

RU moves to recruit

FROM PAGE 1 many of them are criminals and political cadres who usually indulge in acts of violence for Jatityabadi Chhatra Dal and Islami Chhatra Shibir.

Those employees often neglect official work. "Their presence is hampering educational and administrative activities," said a RU teacher.

"They [the 546] intimidate and embarrass us. Our security will be threatened if their job is confirmed," commented a senior official.

POLITICAL BEHEST Political considerations and dealings with bribes are behind the new move to confirm the jobs of the controversial employees, sources said, adding that makeshift political offices set up in and around the campus are dealing with the applicants.

In three such offices, influential pro-government employees who have close ties with top BNP-Jamaat leaders of the city are seen maintaining liaison with the RU authorities and spending time with those job seekers.

Mothar thana BNP President Anwar Ali, Secretary Mukhtar Hossain and Organising Secretary Khazdar Ali are attached to Binodpur office while local BNP activist Ashraf Hasan Bachchu and BNP ward no 26 President Ruhul Amin are running the offices at Kajla and RU station.

The BNP leaders, however, refuted the allegations and said they were gearing up electioneering ahead of the next general polls.

LEGAL EVENTS Over the public interest litigation (PIL) of Rajshahi Bar Association member Abu Aslam, the First Senior

Assistant Judge's Court on June 23, 2004 termed the recruitment of 546 employees illegal and ordered temporary injunction on confirmation of jobs, salaries and assigning any duties to the employees.

On July 14, the Second Additional District Judge's Court of Rajshahi allowed a RU appeal and set aside the trial court's decision. The plaintiff Abu Aslam contested the judgement to higher court.

On June 25, 2005, a High Court bench of Justice Abdul Aziz reaffirmed the trial court decision.

"Humanitarian consideration and emotional thoughts can not substitute legal consideration," the HC bench rule said.

Following an appeal by the RU, the Supreme Court stayed the HC bench ruling while the case is still pending.

VICE-CHANCELLOR'S VERSION Talking to The Daily Star, RU vice chancellor (VC) Prof M Altaf Hossain said there was no legal barrier against recruiting afresh the 'disputed' employees.

"We are doing no unethical act this time and the disputed employees can respond to advertisements," he said, adding that the recruitment is not unnecessary as RU needs to appoint many more employees.

Asked what if the fresh recruitment is challenged, Prof Altaf said, "We [RU authorities] negotiated with the plaintiff and he will not go against the fresh one."

Country

FROM PAGE 1 power cuts over a vast area of the country.

The 64-MW second unit of Ashuganj Power Centre stopped functioning on Thursday night.

Besides, 150-MW No. 5 unit has been closed since December 25 for overhauling.

As a result, production at the 724-MW power centre came down to 130 MW yesterday.

Earlier, the plant stopped operation on May 18 due to CT blasts. Seven of the eight units have not been overhauled for a long time. These units have already run for 1.5 lakh hours at stretch, whereas they should have been overhauled after 40,000 hours.

Meanwhile, two circuits of Bogra-Palashbari 132-KV distribution lines were closed down yesterday at 9:50am, worsening the power situation in the northern region.

Earlier on March 27 and May 18, the regional grid in Bogra shut down due to technical glitches, leading to the closure of Boropukuria and Baghnabari power stations.

Besides, the 132-KV line from Maniknagar to Bangabhaban in the capital was closed on March 27 for technical faults.

The authorities said the distribution lines were activated by yesterday noon. But the units No. 3 and 4 of Ashuganj power station could not go into full operation as of 10:00pm last night, pushing the deficit to 1500MW yesterday.

According to the government statistics, the demand for power yesterday stood at 3,800MW. But sources said the real figure was no less than 4,000MW against a production of below 3,000MW electricity.

In Dhaka region, the demand for power stood at 1,600MW while the supply was 1,100MW.

Meanwhile, Karimganj Bazar Bank Samity, an association of traders, yesterday called a dawn to dusk hartal for tomorrow in Karimganj upazila of Kishoreganj, protesting acute power crisis.

5 cops

FROM PAGE 1 said a witness.

Sub-Inspector (SI) Asraf, ASIs Javed and Aziz, Constables Ibrahim and Anwar and alleged smuggler Nurul Kabir suffered minor bullet wounds during the fight.

Police arrested two including Nurul and recovered five firearms from the spot. The other three managed to flee the scene with the rest of the consignment.

Both Nurul and the other arrestee, Mohammed Shafi, hail from Sadar upazila.

The weapons are believed to have been manufactured at a clandestine arms factory in the dense jungle of Ramu.

Militants

FROM PAGE 16 network across the country, Hasina demanded of the government to locate the training camps of the militants and catch them.

She was highly critical of Jamaat-e-Islami and alleged that every militant has a Jamaat background and its student front Islami Chhatra Shibir.

Criticising the alliance government for "not honouring its pre-election commitment" to the teachers' community, the AL chief said although the government had pledged to nationalise the services of the teachers, it is now dilly-dallying in implementing their demand.

The AL president urged the party's grassroots level leaders to strengthen the party in their respective areas.

Presidents and general secretaries of nine AL organisational units of Sathkhira district that covers five parliamentary constituencies exchanged views with the party chief on the prevailing situation in the country, party's position, probable party candidates for the next polls and the ongoing anti-governement movement.

Syeda Zohra Mujuddin, Syeda Sajida Chowdhury, Motia Chowdhury, Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim MP, Obaidul Kader, Abdul Mannan and Noor-e-Aiam Chowdhury Liton MP were present at the meeting.

Outlaw

FROM PAGE 16 four bullets from the scene.

Chudanga police said Azad was accused in around seven murder cases including a five-murder case, which took place in 2003 in Chudanga and the Shankarchandrapur Union Parishad Chairman Noor Ali murder case in June 24, 2005.

Manmohan

FROM PAGE 1 shortly after they had checked into a hotel on Monday.

Soon after the Indian prime minister's apology, the New Delhi police ordered a probe into "the circumstances and nuances" of the incident.

Primary teachers under the banner of Bangladesh Non-government Primary Teachers Association led by Mansur Ali also continued their hunger strike at Muktangan for the second day.

Another faction of the association led by Abdur Rahman Bachchu has started non-stop sit-in at the Central Shaheed Minar in the capital from Wednesday in a bid to realise their demands.

5 killed

FROM PAGE 1 rickshaw passengers succumbed to their injuries at Comilla Medical College Hospital soon after admission.

The deceased could not be identified immediately.

Six of the injured bus passengers were admitted to the hospital, while the rest given first aid.

Inmates not served

FROM PAGE 1 Section 1098 of the jail code obligates the jail authorities to provide the inmates a ration of fish or meat on every other day at lunch or dinner while section 1101 says alteration of the diet is violation of the rules, and depriving the inmates of their deserved meals is a heinous crime.

After submission of the bids to supply food for July-December at different prisons, the tender evaluation committee of the DCJ, in May, scrutinised bidders' proposal and asked the inspector general (IG) of prisons to accept a bid that offered one kilogram (kg) of beef at Tk 150, mutton at Tk 190 and Tk 175 based on quality, sugar at Tk 52 and soyabean oil at Tk 56 per litre.

The evaluation committee of each prison considered the market price of each item, value added tax (Vat), income tax and profit of the contractor before sending recommendations to the IG for final approval.

The committee comprises deputy inspector generals (DIG), district civil surgeon, a magistrate as representative of the district administration, superintendent of the prison concerned and a social welfare officer.

Talking to this correspondent, a few senior jail officials said the problem arose after the IG prisons unilaterally disregarded the evaluation committee's recommendation.

The authorities called for a re-tender in June and the evaluation committee submitted their recommendation after scrutinising the bids.

But the prison's authorities are yet to make their decision on that, said sources.

As the contractors stopped supplying fish and meat, the DCJ authorities could provide the inmates fish only twice in the last week of July. They provided the inmates egg instead of fish or meat, which too is in violation of rules.

Talking to The Daily Star, a senior prisons official said bidders' rates for mutton, beef, soyabean oil, sugar were not irrational, adding, "There is no alternative but to accept the market rates and ensure quality."

The authorities slash seven percent as Vat and income tax from the supply price, he said.

As per the Public Procurement Act, if bidders' new rates are not

accepted, the suppliers will get the bill as per the previously accepted rate.

Since the price of all the items have significantly risen, no supplier is agreeing to supply at the previous rates, said the sources. "No supplier is now agreeing to supply mutton at Tk 150 per kg, beef at Tk 105, sugar at Tk 42-43, soyabean oil at Tk 45-46 per litre," said a source.

Meanwhile, authorities' failure to supply fish and meat has caused resentment among the prisoners and detainees.

Talking to The Daily Star, IG of Prisons Brigadier General Zakir Hasan said, "The problem arose as the contractors, establishing a syndicate, proposed higher rates for meat and fish and declined to reconsider their bids."

He said the prison authorities are now providing the inmates fish and meat as per the rules after the contractors reduced their rates 'a little bit'.

Surcharge

FROM PAGE 16 are operating either on behalf of foreign companies or on the basis of ship charter, sources said.

The container ship congestion at the Chittagong port began in October last year as the number of feeder vessels increased to 48 from 29 earlier following an upward trend in the country's export and import.

This year's export is showing a tremendous growth of 21 per cent over the last year. The growth in import volume is also above 15 per cent.

As the Chittagong port failed to cope with the tremendous growth in export and import business, the container carrying ships had to wait more than a week at the outer anchorage before getting berthing permission.

Per day waiting loss of a container ship stood at \$5,000 to \$10,000 and the operators imposed additional surcharge to reduce the congestion loss.

The Chittagong Port Authority hopes that the situation will improve following commissioning of two new berthing terminals at the under-construction New Mooring container terminal in October this year.

Govt to import

FROM PAGE 16 ministry said the government is resuming import and marketing of subsidised fertiliser through the BADC on a trial basis to detect any loopholes in the subsidy process.

"The government wants to reach the benefit of subsidy to the door steps of the farmers. But there are allegations from different quarters that the subsidy benefited traders, and not farmers. So we resume operation of the BADC in this field," he said preferring anonymity.

Earlier, the parliamentary standing committee on agriculture ministry criticised the government subsidy policy, indicating that around half of the total subsidy are pocketed by the middlemen.

Bangladesh Fertiliser Association President Khalid Uddin Ahmed has welcomed the government move to resume BADC's operation in fertiliser import and marketing, saying it will now be able to involve directly with the international market.

He however denied the allegations of misuse of fertiliser subsidy and claimed that farmers got fertiliser at reduced price.

Sources said the agriculture ministry will prepare a full-fledged pricing policy to ensure that all the

subsidised fertilisers are marketed at similar prices.

The government has decided to allocate Tk 210 crore as subsidy for TSP, Tk 250 crore for DAP and Tk 134 crore MoP this year.

Meanwhile, the Steering Committee on Agriculture Subsidy at a meeting on Monday decided to release Tk 211.18 crore subsidy against import bills immediately to ensure smooth import and distribution of fertiliser in the Aman season.

Earlier, fertiliser importers had threatened to withdraw the letters of credit (LCs) if the government failed to release their due subsidy.

Till June, the government released Tk 160 crore subsidy out of the Tk 371.28 crore for 9.25 lakh tonnes of fertiliser for fiscal 2005-06.

The finance ministry sought pre-audit report from the agriculture ministry before releasing the subsidy money, and the agriculture ministry then asked the importers to submit necessary documents for conducting the audit.

Baby dies

FROM PAGE 1 Chowdhury Mohammad Haidar Ali. The doctor was not available even when the patient's condition was deteriorating today [Friday] morning," said Rowshi's cousin Momen Chowdhury.

He demanded stern punishment of the doctor for negligence of duty.

Prof Haidar Ali, however, said that he could not save Rowshi as her physical condition was 'not good'.

"The girl's mother Nasima Begum came to my private chamber in Nurjahan Road a few days ago but she made two days' delay to bring the child to hospital," Haider told The Daily Star yesterday night over telephone.

"I found the child very weak last night and prescribed appropriate treatment," he said, adding that he could not know the condition of the child yesterday morning.

She was diagnosed with pneumonia and medical test reports for typhoid and others were yet to be received.

An unnatural death case was filed with Mohammadpur Police Station.

India parliament

FROM PAGE 16 The oil-for-food programme, which began in 1996 and ended in 2003, aimed to ease the impact on Iraqis of UN sanctions, imposed when Baghdad's troops invaded Kuwait in 1990.

Under the scheme, Iraq was allowed to sell oil in order to buy food, medicine and many other goods.

But an inquiry led by former US Federal Reserve Chairman Paul Volcker found the programme was rife with corruption, with companies and government officials around the world involved in kickbacks and bribery in Saddam's efforts to get sanctions lifted.

Singh and Congress both deny any wrongdoing. However, India launched its own investigation in November and Singh quit as minister shortly afterwards after sustained opposition pressure.

Newspapers and TV channels reported on Friday that the inquiry, headed by a retired supreme court judge, had found that Singh and his son Jagat, a state MLA, had misused their positions to get the Iraq contracts.

However, the investigation said no money had been traced to either Singh or Jagat.

Singh said the investigation had vindicated him as it had not found any money trail to him or his son.

"At the time I was neither a minister nor a member of parliament," Singh said referring to the duration of the oil-for-food programme.

Tigers

FROM PAGE 1 innings was also abruptly ended after being in a terrible mix-up with stand-in skipper Khaleel Masud.

For Zimbabwe, skipper Prosper Uteya tied the visitors down and took two to 25, while Masakadza chipped in with two to 36.

In reply, one-day Gregory Strydom scored his maiden half-century to guide the hosts. He scored a run-a-ball 58 before being dismissed by left-arm spinner Abdur Razzak Raj.

Taylor shared an unbeaten 53-run stand with Stuart Matiskeyenry after Masakadza had retired hurt on 19 after with a nosebleed.

Veteran spinner Mohammad Rafique took one for 30 off 10 overs, while Raj and seamer Reza took one each.

The last match in the series will be held at the same ground tomorrow.

Karnaphuli

FROM PAGE 1 programmes from today's rally to press home the demand.

Besides, opposition leaders at a discussion in the capital on Thursday said the government should leave the third Karnaphuli Bridge issue for the next elected government to act on it.

They called for a national-level movement against the government's initiative for constructing a pillar bridge.

On the other hand, Fisheries and Livestock Minister Abdullah Al Noman at a press conference on Monday announced a road march programme to drum up support for the present bridge project. The march titled 'Chalo Chalo Karnaphuli Bridge Abhimukhe Chalo' would end through today's rally on the south of the bridge site.

The minister termed the mayor's move for a suspension bridge an undesirable act to make implementation of the bridge uncertain.

Meanwhile, China Major Bridge (CMB), the company assigned to construct the bridge, started preliminary work on Tuesday.

As part of the project work, more than 100 structures are being demolished to make space for two ends of the bridge.

Project Director of the bridge Belal Mukhtar visited the site yesterday and had discussions with CMB engineers and others about construction work.

Israeli planes pound

FROM PAGE 1 Security sources said that the wounded had been evacuated to Syria.

The workers included both Lebanese and Syrians who were taking the produce into the walk-in cooler at the time the raids struck. They were employees of the Lebanese agricultural firm Nasser Jbaily.

The refrigerated room was situated beyond the building of the Lebanese customs' office in the zone leading to the border with Syria.

Israeli jets wrecked four bridges on the coastal highway leading north from Beirut, effectively cutting the last practicable road between the Lebanese capital and the Syrian border.

South of the capital, they strafed the coastal suburb of Uzai, near Beirut international airport, for the first time in Israel's massive campaign by air, land and sea.

Further down the Mediterranean coast, authorities in Israel's commercial capital Tel Aviv began preparing bomb shelters after Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah warned Thursday that it would be rocketed if Beirut itself were bombed.

"Since the beginning of the conflict, we have updated instructions for residents and have intensified the coordination between emergency services," Colonel Yuval Kimchi, a top official in the city's civil defence agency.

Tel Aviv, a city of 1.5 million people, lies 100km from the Lebanese border, out of range of the Katyusha and Fajr-3 rockets, which Hezbollah has fired daily into northern Israel.

Seven more rockets slammed into Israel from south Lebanon early Friday, police said, but there were no immediate reports of casualties.

But Hezbollah claims to possess more powerful missiles, and Israeli public television quoted a senior military official as saying the army would destroy all Lebanese infrastructure if Hezbollah carried out its threat.

Israeli warplanes have already wrecked much of that infrastructure -- the government of Lebanon Premier Fouad Siniora estimates damage so far at more than 2.5 billion dollars -- and continued to do so on Friday.

Fighter-bombers struck the Ibrahim Abdel Aal power station at Sohmar, in central Lebanon, cutting electricity supplies to the Bekaa Valley and much of southern Lebanon, police said.

In Dubai, the television channel Al-Arabiya reported that three Israeli soldiers had been killed and several wounded in combat in southern Lebanon.

A military spokesman refused to comment on the report.

But on Thursday, the army confirmed it had lost four in firefights with Shia guerrillas. The losses coincided with the deaths of eight civilians killed by Hezbollah rockets in northern Israel.

"Overall in terms of casualties, this is the hardest day," an army spokeswoman told AFP.

At United Nations headquarters in New York, diplomats said the 15-member Security Council would meet Friday for a briefing on the crisis.

British Prime Minister Tony Blair delayed his summer holiday in the Caribbean to consult with other governments on a draft resolution to bring about a ceasefire, his office said.

"He believes the next couple of days are crucial and will be continuing his intense diplomacy with world leaders from Downing Street," a spokeswoman said.

Negotiations were going on behind the scenes in New York between the United States and France, which has drafted a resolution on a ceasefire and deploying an international peacekeeping force.

The administration of US President George W. Bush has not said whether it is ready to agree a resolution or propose alternative action by the Security Council.

But State Department spokesman Sean McCormack said Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice "has instructed our people, both here in Washington and up in New York, that we're going to work all throughout the weekend if necessary to get something done."

Critics have claimed that Washington's insistence on a "sustainable" ceasefire once a political framework has been laid out is designed to give staunch ally Israel time to blast away at Hezbollah.

But Rice denied that Washington had blocked a halt to fighting.

"We've never opposed a ceasefire," Rice said in the interview, arguing that Washington simply opposed one that "falls apart practically the minute it's in place".

Prime Minister Ehud Olmert has said Israel would pursue its drive against Hezbollah in south Lebanon until an international force of some 15,000 combat-ready troops was deployed there.

On Thursday, Defence Minister Amir Peretz's spokesman said the army had been ordered to prepare to take control of southern Lebanon.

In Tel Aviv, an army spokeswoman said Israeli ground troops were operating around 20 border villages in a bid to push Hezbollah fighters further north.

But the main thrust of Israeli operations on Friday morning was from the air.

The Lebanese Red Cross said five civilians were killed and 15 were

wounded in the raids on the highway bridges north of Beirut, but other bodies might be trapped beneath rubble, which cascaded down the mountainside.

The main bridge was near the "Casino du Liban," in the Mediterranean port of Junieh -- the heartland of Christian Lebanon, 20km north of Beirut but politically and culturally a million miles from the Shia suburbs that are the fief of Hezbollah.

Large plumes of smoke billowed into the sky as two of the bridges collapsed and Lebanese troops blocked traffic.

The air strikes punched gaping holes into the other two bridges, destroyed several cars and buses and set off large fires on the mountain flanks.

At Madfun bridge, a crane hauled a blue car clear of the rubble, its dead driver still clinging to the steering wheel.

South of the city, fighter-bombers hit the coastal suburb of Uzai, near Beirut international airport, for the first time since Israel unleashed a massive campaign by air, land and sea to oust Hezbollah fighters from southern Lebanon.

The airport has been closed since the first day of the offensive, July 12.

The Lebanese army said one of its soldiers died and three were wounded as the Israelis launched 19 raids in less than an hour on Uzai and surrounding areas.

Warplanes broke the sound barrier over Beirut causing panic among residents.

A huge pall of smoke mixed with flames rose over Uzai as the sound of jets screeching across the capital was interspersed by the impacts of exploding bombs.

Hours earlier Israel had threatened to spread its bombardment to new areas of Beirut's southern suburbs, bastions of the Shia Muslim Hezbollah movement, and dropped leaflets calling on residents to flee.

Missiles were fired at the Rweiss and Haret-Hreik districts in south Beirut, police said. Rweiss, which had initially been spared, was first targeted the previous night after a week's respite in strikes on the capital's suburbs.

Haret-Hreik and Bir al-Abed, where Hezbollah's headquarters is located, were pounded for two weeks and are in ruins.

Dozens of overnight raids shook several villages in the southern regions of Tyre and Nabatiyeh, relatively far from the border where there were violent clashes between Israeli troops and Hezbollah fighters, Lebanese police said.

10th regional

FROM PAGE 16 expected to speak at the dialogue beginning at 9:30am.

Members of the Nagorik Committee 2006 who are preparing a "Vision Paper" for the country will also be present to receive public feedback.

The first one was held in Mymensingh on April 29.

DOHS buildings

FROM PAGE 16 was approved and gazetted by the government in June. But mysteriously the government deferred implementation of the new rules until December 31, prompting a rush among plot owners to get their building plans approved under the old rules, which require the landowner to leave open space as per floor ratio and build higher buildings, might ensure a sounder environment.

"Concrete places like DOHS creates an urban heat island, which all inmates inside start feeling after sunset when heat radiates through walls and penetrates inside," Mahbub-uz-Zaman said.

Architect Ishfaq Zahir of Institute of Architects, Bangladesh (IAB) said due to such cramped living conditions in parts of Old DOHS in Mohakhali and Baridhara DOHS rents are much lower for large flats. "Cheaper rents and congested living attract undesirable section of tenants as we have witnessed in Mohakhali DOHS in the last few years," Zahir added.

According to planning manuals used throughout the world, two thirds of the project land must be kept aside for roads, playgrounds, greens, worship place, schools and other amenities.

"The unplanned areas of the city now look much better than these planned housing projects because the old construction rules, which most of the developers follow, leave room for irregularities," Zahir said.

Engineer Saiful Islam of the Cantonment Board said the board took up a number of beautification programmes in Baridhara DOHS but the homeowners' council rejected it.