

A lake plundered

FROM PAGE 1

According to various sources, the de-requisitioning process begins at the local tashildar office, where one gains access to any land document for a couple of hundred taka. The operatives in these areas can be 'employed' to complete the whole process of de-requisitioning for fees depending on the price of the land.

All this is done through the loophole of a law that if the government after acquisition of land fails to implement the project within the timeframe, the original owner who had been compensated earlier could claim it back. Although the revised law now prescribes that the unused acquired land will now be classified as public or khas land by the Ministry of Land, the ministry has the discretion to sell or lease out the land to the public.

"From the tashildar office the gang obtains the name of the original owner and immediately sets out to prepare documents of purchase and moves on to the land ministry, where it has established channels," said a broker at Gulshan on condition of anonymity.

He said the ministerial channels

enter a "contract" with the party and process all files.

"At this stage, they need a clearance certificate from the organisation which had originally acquired the land for a project." In the case of Gulshan-Banani-Baridhara Lake, the newfound owners obtained the 'no objection certificate' from the Rajuk because it had acquired the land in the early sixties, he added.

The allotment for such plots comes from the Ministry of Land, involving the deputy commissioner's office of the district. There is no scope for these organisations, except Rajuk, to check whether the allocated land is a lake or a park or a playing field, the broker said.

At present, the Ministry of Housing and Public Works has launched a half-hearted project to safeguard the lake from grabbers. It has employed a consultant called the Vitti Sthapati Brindo, but has, so far, done little to give a go-ahead to developing the lake and saving it from extinction. The only weapon the Rajuk has now to fight against the claimants is the protection of wetland law - enacted during the Awami League government.

Mild tremor jolts Panchagarh

UNB, Panchagarh

A mild tremor shook different parts of this northern district on Tuesday night.

Locals said the tremor started at about 9:20 pm and lasted a few seconds.

People ran out of their houses, but no damage was reported.

A similar tremor shook the district on November 14.

PM vows

FROM PAGE 12

and a three-member team of consultants has been formed to work on the planned document," she said during the Prime Minister's Question Time in the House.

Khaleda answered questions for the first time yesterday since the present parliament went into its maiden session on October 28.

The white paper would be published as soon as possible to let the people know about their (AL government) corruption, the prime minister said. "It is difficult to mention any specific time for publication of the white paper," she told a questioner.

Replying to a host of other questions on the issue, Khaleda said her government has already begun investigating specific acts of corruption and irregularities and it would take action as per law of the land. "Personal vengeance will not influence our action," she said. The government would go for action only against the culprits, she assured.

Referring to her party's election pledge to root out corruption from the society, Khaleda said her government would fight corruption and injustice to ensure peace and welfare of the people. "Public wealth embroiled through corruption will also be recovered."

She recalled that the BNP government headed by her last time had also taken action against persons involved in corruption during the rule of the previous regime (of Ershad). "Many of those corrupt people were punished," she said without referring to the conviction of Ershad in a corruption case filed at that time.

PM: Power tariff

FROM PAGE 1

To a question from Nurul Huda (BNP), the prime minister said the previous Awami League government had increased power tariff nine times between October 1996 and November 2000.

The previous BNP government gave emphasis on construction of roads, increasing production of power and establishing more educational institutions, she said. "But all such development projects were stopped by the Awami League government."

Khaleda said her government would take measures to increase power production so that people throughout the country get access to electricity.

Shahriar Kabir

FROM PAGE 1

permission to file a Revision Case against the stay order passed by the CMM's Court on Sunday.

Metropolitan Public Prosecutor (PP) Abdullah Mahmud Hasan on Monday filed a Criminal Revision with the Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court, seeking cancellation of the stay order by the CMM's Court. But he withdrew the revision petition because he is not entitled to file an appeal on behalf of the state.

The District Magistrate's Court on Sunday night gave one month's detention to Shahriar under the Special Powers Act, 1974. The court also ordered sending him to Dhaka Central Jail, rejecting his bail prayer submitted by defence lawyers.

Turkey, a key US ally whose airbases are used by US and British planes patrolling Iraqi airspace, hinted Wednesday that it might drop its objection to an attack against its southeastern neighbor.

"We have repeatedly said that we do not desire a new operation in Iraq, but new conditions could bring about new assessments," Defence Minister Sabahattin Cakmakoglu told reporters, the Anatolia news agency said.

With at least 400 more Marines expected to reinforce some 600 already deployed at a new US base near Kandahar, US warplanes Tuesday bombed a compound they said housed senior leaders of Osama bin Laden's al-Qaeda organisation and the Taliban protecting them.

But Abdul Salam Zaeef, the Taliban envoy to Pakistan until Islamabad cut off diplomatic ties last week, said the site under attack was simply the home of a local official.

Watching the attack on the compound southeast of Kandahar - the latest target in the hunt for bin Laden - live from Central Command headquarters in Tampa, Florida, US Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld said he could not name the leaders believed to be inside, but said they were of "appreciable" importance.

US officials said they were tightening the noose around bin Laden after narrowing their hunt to the Kandahar region and an area between Kabul and the Khyber Pass to the east, including Jalalabad.

Earlier on November 12, the BNP government appointed Prof. Anwarullah Chowdhury vice Chancellor of Dhaka University removing Prof. AK Azad Chowdhury from the position.

HC rule

FROM PAGE 1

A division bench of the High Court comprising Justice Mohammad Abdul Motin and Justice Mohammad Marzi-ul-Haque issued the rule following a writ petition filed by two members of the university senate, AM Ismat Kadir Gama and Habibur Rahman Khan.

The bench asked Prof. Anwarullah Chowdhury to respond within the next four weeks.



Awami League President Sheikh Hasina visited Bangladesh Medical College Hospital yesterday to see bullet-wounded Ramzan Ali, owner of Bikrampur Mistanna Bhandar. Ramzan was shot by some terrorists at Sukrabad in the city on Friday.

PHOTO: STAR

AL calls hartal December 2

FROM PAGE 1

a torch procession in the city on the night before the Sunday's hartal.

As per the schedules, Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) would stage a demonstration today, Jubo League, Mohila Awami League and Awami Shechhashebak League on Friday, and Krishak League and Sramik League on Saturday.

Meeting sources said the meeting termed the government move as a manifestation of 'politics of vengeance' and vehemently protested the initiative to scrap the act as, it feared, such a move would revitalise the fugitive killers of Bangladesh.

The meeting over, AL Presidium member Abdul Jalil told newsmen that there were nine attempts on Sheikh Hasina's life in the past and he warned that Prime Minister Khaleda Zia would have to bear the consequences if there were any problems in relation to Hasina's security in future.

"The ruling alliance started showing an attitude of vendetta right from the beginning of its assuming

power. Some killers of Bangladesh remain at large and they know that if they can kill Hasina now they may avoid trial," said Jalil, adding that scrapping of the act would make Hasina's life more vulnerable.

Jalil wondered what prompted the government to rashly into such a decision and extend the tenure of the first session of the parliament.

AL Agriculture Secretary Motia Chowdhury recalled that the day the parliament had repealed the infamous Indemnity Ordinance, the then opposition BNP remained absent from attending the proceedings of the House. "They sided with the killers."

Expressing deep concern at the security of Hasina, the AL leader referred to the assassination of former Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, who was killed just after the then Indian Prime Minister VP Singh had withdrawn the special 'Black Cat Force' assigned to look after his security.

Since then it became a law in India that all ex-prime ministers would enjoy the special security coverage, Motia added.

Another AL leader, Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim, said it does make any sense that when the immediate-past chief of the caretaker government was provided with special security for a year, Hasina, who has lost almost all of her family members in 1975, would not get such security.

AL Publicity Secretary Abdul Mannan feared that Hasina had been exposed to security threats and the ruling alliance was desperate to destroy the AL.

AL General Secretary Zillur Rahman, Presidium members Abdur Razzak, Tofail Ahmed, Sajeda Chowdhury, AL Advisory Council members ASHK Sadique, Gazilul Haq, SA Malek, ALCWC members Abdul Mannan Khan and Abdul Mannan, were also present, among others, at the meeting.

Spl security for Hasina, Rehana

FROM PAGE 1

facilities.

Under the law styled Father of the Nation's Family Members' Security Act 2001, they were allowed special security by Special Security Force (SSF).

During passage of the law at the tag end of Awami League rule, the then opposition BNP now in power had opposed and demanded its repeal.

While introducing the bill, the law minister delivered a long speech defending the government's decision to scrap the Act.

In his 20-minute speech he said the SSF Ordinance was promulgated to ensure security to the President, the Prime Minister and other VIPs declared by the government to time.

"Sheikh Hasina is not supposed to be entitled to get SSF protection," he said. The government can ensure her security under existing laws, he added.

The Act is "discriminatory and it ultra-vires the Constitution". The immediate past government had "some evil design" to enact such a law, he said. "It was a politically motivated one." Awami League had been trying to persuade the election process by enacting the law. "It was designed to undermine the caretaker government also."

The law minister said during her 14 years in opposition and five years in government, Sheikh Hasina never sought state security. "Why she took the privilege only 23 days before expiry of her government's tenure?"

He said the government spent Tk 2.91 lakh per day for security of the opposition leader by SSF.

None of the MPs attending yesterday's sitting opposed the bill.

UNB adds: If Sheikh Hasina goes abroad even on a private visit, she will have to be provided with SSF security with eight officers and a doctor and if she stays abroad for

one month, more than Tk. 72.99 lakh would be required.

He said Tk. 5.34 core additional budgetary allocation was made for the special security to Sheikh Hasina and Sheikh Rehana.

Moudud said, "If you claim yourself as Janonetri (people's leader) why are you spending crores of taka for SSF and becoming isolated from the people."

Amidst thumping of the desk by treasury bench members, the Law minister said, "This law has to go. It is the people who will give security to Janonetri and it is Almighty Allah who will provide security."

Moudud however said the government would provide all necessary security for Sheikh Hasina as Leader of the Opposition and former Prime Minister.

During his deliberation all opposition members excepting an independent MP were absent from the House.

Bonn talks tougher on day two

FROM PAGE 1

coalition.

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After hearing warnings Tuesday from their German and UN hosts that the world stands ready to help on condition they abandon their old warlike ways, the Afghan delegates in Bonn said they expected to strike a deal, hopefully by the end of the week, on a broad-based temporary government in Afghanistan.

According to a UN blueprint, the conference would form an "Interim Supreme Council of Afghanistan", a cabinet-style body to run the country for three to six months.

It would also create an "Interim Administration of Afghanistan", a kind of parliament, and an "emergency Loya Jirga", or grand council of elders, to decide on a new constitution, a UN spokesman said Tuesday.

This process should be complete by April 2002, he said.

In northern Afghanistan, Alliance commanders said their troops, backed by US and British special forces, finally put down on Wednesday a bloody rebellion by hundreds of non-Afghan Taliban prisoners of war at a fort near Mazar-i-Sharif.

Alliance soldiers were in complete control of the sprawling fortress of Qala-e-Jangi after wiping out the last pockets of resistance, an AFP journalist at the scene said.

The clay facility, the target of waves of US air strikes, was littered with bodies of slain POWs, burned-out vehicles and shell casings.

"We have subdued the last of those who were resisting this morning," said General Abdul Atif, one of the commanders who led the assault. "In total we killed 450. None wanted to surrender."

The dead, he added, were Pakistanis, Chechens, Arabs and Uzbeks, many believed to have been recruited through al-Qaeda.

A Red Cross official in Kabul said his organisation had begun collecting the bodies for identification and burial, but could not confirm casualty figures.

The POWs had surrendered to Alliance troops last weekend in Kunduz, the last Taliban stronghold in the north, and were transferred to Qala-e-Jangi, 10 kilometres (six miles) west of nearby Mazar-i-Sharif.

They rebelled on Sunday in conditions that remain unclear, taking over the prison and seizing stocks of weapons and ammunition from their jailers.

They put up fierce resistance under machine gun and tank fire from Alliance troops and pounding by US warplanes, killing 45 to 50 Alliance soldiers in their fight to the death, a commander said.

The Pentagon said five US soldiers were hurt during a US air raid Sunday but none were killed, although it was investigating reports that "other categories of personnel" may have died.

Witnesses on the scene said an American, possibly a CIA operative, was killed at the start of the rebellion.

The French nuclear-powered aircraft carrier Charles-de-Gaulle, meanwhile, left the Mediterranean port of Toulon Wednesday on its maiden military operation to support the US armada in the Arabian Sea.

JS tidbits

FROM PAGE 12

on his starred question. This angered the prime minister and other top leaders sitting on the front row. Finance and Planning Minister M Saifur Rahman, Health Minister Khandakar Mosharrif Hossain and PM's Parliamentary Affairs Advisor Salahuddin Quader Chowdhury all started shouting at the BNP legislator on the floor.

However, the speaker intervened only after SQ Chowdhury jumped to his feet and protested Huda's lengthy statement. "It's not fair that you have made a statement for five minutes in the name of asking a supplementary question."

Nevertheless, similar practice by others continued even on the day. But, precise questions do not always help in smooth running of the House or saving time because of the fact that the ministers are not also used to hear such questions. In fact, the minister concerned becomes attentive a few minutes after the questioner starts speaking as the question usually comes at the end of the statement.

For example, the finance minister yesterday failed to follow BNP MP Rustam Ali Farazi who, being advised by the Chair, had made his question precise. Still busy talking to the prime minister, the finance minister had to request Farazi to repeat his question.

Communications Minister Nazmul Huda came up with yet another interpretation of the much-talked about political issue of the spirit of the War of Liberation. Disagreeing to the generally accepted concept that the spirit derived from the 1971 war, Huda told parliament that there were two spirits of liberation. The first spirit was gained in 1947 when Pakistan got independence from India on the basis of religion and again in 1971 when Bangladesh got independence from Pakistan on the basis of language.

"I don't like to be identified only as a Muslim or only as a Bangalee. In fact, I am a Bangalee Muslim."

Jamaat-e-Islami MP Shah Mohammad Ruhul Quddus issued sort of a religious edict that Allah did not like those who had run into debts. "Allah will not forgive such people once they die," he said, condemning the fact the finance minister had disclosed in the House that per capita foreign debt in Bangladesh now stood at US\$ 123.86.

Shazneen case

FROM PAGE 12

about 10.15 pm on April 27, 1998 and produced him (Shahid) before the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court, Dhaka the following day. The court placed Shahid on remand, Mojbir added.

He further told the court that he did not take any permission from the court to interrogate Shahid.

A petition seeking bail for two other accused Minu and Parvin was moved. But the court did not pass any order on the issue.

Shazneen Tasnim Rahman, 15, youngest daughter of Latifur Rahman, chairman of Transcom Group, was raped and murdered at their Gulshan residence on April 23, 1998.

Latifur Rahman filed a murder case with Gulshan thana on April 24, 1998 accusing Shahidul Islam alias Shahid a domestic help at his house.

Mojibur Rahman filed a rape case with Gulshan thana after six months' investigation into the murder case.

All the accused Shahid, Hasan, Badal, Shaniram, Minu and Parvin were produced before the court during the hearing.

Advocate ABM Sharfuddin Khan Mukul, Mahubub Ahmed, Saima Khanam, Sheikh Baharul Islam and Ali Hossain appeared for the state while Advocate M A Kamrul Hasan

Another lawmaker of the fundamentalist party, Mia Golam Parwar demanded immediate arrest of a number of noted personalities known for their stance against fundamentalism.

He accused Prof. Kabir Chowdhury, Syed Hasan Imam, Muntasar Mamun, Abed Khan and some others including Shahriar Kabir of being engaged in anti-state activities and said "they all should be taken on police remand to unearth their conspiracy". At this, many BNP lawmakers cheered the Jamaat MP.

Finance and Planning Minister M. Saifur Rahman held the past Awami League government responsible for causing a "sharp rise" in the amount of foreign credits by spending money in unproductive sectors. "...

GDP in the past five years had a declining trend and it ended up being in the grave," he said while projecting a gloomy picture of the economy during the AL rule.

Statistics however show that the country's GDP growth was the highest in the last 26 years during the tenure of the AL government.

During the question-answer hour, the finance minister came down heavily on the last government for permitting 13 private banks to operate. "They opened new banks like [candy] shops ... there had been a mushroom growth of banks, which had no market in the country," he said, adding those banks also lacked transparency in their management. "We have decided not to deposit the exchequer's money with private banks less than five years old.

BNP deputy ABM Ashrafuddin compared the condition of a section of his constituents with that of a broken heart and a lyre with severed strings. "Like a broken heart that cannot love or a lyre with severed string that cannot stir musical waves the lives of the river erosion-hit people of Ramgati in Laxmipur are without a tune," he said to draw sympathy of the minister concerned.

In his call attention notice, the treasury bench member demanded rehabilitation of the Ramgati people who have lost everything. "They are so poor that they even cannot dream of wearing a pair of rubber slippers."

Dengue scare

FROM PAGE 12

index had reached 30 in the city rising further to 160 in 1999 and to 254 in June 2000. Experts said the Dhaka City Corporation and the health ministry had ignored the warning about dengue outbreak.

Currently, the WHO has estimated cases of dengue infection at 50 million worldwide every year and warned that two fifths of the world's population - 2,500 million - are at risk.

Before 1970, only nine countries suffered DHF onslaughts and the number of countries increased four times by 1995.

The latest WHO report on Dengue and Dengue Haemorrhagic Fever said that not only the number of cases was increasing but the explosive outbreaks were occurring as well.

An estimated 500,000 cases are hospitalised each year with dengue infection with roughly five per cent of the infected cases dying around the world.

requirement of fertiliser in the country would be met by the import of 1.50 lakh tons, and the rest 20,000 tons would not be necessary.

About the supply of 2.30 lakh tons fertiliser from the Karnaphuli Fertiliser Company (KAFCO), he said the supply is expected to arrive by March next year upon an order already issued.

Also about the fertiliser price hike in different areas of the country, the BCIC chairman said the government was not responsible for the crisis which he attributed to malpractice by fertiliser traders.

To meet the country's demand, the government had earlier planned to import 5.50 lakh tons of urea, of which 2.30 lakh tons to be collected from the KAFCO and the rest 3.20 lakh supposed to be imported through an international tender.

The government had earlier estimated this year's demand for urea at 23.50 lakh tons.

After deducting the urea production in six BCIC fertiliser factories, the deficit was estimated at 5.50 lakh tons.

Normally, the country face a deficit of two lakh tons of urea fertiliser, but this year the deficit increased because of production suspension in the Jamuna Fertiliser Factory in Jamalpur.

Nepal: Maoist violence

FROM PAGE 12

Thapa also explained to Singh the latest situation in Nepal and the steps taken by the government to tackle the violence let loose by Maoists.

The meeting between Singh and Thapa came a day after Nepalese Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba spoke to his Indian counterpart Atal Bihari Vajpayee on phone and briefed him about developments in his country and measures taken by his government to respond to them.

Vajpayee is understood to have told Deuba about the need to protect the interest of the Nepalese people and to safeguard its Constitution. India has supported the measures taken by the Nepalese government saying they were "necessary steps by a democratic government to maintain peace and security in the country".

A statement by Indian government said New Delhi has consistently opposed use of violence for

gaining political or ideological objectives. "We remain convinced that constitutional monarchy and multiparty democracy in Nepal are the two pillars that provide necessary space to accommodate divergent political opinions."

A spokesperson of the Indian external affairs ministry has declined reply when asked whether India was providing operational help to Nepalese army to tackle the Maoists.

But official sources said security agencies of India and Nepal were sharing intelligence on the nature of Maoist activities.

Two leading dailies "The Hindu" and "The Indian Express" yesterday reported that the chief of Nepalese army Prajwal Shamsheer Jung Bahadur is understood to have met his Indian counterpart General S Padmanabhan in New Delhi on Sunday last. General Bahadur was passing through Delhi on his return home from a tour of Europe.

Big Asian countries

FROM PAGE 12

children were newly infected with the human immunodeficiency virus in Asia and the Pacific, bringing the total of HIV or AIDS cases in the region to 7.1 million, the report estimated.

"The apparently low national prevalence rates in many countries in this region are dangerously deceptive," it said.

"They hide localised epidemics in different areas, including some of the most populous countries. There is a serious threat of major, generalised epidemics."

The report, an annual assessment on the state of the global AIDS epidemic, was published ahead of World AIDS Day on Saturday.

It sketched the situation in these countries:

CHINA: According to China's official statistics, about 600,000 people had AIDS or its precursor virus, HIV, in 2000. In all probability, the report said, that tally now exceeds one million.

Seven Chinese provinces are experiencing "serious local HIV epidemics", and another nine "are possibly on the brink" of epidemics, it said.

The causes: tainted blood transfusion; drug use; and unsafe sex. "Increasing evidence has emerged of serious epidemics in central China, where tens of thousands (and probably more) of rural villagers have become infected since the early 1990s by selling their blood to collecting centres that did not follow basic blood donation safety measures," it said.

HIV rates among injecting drug users are at least 70 per cent in Yili Prefecture in Xinjiang province and Ruili County in Yunnan province. In at least three provinces (Yunnan, Guangxi and Guangdong), "there are also signs of heterosexually transmitted HIV epidemics" driven by men who have unprotected sex with prostitutes.

INDIA: Vast and populous, India shares many of China's problems. It has diverse sources of HIV and localised pockets of infection that

are a potential source for spreading the virus across the country, the report said.

"At the end of 2000, the national adult HIV prevalence rate was under one percent, yet this meant that an estimated 3.86 million Indians were living with HIV/AIDS - more than in any other country besides South Africa," it said.

It noted that in the state of Andhra Pradesh, the infection rate among pregnant women who attended antenatal clinics was more than two percent, and the figure was at least one percent in the states of Karnataka, Maharashtra, Manipur, Nagaland and Tamil