

Militants to be used against AL in caretaker rule

Fears Hasina
UNB, Dhaka

Opposition Leader Sheikh Hasina yesterday expressed her apprehension that the BNP-Jamaat alliance might use the militant forces against Awami League (AL) during the period of caretaker government.

"They may use the militants to scare the voters in the next parliamentary election so that people can't go to the polling booths to cast votes in favour of their candidates," she said.

The AL president made the remarks while exchanging views with the party's grassroots level leaders of Sathkira district at her Dhanmondi office.

Hasina demanded transparent ballot boxes in every polling booth across the country, saying that Awami League wants free, fair and credible elections.

She urged the people to get united to resist the "evil design of the government" to return to power.

Alleging that the militants have already established a strong

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

90pc DOHS buildings deviate from plans

Homeowners' body terms it concrete slum, laments lack of breathing space

MORSHED ALI KHAN

With over 567 residential buildings - each six-storey high and crammed - over an area of 82.99 acres Defence Officers' Housing Society (DOHS) in Baridhara represents one of the most densely built modern housing projects, devoid of any consideration for the environment.

Approved by the Cantonment Board, over 90 percent of these six-storey buildings have been built deviating from the original plans but later legalised and certified through a 'fine' paid by the builders to the board, sources said.

According to Estate Officer of the Military Lands Wadudul Bari, the board approves construction of 2,540 square feet of floor space each for the five-Katha plots. But in over 90 percent of cases the plot

owners end up deviating and extending the floor space beyond 2,700 square feet.

The President of Baridhara DOHS Council, an association of homeowners, Brigadier (retd) Mustafizur Rahman termed the DOHS 'nothing but a concrete slum' and said it was a 'planning blunder'. He said the width of all the roads was negotiated to make more plots and the authorities did not consider aspects of green and open spaces for such a big project.

"But we are trying to plant trees and create spaces for healthy movement of the residents," Rahman added.

The housing blocks are so crammed most of them do not get proper sunlight or air exposing the inmates to a constant unhealthy atmosphere.

Architects, town planners and engineers interviewed on the matter said the Building Construction Rules 1996 and lack of monitoring are responsible for creating such concrete jungles in the city.

Since DOHS is already a built up area, the consequences can be physically seen. Dhanmondi, Gulshan, Baridhara, Uttara, Banani, Lalmatia and other so-called planned housing projects in the city are set to resemble DOHS once all the plots are built upon. They said the 1996 construction rules were grossly inadequate.

Experts from different professional institutions worked for three years to formulate a new Building Construction Rules 2006, which

SEE PAGE 15 COL 8



Baridhara DOHS

PHOTO: GOOGLE EARTH

An image from Google Earth shows buildings at Baridhara DOHS crammed together and the zone devoid of any greenery.

Thai FM due tomorrow

UNB, Dhaka

Thai Foreign Minister Kantathi Suphamongkhon arrives in Dhaka tomorrow to hold bilateral talks with Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan

The bilateral talks will be followed by the signing of a five-year accord on cultural arrangement between the two countries.

Suphamongkhon will call on Prime Minister Khaleda Zia and inaugurate Thai chancery at Baridhara during his one-day visit.

He will leave for New Delhi on August 7 to attend the BIMSTEC ministerial meeting.

Foreign Minister Morshed Khan, who is the current chairman of the sub-regional grouping, is likely to leave for New Delhi the same day to attend the 9th BIMSTEC meeting. He will hand over the chair to India at the meeting.

Outlaw killed in 'crossfire' with cops

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

A top activist of Janajuddho faction of the outlawed Purba Banglar Communist Party (PBCP) was killed in 'crossfire' between the police and his cohorts at Saheb Nagar in sadar upazila under Chuadanga district early yesterday.

The dead was identified as Abul Kalam Azad, 30, son of late Adalat Mondol of Boalia in sadar upazila.

According to police, they arrested Azad from Shekra Bazar in Sailakupa upazila in Jhenidah district Thursday noon and took him into their custody for interrogation.

Azad admitted his involvement with the outlawed party and provided information about his accomplices and hidden firearms.

Following the statement, a team of sadar police accompanied Azad and headed out for the village Saheb Nagar to arrest his cohorts and seize their hidden firearms.

When police reached the village at about 4.30am, the Janajuddho men opened fire on the law enforcers, prompting them to return fire.

Azad was caught in crossfire and died on the spot while trying to escape, said police.

Rab recovered a firearm and

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3



PHOTO: STAR

Illegal nailing of billboards to trees resurfaces again in Paltan area in the capital after Dhaka City Corporation's drive against the practice ended.

PRIMARY SCHOOL

Poor salary keeps bright job-seekers at bay

SURANJITH DEABNATH

Brilliant and talented people are avoiding the career of primary school teachers due to poor salaries, causing a downside in the quality of education at the first stage of learning process.

Bright students with good academic results do not want to start their careers as primary school teachers and most of the meritorious students who had taken up the career believing that it is a noble profession, do not continue in the profession for long because a government primary school teacher is paid less than the salary of an upper divisional clerk of a govern-

ment office or of a chauffeur of a government officer, according to aggrieved primary school teachers and education experts.

"To improve the quality of primary education, teachers have to think about various effective ways of teaching to improve students' understanding. Only meritorious and talented people can do that well but they will not go to teaching profession without getting better salaries," AAMS Arefin Siddique, former president of Dhaka University Teachers Association told The Daily Star.

Government primary teachers are very disappointed over their poor salaries although the govern-

ment increased their basic salaries a little on July 13.

The new pay scale increased the monthly salary of head masters without training from Tk 2,850 to Tk 3,300, the salary of head masters with training was increased from Tk 3,100 to Tk 3,500, assistant teachers with training are now getting Tk 3,100 instead of their previous salary of Tk 3,000 and assistant teachers without training are getting Tk 3000 instead of Tk 2600.

Despite having the same ranking and academic qualifications, the salary of a government primary teacher is eight grades lower than

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

Govt to import, market 30pc fertiliser to check misuse of subsidy

JASIM UDDIN KHAN

Amid widespread allegations of misuse of subsidy by private importers, the government has decided to import and market a portion of fertiliser through its own wings from the current fiscal year.

According to the government decision, 30 per cent of around 10 lakh tonnes of fertiliser with import subsidy would be imported and marketed by Bangladesh Agriculture Development Corporation (BADC).

The BADC would import and market 1.25 lakh tonnes of Triple Super Phosphate (TSP) and one

lakh tonnes of Muriate of Potash (MoP) this fiscal year (2006-07). And the demand for Di Ammonia Phosphate (DAP) that used to be imported in the past would now be met from local production. Bangladesh Chemical Industries Corporation (BCIC) would start production of DAP next month.

Government estimates said the demand for fertiliser this fiscal year is 4.5 lakh tonnes of TSP, 2.5 lakh tonnes of DAP and three lakh tonnes of MoP. The government would give Tk 594 crore subsidy on them.

A top official of the agriculture

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

THIRD KARNAPHULI BRIDGE Rally, counter rally to be held in Ctg today

CU CORRESPONDENT

Tension runs high in Chittagong as both the opposition-backed Nagorik Committee and the ruling BNP-backed Third Karnaphuli Bridge Execution Committee have announced separate programmes on the bridge issue today.

The Nagorik Committee, headed by city Mayor ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury, will hold a rally at Laldighi Maidan at 3:00pm to be addressed by leaders of the committee and opposition parties.

The bridge execution committee would also hold a rally near the bridge site at the same time,

sources said. Both the sides were busy campaigning yesterday at different points in the port city to persuade people to join their rallies.

When contacted, Senior Assistant Commissioner of Detective Branch of Police Mosharrif Hossain said security would be stepped up to ward off violence centring the rallies.

Earlier at a July 29 press conference, Mohiuddin reiterated the demand for construction of a suspension bridge on the Karnaphuli and said he would announce further

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

CTG PORT Surcharge costs country Tk 100cr in 2 months

RAFIQ HASAN

Additional surcharge on export and import cargoes due to lengthy container handling at Chittagong port cost the country around Tk 100 crore in two months.

The Singapore-based feeder operators realised the money as additional surcharge from all Chittagong-bound export and import containers from June 5 to July 31, sources said.

On June 5, the feeder operators started charging \$130 as surcharge on each twenty equivalent units (TEUs) and 45,000 containers loaded with TEUs had to pay the surcharge in June and 56,000 in July.

The surcharge was realised only from loaded containers.

The feeder operators, however,

are now thinking of withdrawal of surcharge, sources said.

"We had to impose the surcharge as we had been suffering losses due to long congestion at the Chittagong port," said Jamal Uddin Quader Chowdhury, managing director of QC Shipping, a major feeder operator.

Such surcharge is nothing new in shipping business, he said, adding that there is a peak season surcharge of \$350 per TEUs in New York port.

Holding the Chittagong Port Authority responsible for failure to handle containers efficiently and creating congestion at the port, he said the feeder operators had also imposed such surcharge in 1998-99.

Jamal also said they realised the additional amount from the main line

operators (MLOs) and not from any local businessmen. In the case of garment export the buyer had to pay the surcharge as the LCs are open on Free on Board (FOB) basis, he added.

Ninety-nine per cent of feeder operators realised the surcharge, the QC Shipping managing director said, adding that they would withdraw the surcharge when the congestion eases.

The ship owners had given one month's ultimatum on May 5 and started realising the surcharge on June 5. There are 48 feeder vessels operating between Chittagong, Singapore and other connecting ports.

Among the five major players, only HRC is owned by a Bangladeshi businessman. The rest

SEE PAGE 15 COL 5



PHOTO: STAR

Dulahazara Safari Park in Cox's Bazar releases 1600 of these starred tortoises in its protected area after they were confiscated during smuggling near the Indian border at Rajshahi on July 31.

India parliament in chaos as Iraq oil scandal probe links Natwar

REUTERS, New Delhi

The parliament was plunged into chaos yesterday after an inquiry report suggesting the previous foreign minister sought favours from Saddam Hussein in Iraq's oil-for-food scandal was leaked to the media.

The report by an independent committee cleared the ruling Congress party of any wrongdoing, but opposition lawmakers accused the government of selectively leaking the report, instead of releasing it to parliament.

Noisy protests forced both houses of parliament to be suspended.

The investigation was ordered late last year after a UN report said then Foreign Minister Natwar Singh and the ruling Congress were among politicians and groups in several countries given oil vouchers by Iraq that could be sold for a commission.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6