

Trouble-prone UZs

FROM PAGE 1
may be deployed at the most troubled centres.

Following are the constituencies under which 64 thanas and upazilas were marked as vulnerable: the constituency comprising part of Barisal and another from Pirojpur district, Barisal-2, Bhola-1, 2, 3 and 4, Jalakathi-2, Patuakhali-2, Pirojpur-1, Chandpur-1 and 2, Chittagong-3, 4, 6, 7, and 12, Feni-1, 2 and 3, Laxmipur-4, Noakhali-5 and 6, Comilla-3, 8, 9 and 12, Dhaka-3 and 9, Mymensingh-10, Munshiganj-4, Netrokona-1, Narayanganj-4 and 5, Tangail-8, Bagerhat-2, Jessore-3, Khulna-4, Kustia-2,3 and 4, Bogra-1, Naogaon-6 Rangpur-3, Sirajganj-2 and 5, Pabna-1 and 2, Sylhet-1, 2 and 3.

Meanwhile, the Election Commission yesterday postponed its scheduled meeting supposed to take place the same day due to some "unavoidable circumstances". The commission on Sunday at a meeting decided to sit at least once a day till the election to review its preparation.

But, two delegations -- one from the Asia Foundation and the other from the Jamaat-e-Islami -- separately met the Chief Election

Commissioner at the latter's office yesterday.

The Asia foundation discussed the deployment of foreign polls observers, while the Jamaat placed a nine-point demand to the commission including transfer of some officials already assigned electoral duties.

'Sheaf of paddy' lifters!

UNB, Rajbari

Farmers in the district have been suffering from a campaign phobia passing sleepless nights to protect paddy fields from sheaf lifters.

Farmers alleged that supporters of BNP-led alliance tear off paddy sheaf whenever they bring out processions in favour of their candidates. Farmers of Pangsha and Machpara areas have been mainly affected.

Some farmers came to Rajbari district court area to lodge complaints with the authorities but they said they were not yet ready to start court cases.

Kidnapper held

FROM PAGE 12

Bijoynagar Road at 12:30 am. Sadek, 23, who masterminded the crime, was held along with a pistol.

When contacted yesterday, Aktaruzaman said, "There were great risks involved in the entire operation. My priority was to rescue the child unhurt."

He also said, "I called my detective team and set out on the hunt at 11:00 pm in four separate vehicles. The kidnappers asked Dr Nayeem to send the money in a white microbus. He was also instructed to give a cell phone to his driver they knew before and follow their instructions."

First, the kidnappers asked the driver to pull up his car somewhere near Farmgate. Later, they changed the decision and asked the driver to wait at Bijoynagar.

The driver kept three cell phones with him one for communicating with kidnappers, one with police who were trailing the microbus from afar and the other was kept on all the time during the operation.

When the microbus reached Bijoynagar, kidnappers emerged from an auto-rickshaw. The police instantly surfaced on the spot and arrested Sadek who had the child with him before other members of the gang escaped.



PHOTO: STAR

Awami League president and former prime minister Sheikh Hasina (inset) waves to the party activists and supporters at an election rally at Mohammadpur in the city yesterday. She introduced party candidate Alhaj Mockbul Hossain, who is contesting the upcoming election for Dhaka-9 JS seat, to the crowd.

CA inaugurates new central jail in Gazipur today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief Advisor Latifur Rahman will inaugurate the newly constructed Kashimpur Dhaka Central Jail in Gazipur tomorrow.

The work of only one unit out of three has so far been completed. The completed high security unit will accommodate three hundred convicted prisoners.

The incomplete two units include one vocational trade unit for 2,000 convicts and the other for 300 female ones.

The work of Tk 126 crore project started in 1998, and only Tk 22 crore has been allocated for the project so far.

On the inaugural day, the jail will accommodate 200 convicted prisoners who will be shifted from the central jail at Nazimuddin Road.

At present, nearly 68 thousand prisoners are detained in 64 jails across the country against the total capacity of more than 21 thousand.

In the Dhaka Central Jail, 9,600 prisoners are detained now against its capacity of only 2,632.

Bagerhat blast Bomb was remote-controlled device: experts

BSS, Bagerhat

The powerful bomb that exploded here Sunday at the election rally of Awami League was a remote-controlled device and the nature of the explosive was quite similar to the powerful explosive shell that exploded at Awami League office in Narayanganj recently, experts said.

The device containing at least 6 to 7 kilograms of explosives was covered with a plate of cast iron that ultimately turned into thousands of shooting splinters after the explosion, visiting explosive experts of army and police told journalists at the spot yesterday.

A 10-member explosive expert team of CID police yesterday came to the spot at Khalilur Rahman Degree College ground at Mollahat, 40 kilometres from the district headquarters.

Asimilar army team from Jessore cantonment also visited the spot to detect the nature of the explosives.

The bomb which also contained five to six batteries to activate the remote control, was also made locally, experts said.

Manpower

FROM PAGE 1

recruiting agencies, the media and NGOs took part in the workshop.

Barrister Ishtiaq said all necessary steps should be taken immediately to render prompt services to the labour force that fetch the valuable foreign currency for the country.

In his presidential address at one of the sessions, Prof Rehman Sobhan proposed opening of 'skill development centres' in every thana to train at least 1,000 boys and girls at each of those annually, keeping an eye on job markets.

Nobody is taking the sector seriously although it alone can fetch five to 10 billion dollars annually in near future, observed Prof Sobhan. Remittances well surpass the volume of foreign aid to the country in a given year, he said "Our manpower working abroad would remain the biggest money earner in foreseeable future."

In line with Prof. Sobhan's suggestions, Director General of Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Masood Aziz, said the country's missions abroad have to keep track of the job markets abroad and change their attitude. He regretted that in many cases, Bangladeshis working abroad did not even get access to their country's missions for assistance.

Prof Wahiduddin Mahmud, who presided over another session, said the manpower sector should be recognised as an industry and there should not be too much of government regulations.

Rokia Afzal Rahman, Advisor in charge of Labour and Employment Ministry, who chaired both the inaugural and the concluding sessions, admitted that people have to cross a lot of hurdles in going abroad and in many cases, they can not even recover the money they spend.

Advisor Abdul Muid Chowdhury said more emphasis should be given for export of skilled manpower. There should be more transparency and accountability in activities of recruiting agencies.

Advisor M Hafiz Uddin Khan said concerted efforts should be made for export of more manpower. He regretted that the money deposited in the migrant workers' welfare fund was misused.

Representatives of BAIRA, the apex body of manpower recruiting agencies, said the sweeping allegations of cheating people is not applicable in case of all agencies. They welcomed any government move at streamlining the recruitment process. BAIRA General Secretary Golam Mustafa also spoke.

On the other hand, representatives of migrant workers noted that people willing to go abroad for jobs are cheated in many ways. They became subject to exorbitant fees, faulty recruitment process and harassment at airports. They often fall prey to unscrupulous middlemen. They regretted that Bangladesh failed to utilise the experience and expertise of migrant workers in nation building.

How the media, both print and electronic, focus the manpower sector also came up prominently in one of the sessions. Editor of The Daily Star Mahfuz Anam and Editor of the Prothom Alo Motiur Rahman co-chaired the session. Managing Director of Ekushey Television Farhad Mahmud also took part in the discussion.

They all agreed that the media should give more importance to manpower export, the most prospective sector that fetches more foreign currency than the most robust export sector, garments industry.

Earlier, Prof CR Abrar and Dr Tasneem Siddiqui presented a keynote paper, portraying the prospects and problems of manpower sector and put forward some recommendations for solving the problems faced by migrant workers.

Labour and Employment Secretary Md Sirajul Islam gave the address of welcome. Others who took part in the discussions include Bangladesh Bank Governor Mohammad Farashuddin, Shengji Li of ILO, Shahidul Haq of International Organisation of Migration (IOM), lawyers Refaat Ahmed and Dr Shahdeen Malik of RMMRU, Syed Saiful Kafia Asif, Anisur Rahman and Abdul Mannan of WARBE, a migrants' organisation, and Abdul Mannan, of Islami Bank.

Feni Jubo League leader killed

FROM PAGE 12

in his abdomen, when BNP and AL clashed at Banglabazar under Chhagalnaiya thana on Sunday.

The clash erupted when AL activists allegedly attacked an election procession of BNP. Police fired five rounds of gunshots to disperse the AL and BNP activists during the clash. The police havilder was admitted to Feni Sadar Hospital.

Our Sirajganj correspondent adds, at least 50 people were injured, eight critically when Awami League and BNP activists clashed in Varitari, Shahangachha and Ram Krishna Nagar areas in Sirajganj yesterday.

The clash erupted in Varitari area of Sadar upazila at about 11 am when an AL procession was crossing a BNP rally. At least 20 of both the groups were injured. Eight were admitted to Sadar Hospital in critical condition.

The critically injured are BNP activists Selim, Khokon, Bishu, Manjur and AL activists Rezaul, Razzak, Rubel and Kayinsha.

At least 30 people were injured in separate clashes between AL and BNP activists at Shahangachha and Ram Krishna Nagar.

Both the groups exploded bombs

and used sticks, brick bats and other lethal weapon.

The tense situation was prevailing in Sirajganj.

Our staff correspondent from Khulna says, Awami League activists ransacked an election campaign office of BNP at Islampur road yesterday afternoon.

The AL activists stormed into the election campaign office leaving four BNP activists injured. Two roadside shops were also looted, witnesses said.

The incident occurred in presence of police, witnesses and BNP leaders said.

UNB from Barisal adds, some 12 people were injured, four by bullets, in sporadic clashes between BNP and Awami League supporters in Gourmadi upazila yesterday.

Police and witnesses said two JCD activists were injured when a BNP procession came under attack at Chandrarah area in the morning.

Agitated BNP men ransacked houses of their opponents, including the houses of Atanta Shollee and Chitta Ranjan Halder of the area.

BCL worker Kalachan was shot when an AL election campaign team was attacked at Darial area.

Besides, clashes between BNP and AL workers took place at

Chandshi Narasinghapotti, south Bijoypur and Darial areas leaving eight people injured, three by bullets, yesterday.

BNP and AL blamed each other for the attacks.

Meanwhile, two BNP activists were injured, one with bullets, in separate attacks allegedly by Awami League workers in Lalpur upazila in Natore yesterday.

Wasim and Babu were rushed to Rajshahi Medical College Hospital in critical condition.

A pre-election clash between BNP and AL activists left at least 20 injured at Garaganj bazar in Shailakupa Sunday evening.

One of the injured, whose identity could not be known, was shifted to Dhaka in a critical condition.

Witnesses said the clash took place when election processions of the two rival parties came face to face in the area.

Twelve people were injured when AL and BNP activists clashed at Laxminarayanpur village in Sadar upazila under Rajbari district on Sunday night.

Police said the clash took place as BNP workers attacked an Awami League procession and stabbed its leader Aziz Sarder at about 8 pm.

Ctg, Mongla ports

FROM PAGE 12

Lanka," the advisor said. He added that the SAARC Secretariat should look into this matter to avoid any environmental disaster.

The secretary of the Ministry of Environment and Forests said oil spillage is one of major causes for damage to natural resources. "Planted and mangrove forests and paddy fields are effected by oil spillage and the effect of it may extend up to 100 km."

The secretary of the Ministry of Shipping said oil spill is a serious hazard to the eco-system and any serious accident may lead to serious oil spill crisis. "In fact, the country should have a national oil contingency policy at hand much earlier."

The deputy country representative of Asian Development Bank mentioned that Bangladesh did not have any contingency plan.

The chairman of the Mongla Port Authority said Mongla port expects visit of more ships in near future and there is an urgent need to establish a regulatory body to prevent oil spill near the Sundarbans.

The government should ratify the IMO International Convention on Oil Pollution Preparedness, the speakers added.

A good quantity of fuel oil released from a foreign vessel near Dhangmari in 1994 also consider-

ably affected the Sundarbans mangroves, marshes, fishes and shrimps, a study found. Impacts of oil spills in Golpata, Sundari and Gewa trees are being assessed.

AL apprises

FROM PAGE 12

secretary Muzaffar Hossain Paltu, called on the President at Bangabhaban to apprise him of the prevailing situation.

The members of the delegation informed the president of the bomb blast at AL meeting at Mollahat in Bagerhat district on Sunday, which killed a number of people.

Series of bomb blasts at Udichi function, Ramna Batamul, Narayanganj and other places as well were the acts of fundamentalists, they said.

AL also complained against some deputy commissioners and officers-in-charge of different thanas saying that they are working in partisan line. "They should be withdrawn from their present postings immediately."

A Bangabhaban release said President Shahabuddin Ahmed gave them a patient hearing and said that he would look into the matter.

Other members of the delegation were Monaem Sarkar, Ataur Rahman Kaiser, Adv Syed Ahmed and Adv Abdul Mannan Khan.

Hartal in Bagerhat

FROM PAGE 1

Helal is contesting two BNP stalwarts -- Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and AHM Selim.

Sheikh Helal also suffered minor injuries when his private security guards forced him down to the ground when the bombs exploded, some of the injured admitted to Khulna Medical College Hospital said. The bombs went off when Sheikh Helal was entering the venue to address the meeting.

Meanwhile, an eight-member CID team headed by Fazlul Karim, Additional SP of CID in Khulna-Barisal zone, reached Mollahat yesterday to probe the bomb blasts.

Sources said the CID team may go into action if any FIR is lodged. But till 5-30 pm yesterday, none filed any case, said Probdh Chakravarty, OC of Mollahat thana.

The CID team collected four bomb splinters from the spot but could not ascertain the type of the bombs.

An army explosive expert said the powerful bombs may be like the ones planted at Kotlailpara and at Udichi cultural function in Jessore last year. "We are digging into the matter", he said.

An intelligence official said the bombs may be like the one planted at Baniarchar church.

Awami League brought out a

procession with the dead bodies yesterday afternoon. It was led by Sheikh Helal. The namaz-e-janaja of the dead was held at the KR College ground after Zohr prayer and bodies were handed over to their relatives.

Local Awami League leaders vowed to "drive out BNP-Jamaat axis from the soil of Bagerhat district".

At a press conference on Sunday night, Sheikh Helal alleged that alliance candidate in Bagerhat-2 (Sadar-Kachua) and president of district BNP AHM Selim masterminded the incident to kill him.

Selim denied the charge yesterday. He accused Sheikh Helal of trying to foil the election in Bagerhat and to "conceal the stigma of Kalidas Boral murder".

The entire Mollahat upazilla has been brought under tight security cordon by deploying Army, BDR and riot police.

According to BNP leaders at Bagerhat, the house of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, alliance candidate in Bagerhat-2, was ransacked and looted on Sunday night by unruly AL activists.

Mujibar Rahman, Helal's main rival in the polls race, alleged that armed cadres of AL stormed into his house at Mejera Gaola village in Mollhat on Sunday night to kill him.

India lukewarm

FROM PAGE 12

joint ventures involving India and US and collaboration between scientific organisations of the two countries.

The ruling BJP, the main opposition Congress and the Communist parties view the decision as a US reward to Pakistan for its decision to co-operate in Washington's military campaign against the Taliban regime in Afghanistan as a retribution for the September 11 strikes in New York and Washington.

Finance Minister Yashwant Sinha said it was good that the sanctions were waived but it was a minor issue as far as the Indian economy was concerned. Except for some defence supplies, the sanctions had no meaning, he added.

External Affairs and Defence Minister Jaswant Singh, meanwhile, said, "I hail the development. It's welcome news."

In fact, India has all along maintained that the sanctions have been counterproductive and hurt the US economy more than they did the Indian economy.

The BJP was very cautious in reacting to the lifting of the sanctions which they say had minimal impact on India. The party is waiting to see

if restrictions on high technology transfer goes.

But the head of the BJP's economic cell Jagdish Shettigar said a positive feature of the decision is that American companies tying up with Indian government's projects can now secure funds from US banks.

The BJP, some of its allies as well as the opposition parties chose to see the lifting of sanctions as US' quid pro quo to Pakistan's support to Washington's drive against international terrorism.

Apex Indian industrial and business welcomed the decision saying it would allow exports from the US and provide a psychological boost to greater trade and investment between the two countries.

Police defy

FROM PAGE 1

under their illegal occupation for about five years, CAAB officials said.

The illegal occupants also organised a fair at the place last year and rented out stalls on payment. CAAB's complaint to Teigaon police in this regard was allegedly ignored.

They have virtually turned the area into a den of terrorists and other criminals, residents alleged.

Hundi: BB governor

FROM PAGE 1

through official channels by the Bangladeshis working abroad has risen to 1.9 billion US dollars from 1.3 billion US dollars three years back," Dr Farashuddin said in his speech as chief guest at the concluding session of the workshop.

The Ministry of Labour and Employment organised the daylong workshop.

The central bank governor admitted that the hundi system had made inroads because of the weaknesses of the formal banking sector. "Quality of service in the banking sector leaves much to be desired."

Dr Farashuddin also spoke of the fragility of the country's banking sector when asked whether it is possible for the banks to provide mortgage facilities to employment-seekers, who tend to sell their properties in the countryside just to have jobs abroad. "Even the clever ones find it difficult to deal with banks in this country."

He recalled the proposals he had put forward to the government three years back about tapping optimum benefit out of a huge amount of remittance by over three million Bangladeshi expatriates. "I don't

think, the remittance money are being utilised in a proper way. If we could build some bridges and factories with that money, it would help nation building as well as give a sense of pride to foreign wage earners."

Some other participants in the workshop shared the central bank governor's views on proliferation of hundi business. Over a half of the remittance by expatriate Bangladeshis is channelled through hundi, they claimed.

Minhazuddin, an executive member of the Bangladesh Association of International Recruiting Agencies (BAIRA), blamed poor service of the banking sector for expansion of hundi network. The BAIRA is the apex body of agencies that recruit people for jobs overseas.

Senior Vice-president of the Islami Bank Abdul Mannan also noted that people tended to send money back home via hundi as the banking system lagged behind. He also levelled allegations of corrupt practices and public harassment against the banks.

Taliban mobilise

FROM PAGE 1

weeks, if not days.

Two US navy battle groups, each led by an aircraft carrier, were in the Gulf and the Indian Ocean, and more than 100 extra warplanes have been deployed to the area.

Two more aircraft carriers were enroute for the region: the USS Kitty Hawk which left Japan on Friday and the USS Theodore Roosevelt which left Norfolk, Virginia, bound for the eastern Mediterranean and "points east."

Long-range B-52 and B-1 bombers have also been deployed along with A-10 Warthog ground-support attack jets, and US army special forces -- elite units who have seen action in Panama, Somalia and the Gulf -- received orders last week to deploy to an unspecified location.

AFP says, Britain's contribution to military action against Laden's terrorist network is likely to be spearheaded by the Special Air Service (SAS), a crack squad with a history of perilous missions since World War II.

According to some press reports in London, SAS units are already in Afghanistan, where bin Laden is based.

The ministry of defence refused to discuss reports that a four-man SAS team was fired on by Taliban soldiers late Friday in the foothills near Kabul.

Nevertheless, the consensus here is that if they are not there already, they soon will be. A P f r o m I s m a i l y , E g y p t says a British aircraft carrier passed through the Suez Canal yesterday to join a group of some 20 British ships gathering in the Gulf.

The vessels that passed through the canal yesterday were the aircraft carrier HMS Illustrious, the Trafalgar submarine, the destroyer Nottingham and supply ship Fort Victoria.

A total of 25 British ships are expected to be deployed in the Gulf region, along with ground troops and warplanes. It is the biggest deployment of Royal Navy ships since the 1982 Falklands War.

A Tokyo report says, Japan plans to send a state-of-the-art Aegis destroyer and three other naval ships to the Indian Ocean to support US retaliation for terror attacks in the United States.

It would be the first time Japan has sent abroad armed forces in connection with a US military operation, despite a constitutional ban on the use of force overseas, the Kyodo news agency reported.

The flotilla may leave the naval base of Sasabo, southern Japan, as early as Thursday to collect intelligence and conduct surveillance, Kyodo quoted Defence Agency sources as saying.

The four ships, including two helicopter-carrying destroyers and a tanker, will work closely with a US

Naval task force led by the aircraft carrier USS Kitty Hawk, the report said.

They will team up off the Pacific Island of Iwojima, about 1,000 kilometers south of Tokyo, the sources said.

Kyodo said more than 900 troops would be aboard the flotilla -- the 7,250-ton Aegis destroyer, a 5,200-ton destroyer capable of carrying three helicopters, a 4,550-ton destroyer capable of carrying one helicopter and a 8,150-ton tanker.

They are expected to be in the Indian Ocean for a long time with the Aegis monitoring movements of suspicious aircraft and naval ships, the report said.

Meanwhile, calling it a "strike on the financial foundation" of terrorists, President Bush yesterday signed an executive order freezing the assets of 27 individuals and organisations.

"They include terrorist organisations, individuals, terrorist leaders, a corporation that serves as a front for terrorism and several non-profit organizations," the president said in a Rose Garden appearance.

Bush was flanked by Secretary of State Colin Powell and Treasury Secretary Paul O'Neill as he spoke.

Bush said he signed the order one minute after midnight, adding, "This list is just the beginning."

"To follow the money is a trail to terrorists," the president said. He called the list "the financial equivalent of law enforcement's most-wanted list."

Bush spoke as halfway around the world, the leader of Afghanistan's ruling militia, Mullah Mohammed Omar said the United States should withdraw from the Persian Gulf and "put an end to the biased attitude on the issue of Palestine."

In a faxed statement, he said the death of Laden would do little to remove any threat to the United States.

Taliban regime yesterday warned its neighbour Uzbekistan against cooperating with any US military strikes after a US spy plane was allegedly shot down near the border.

In a toughly-worded statement released through the Pakistan-based Afgan Islamic Press, Taliban Foreign Minister Wakil Ahmed Mutawakel accused Uzbekistan of "beating the drums of jubilation" ahead of possible war between the United States and the radical Islamic militia.

Meanwhile, the US embassies in the Central Asian nations of Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan have warned Americans against traveling to those countries for security reasons and are evacuating some personnel as Washington prepares to strike nearby Afghanistan.