## Defence purchase directorate denies role in fighter deal

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In the face of allegations of corruption in procuring 16 fighters, the Directorate of Defence Purchase (DDP) yesterday said it was not involved in the purchase process, rather the government sealed the deal bilaterally with China, sources said.

"Our role was confined to receiving a budgetary offer and finalising four among six proposals for the purchase," Brig Gen Anwarul Azim, director general of defence purchase (DGDP), said at a meeting of the standing committee on defence.

"The government has completed the procurement and so the responsibility in this regard lies with the government," he observed.

Committee Chairman Mahbubur Rahman told reporters that the government can procure the fighters bilaterally but the process should be transparent.

Dismissing the opposition's call for a probe into the purchase, he said the matter could not be discussed without specific allegations.

Earlier, AL lawmakers alleged

SEE PAGE 19 COL 1

## SC BAR SENDS LETTER President urged to take steps for CEC's removal

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) yesterday sent a letter to President Iajuddin Ahmed requesting him to take necessary steps through the Supreme Judicial Council to remove the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) and two election commissioners if they do not resign willingly by July 31.

The letter was sent as part of a follow up action of an SCBA roundtable held on July 22 where a large number of professionals, lawyers and civil society leaders voiced the demand.

To discuss people's concern about their voting rights and empowerment, the SCBA sought an appointment with the president for his meeting with a civil society delegation.

Signed by SCBA President barrister Amir-Ul Islam and Secretary AM Amin Uddin, the letter was attached with the resolution and recommendations of July 22 SCBA discussion on

the existing political situation, preparation of a proper voter list and caretaker government and Election Commission (EC) reform.

The SCBA will also inform the prime minister, CEC and two election commissioners about the demands for the resignation of the CEC and two election commissioners.

"The Election Commission with the CEC and two commissioners has lost its credibility. The voter list prepared under the supervision of the incumbent election commissioners is not legal and acceptable. The election held under their supervision will not be acceptable. The resignation or removal of the CEC and two other commissioners and reconstitution of the EC are very essential," reads the resolution of the July 22 roundtable.

The EC should be reconstituted with persons acceptable to both the government and the opposition, it adds.

SEE PAGE 19 COL 6

## 250 shanties ravaged in fire; rescuer dies

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A volunteer rescuer was killed and two others suffered injuries in a devastating fire at a camp of stranded Pakistanis at Pallabi yesterday. The fire broke out only 14 hours after the fire at a garment factory in the area on Wednesday.

Firefighters were still pumping water inside the Recent Garment Knitting Industries until 6:45pm yesterday to extinguish the fire which started Wednesday around 10:00pm. Large cracks have developed in the columns and walls of the sixth and seventh floors of the eight-storey building that housed the factory.

Fire fighters requested police to evacuate people from the surrounding areas of the building fearing it may collapse.

**FIRE AT STRANDED PAKISTANI CAMP**

Witnesses and firemen said Abdul Motilab, 22, a help of a nearby shop, was electrocuted when he rushed to rescue trapped victims

of a blaze that gutted around 250 shanties and 10 weaving factories.

Police later recovered his body from the debris. Witnesses said two other volunteer rescuers were also injured. Their identities however could not be known.

The fire originated from a shanty at the southeastern corner of Madrasa Camp around noon yesterday and quickly engulfed the entire area. "The flame spread rapidly as male members, who could pour water, were not at home," said Rahela Begum, a 60 year-old who lost her home and everything in it.

"None of us could save any belongings, we only have the clothes we are wearing," said Shahana, who was frantically searching in the debris of her home for things to salvage.

Locals alleged firefighters reached the scene one hour after the fire broke out, though the Mirpur Fire Station is hardly one km from the area. They said they

SEE PAGE 19 COL 3

## Rajuk's secret Gulshan plot allocation

MORSHED ALI KHAN

Rajuk has secretly allocated an unspecified number of plots along Gulshan-Banani lake, for which land was extracted from the lake by filling it up partly in the name of paving footpaths.

Rajuk Chairman KAM Harun and Chief Engineer Emdadul Islam flatly denied allegations of recent allocation of plots. The chairman however said 'time to time' plots are allocated in pieces of land unused by some people along the banks of the lake.

"That sort of allocations do take place but then Rajuk board members have to approve them. Apart from one or two similar allocations, I do not remember allocating any new plots in Gulshan or Banani," said Harun.

The chief engineer said plots along Gulshan-Banani lake were allocated first in 1992, then in 1996 and now the owners are trying to build some structures. Thirty-five acres of the lake area were 'de-acquired' under a court order and returned to individuals, who had reclaimed it through legal loopholes.

SEE PAGE 19 COL 4



PHOTO: STAR

Filling up the Gulshan Lake in the name of making footpaths. Rajdhani Unnayan Kartipakkha secretly allocated a part of the lake to different individuals who are now building structures on the bank.

## EVACUATION 1st batch of 132 Bangladeshis arrives today

UNB, Dhaka

The first batch comprising 132 Bangladeshis evacuated from the war-torn Lebanon will arrive in Dhaka from Damascus on Sunday by a special aircraft of Qatar Airlines, a spokesman for the foreign ministry said yesterday.

Zahirul Huq, director general of external publicity (DGEP), told the news agency that 280 Bangladeshis left Beirut for Syria by buses at about 10:00am (Beirut time) yesterday. Bangladesh Ambassador to Jordan Golam Mohammad, concurrently accredited to Syria, will receive the Bangladeshis on Arida border of Syria.

The evacuated Bangladeshis will stay at the IOM (International Organisation for Migration) camp in Tarfus city of Syria and will be brought to Damascus today. The first batch will arrive at Zia International Airport at about 8:00am on Sunday.

Ambassador Golam Mohammad informed the DGEP that the IOM is negotiating with the Etihad Airlines to lift the remaining 148 Bangladeshis from Damascus on Sunday or Monday.

Huq said the government in cooperation with the IOM has made necessary arrangements for the evacuation of Bangladeshis who want to return home in the wake of escalating Israeli offensive in Lebanon.

## Lebanon battles rage as talks fail to agree on truce

UNSC fails to adopt draft resolution critical of Israel

AFP, Beirut

Fighting in Lebanon showed little sign of abating yesterday after nine Israeli soldiers were killed in running battles with Hezbollah on the Lebanese border as the conflict entered its third week marked by the failure of international talks to agree a truce.

Israel was also under fire over the killing of four UN peacekeepers Tuesday in what UN chief Kofi Annan charged was an "apparently deliberate" targeting of their post.

But the United Nations Security Council failed Wednesday to agree a statement condemning the killings after the United States rejected any criticism of the Israeli attack, and was to resume its negotiations on Thursday.

As the Israeli toll mounted in a war that has already cost more than 405 lives in Lebanon, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert laid out plans to set up a narrow security zone in southern Lebanon, which has borne the brunt of the Israeli offensive.

In Rome, far from the bombs and bloodshed, 15-nation crisis talks failed to agree on a call for an immediate ceasefire, effectively backing

the US stance that there must first be a sustainable solution.

Lebanese Prime Minister Fuad Siniora despaired for his war-ravaged people, saying his country was being "cut to pieces".

US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice denied on Thursday that Washington had been isolated at the talks in its rejection of an immediate ceasefire between Israel and Lebanese Shia militia Hezbollah.

"Yes, there were a lot of countries calling for an immediate ceasefire. There were several that did not," Rice told journalists on board a plane taking her from Rome to a meeting with southeast Asian leaders in Malaysia.

"It was not all countries calling for an immediate ceasefire," she said.

Rice insisted the Rome meeting had not been a failure.

"It was a success because it identified the elements that would eventually make up a sustainable ceasefire," she said.

She said there had been agreement that full implementation of United Nations resolution 1559 and the Taif Agreement that ended

Lebanon's civil war in 1990 were the basis for a solution.

Both the resolution and the agreement call for the extension of the Lebanese government's sovereignty to the whole of the country and the disbanding of private militias such as Hezbollah.

Rice said there had also been agreement in Rome on the need for a multinational UN-mandated force for Lebanon. "The UN plans to hold a troop contribution meeting at the end of this week or next week," she added.

Israel announced that nine soldiers had been killed in fighting around the key Hezbollah military stronghold of Bint Jbeil and a nearby village, bringing to 51 the number of Israelis killed in the worst cross-border fighting in a quarter century.

It was the highest toll since Israel launched its deadly offensive against Lebanon on July 12 to try to recover two soldiers captured by Hezbollah in border attacks that also killed eight servicemen.

Israel is also engaged in a similarly fierce assault in the Gaza Strip

SEE PAGE 19 COL 7