

## Body to probe alleged corruption in BRTA

UNB, Dhaka

The Communications Ministry has constituted a four-member inquiry committee to investigate the reported irregularities and corruption in Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA).

The committee, headed by Ali Imam Majumder, Deputy Secretary (Admin) of the Roads and Railways Division, has been asked to submit its report to the government within 10 days, said an official handout yesterday.

Other members of the committee are Public Transport Specialist Fazlur Rahman and BRTA Director (Technical) Dr SM Saleh Uddin. BRTA Secretary Khandaker Asaduzzaman will act as member-secretary of the committee.

The committee was formed following press reports on a section of BRTA officials and employees providing fake fitness certificates and registration numbers to vehicles that are more than 20 years old.

The reports also mentioned that the dishonest people were taking Tk 30,000 to Tk 40,000 from bus and truck owners for issuing fitness certificates and Tk 20,000 for changing vehicle documents.

As the government banned plying of vehicles above 20 years old on the streets of Dhaka, the committee will probe the alleged attempt of owners to operate again the dilapidated vehicles in the capital with fake papers, the hand-out said.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh Sarak Paribahan Samity in a statement yesterday suggested review of the government decision arguing that the old vehicles had been banned without any valid and logical reason.

"It is illogical and ridiculous to ban the vehicles on the basis of the

years of registration. In fact, engines above 20 or 25 years old do not exist," said Samity secretary general Ashraf Khan.

He claimed that old vehicles are not responsible for black smoke. Adulterated fuel and mobile can cause pollution even if they are used in new vehicles, he said.

## Directive to demarcate Gulshan lake area

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The minister for Housing and Public Works Mirja Abbas has asked the relevant experts to officially demarcate the entire Gulshan lake and lakeside areas within seven days.

In a meeting, held yesterday at the ministry experts and top Rajuk officials, including the acting chairman of Rajuk, the minister also said that after the demarcation is over the lake development project should be designed and immediately implemented.

The Gulshan-Baridhara-Banani lake has long been subjected to massive encroachment. A section of influential developers in connivance with top Rajuk officials has grabbed, land-filled and constructed apartment blocks on the lake.

Mirja Abbas' determination to save the Gulshan-Baridhara-Banani lake comes at a time when the lake is facing near extinction. It may be mentioned that The Daily Star has long been campaigning to save the city lakes.

## Quality seeds

FROM PAGE 1

duces as seeds. Dr Hossain told the participants that seed quality deteriorated in the country due to overuse of the same seeds year after year. He noted that rates of seed replacement and variety replacement are low in Bangladesh.

Stressing the need for creating a level-playing field for public, private and NGO sectors, Dr Hossain also pointed out that lack of incentives for seed breeders was a reason for the backwardness of the seed market.

He suggested that research institutions be allowed to operate separate commercial wings for income generation. Breeders should also get royalty for developing new varieties.

Dr Hossain, who played a pioneering role in preparing the country's latest Agriculture Commission Report, laid special emphasis on updating regulatory regimes so that frontier technologies like genetic engineering could be adopted.

He also put stress on formulating a plant variety protection law to preserve the country's rich bio-

diversity.

Dr Hossain dwelt on the activities of the Seed Certification Agency (SCA) and noted that nowhere in Asia such agencies certify breeder seeds. The breeder seeds need to be totally exempted from a formal and compulsory certification by the SCA, he said.

He said the country's seed system has to serve 13 million farmers with adequate supply of quality seeds of modern varieties at affordable prices at the right time.

In his speech, Prof Rehman Sobhan said the country's farmers represent the most neglected private sector. He emphasised that every farming household in the country should have access to quality seeds at affordable prices.

Ex-agriculture secretary Dr Shawkat Ali noted that the rate of variety replacement in the country is 10 per cent, which he said, should be enhanced to 20 per cent. He called for creation of an inventory of plant genetic resources and setting up of an institute for plant genetic resources.

## Felling of trees

FROM PAGE 12

When asked whether he has been able to interrogate any of the accused named in the FIR, SI Masud replied in the negative. Nor could he tell when he would be able to submit the charge-sheet of the case.

A High Court bench comprising Justice Syed JR Muddasir Hossain and Justice Syed Mahmud Hossain issued a suo moto rule on Monwara Begum and her husband on July 16, asking them to explain why they should not be charged with contempt of court, as the felling of trees was in violation of the July 8 order by the same bench for a status quo for the next two weeks.

The bench also asked the inspector general of police to recover the piece of land and maintain status quo. Ramna police took possession of the 2.81 acres of land

on July 26 and it is still under the police authority.

Meanwhile, Monwara Begum executed an affidavit on August 9, denying her involvement in the felling of the trees at the Osmany Udyan in reply to the show cause issued by the HC bench.

Following submission of the affidavit by Monwara Begum, the additional attorney general referred to the case filed in the Rajuk and said the bench would come to know about the fact soon after submission of the charge-sheet of the case.

The bench initially adjourned the case for the next three months for hearing of the contempt of court case.

But after the police's failure to submit the charge-sheet, the prosecution submitted a time prayer in November and is waiting for the findings of police investigation.

## Zhu may urge Dhaka

FROM PAGE 1

regional and global issues. Zhu's visit comes at a time when China is seen to be seeking to forge firmer relations with some of its neighbours. The visiting Chinese prime minister is likely to seek the country's support and active cooperation in maintaining peace and security in the region, particularly against the backdrop of the changed scenario after September 11 incidents and the recent stand-off between India and Pakistan.

Zhu will lead more than a 120-member entourage including senior officials, business entrepreneurs and nearly 20 media personnel. His visit comes in less than two years after former Chinese premier Li Peng came here as the chairman of the National People's Congress of China in April 1999.

Although the details of Zhu's visit are still being worked out, it was learnt that the three-day itinerary will include visiting one or two Chinese assisted development projects, handing over of the NAM Conference Centre and a civic reception in his honour. He will also attend a banquet will be hosted by Prime Minister Khaleda Zia.

Sources indicated that Khaleda may reciprocate the visit of the Chinese premier by making a bilateral trip to China before she takes

any other bilateral tour. Bangladesh has received Chinese cooperation and assistance in several sectors, including setting up and expansion of power plants at Rauzan, the Barapukria coal mine projects, and a number of bridges.

Bangladesh has also a significant level of defence cooperation with China, a major supplier of its military hardware.

China, during the trip of its prime minister, is likely to announce a fresh package of soft-term loans for bridge and power projects.

At the official level talks between Khaleda and Zhu, the Bangladesh side is likely to urge the Chinese leader to investment more in Bangladesh, specially in medium-scale projects.

Khaleda will urge the Chinese trade delegation to import more products from Bangladesh. Dhaka will also stress the need for reducing the yawning trade imbalance now against Bangladesh.

"We will ask the Chinese delegation to import more of our non-traditional items to level out the trade deficit," an informed official said.

During the Chinese premier's visit, the date for the next Bangladesh-China Joint Economic Commission is likely to be fixed.

## India, Pakistan trade fire along border

REUTERS, Islamabad

Hostile neighbours Pakistan and India traded intermittent fire across their tense border yesterday as Islamabad considered fresh action to curb Islamic militants at the heart of its military standoff with India.

Witnesses said Pakistani and Indian troops traded fire across their border in the Sialkot area of Pakistan's Punjab province.

The nuclear-armed rivals also exchanged sporadic small-arms fire on their frontier in the disputed Himalayan region of Kashmir, Pakistani police and officials in the area said.

Meanwhile Indian defence authorities blamed Pakistan-based guerrillas for an attack on an army camp today in India's revolt-racked Kashmir in which two rebels and an Indian soldier were killed.

The attack in the disputed Himalayan region, the latest in a string of assaults on security posts, came amid a tense military standoff between India and Pakistan after a

raid on the Indian parliament which New Delhi blamed on Pakistan-based militants.

New Delhi has said all options, including war, are open if Islamabad does not move decisively against anti-Indian guerrillas that India says are operating from Pakistani territory.

"Alert soldiers shot dead two militants near the gate of an army camp at Trehgam when they tried to storm the camp. One soldier was killed," a paramilitary spokesman told Reuters.

No group has claimed responsibility for the incident near the Pakistan border. But an Indian defence statement said the attackers belonged to the Pakistan-based Lashkar-e-Taiba group, one of the outfits blamed for last month's attack on parliament in which 14 people died.

India said yesterday it saw no shift in Pakistan's stand on cross-border terrorism, despite President Pervez Musharraf's statement condemning terrorism in all its

forms.

"I don't see any shift in their position on terrorism as directed against India. I think the time has come for Pakistan to shed the ambivalence it continues to maintain on such issues," Foreign ministry spokeswoman Nirupama Rao told a news conference.

Rao said New Delhi was still awaiting concrete steps by Pakistan against guerrilla groups who India says are operating from its soil against the country.

"What we expect from Pakistan is concrete, serious, substantial steps to deal with cross-border terrorism and groups that operate from Pakistani soil. We have yet to see satisfactory action taken," she said.

"In matters relating to India and Pakistan, the position of the government has been made clear. It is for our two countries to deal with such issues. We really see no room for other countries to be involved," she added.

## Army

FROM PAGE 1

National Defence College. Brigadier General Ekramul Haq, defence attache in Bangladesh mission in New Delhi, has been appointed officiating GOC of Jessore. He will replace Major General Ashfaq whose disposal has not yet been announced.

Brigadier General SMS Iqbal, defence attache in Kuwait, has been appointed Brigade Commander, Comilla; Brigadier General Golam Rabbani has been made DDG, Bangladesh Rifles. He was from Brigade Commander, Comilla.

Colonel Aulad Hossain has been transferred from DGGI to BDR as Sector Commander while Colonel Shawkat Reza, after his return from UN peacekeeping mission, will join DGGI.

Colonel Sheikh Mahmud Hossain has been moved from DGGI to BDR as Sector Commander; Colonel Salahuddin Ahmed has been made CO, Army Security Unit (ASU) from Colonel, Administration, Comilla and Colonel Ibrahim Khalid from BDR to DGGI.

Earlier, Brigadier General Abdur Rahim (retd.), freedom fighter and commander of the Independent Engineering Brigade, has been appointed the new Director General of the National Security Intelligence (NSI).

## Rejoinder

FROM PAGE 12

Osama bin Laden's al Qaida and with the Taliban movement, have been recovering since early December, the official said.

"I don't know whether he killed himself with the bomb inside or outside his room," he told Reuters by telephone.

The official said the dead man was one of the fighters who have been holed up in the hospital since last month.

It was unclear exactly how many of the fighters were left barricaded in the ward. The intelligence official said the dead man was one of eight gunmen. A guard told Reuters on Sunday that only seven men were in the ward.

"Nobody can get near them," the official said. "Every body is afraid that they will explode something." The men, who have threatened to blow themselves up if anyone except one doctor enters their ward, are part of a 19-member group brought to Kandahar's Chinese Hospital or treatment shortly before the city fell to opposition forces on December 7.

Several have since escaped and two were arrested by US forces after they were tricked into leaving the ward.

## BNP collecting lists

FROM PAGE 1

Mannan Bhuyian also asked for addresses, organisational identities (if any) of the victims and brief description of the alleged acts of persecution.

Bhuyian heads the committee for the convention, which was earlier planned to be organised by the government.

The letters said BNP is going to organise the 'national convention' to "inform the nation about the incidents of violation of human rights, repression and oppression during the AL rule".

Description on incidents of alleged repression on minorities and government officials and employees by AL leaders and activists has also been sought.

It said the party will display lists of those killed, disabled and repressed. Souvenirs and newspaper supplements will also be published on the occasion.

The party units and leaders have also been asked to send names and addresses of victims' families so that their representatives can attend the convention.

The letter also sought names of AL leaders and activists who forcibly occupied lands, properties, houses and business establishments during

their rule. Reports on cases filed against leaders and activists of BNP and its front organisations by the AL government have also been asked for.

## Award to help police providing secret video, still pictures of terrorists

UNB, Dhaka

The government decided to award those who will assist the police providing secret video or still pictures of terrorists and criminals.

"The government will give award to those who will assist police investigation with hidden video tapes or still photographs of heinous crimes like damaging individual or public property and subversive or terrorist acts," said the government announcement.

It said the government would keep secret the identity of the people who will assist the government in this regard.

## 3 Taliban ministers

FROM PAGE 12

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## Cases against ex-AL ministers

FROM PAGE 1 (FIRs) to the PMO for scrutiny as per a government decision. A lawyer scrutinised the files and made some minor changes in phrasing.

Allegations against Amu BAC inspector MA Majed filed a corruption case with the Ramna Police Station against former food minister Amir Hossain Amu. Amu has been accused of embezzling Tk 20 crore by procuring an additional two lakh tons of rice when there was an adequate stock.

On July 2 last year, a meeting of the food planning and monitoring committee observed that the country had a stock of four lakh tons of rice. When the minister proposed the additional procurement of two lakh tons, the former food secretary, high officials and former agriculture minister Motia Chowdhury termed it unnecessary.

But ignoring all opinions, the former food minister decided to push ahead with the procurement and signed the relevant documents on July 12.

On July 15, the last day of the AL government, Amu instructed through unofficial notes to issue 52 delivery orders for procurement of one lakh ton rice under his own quota as minister. He then ordered the purchase of the government's quota of one lakh ton at a rate which is Tk 2 higher than market one. As a result, the government incurred a

loss of Tk 20 crore. Allegations against Mohammad Nasim

BAC official Md Abdul Hai in a case filed with the Ramna Police Station accused that in order to 'illegally award' a contract to the WorldTel to install three lakh telephones, Mohammad Nasim had appointed a private firm, Consosietes Ltd, the consultancy without any competitive bidding. Accordingly, the consultancy made 'fictitious' recommendations for the WorldTel, the lone bidder of the project, to 'make its financial proposal look lucrative'.

In reality, the project was awarded to the WorldTel without any competition. Although there was no fund for appointment of a consultant, Nasim appointed Consosietes to the post and made the WorldTel pay for the fee. So, while Consosietes was on the payroll of WorldTel, it was also given the task to evaluate the latter's financial proposal. This has damaged the country's interest, the FIR said.

Allegations against Rafiqul Islam

Three cases were filed against Rafiqul Islam.

In a case filed with the Motiheel Police Station by BAC Inspector Mijanul Islam, former state minister for power Rafiqul Islam and seven others have been accused of graft in implementing two units of 70MW

Shahjibazar power plant. It has been alleged that due to their 'corruption', the country lost Tk 68.6 crore.

In the 210MW Siddhirganj power plant 'scam', BAC Inspector ABM Abdus Sabur accused Rafiqul Islam of misusing power in signing an unsolicited contract with a Russian company in connivance with former power secretary, PDB chairman and other officials. As a result, the state incurred a loss of Tk 24.96 crore.

A contract was signed with Russian Technoprom Export (TPE) at a price much higher than those of contemporary power plants and the accused persons gained personally from the deal, it has been alleged.

In the Meghnaghat site preparation case filed by BAC Inspector Md Zahid Hossain, Rafiqul Islam has been accused of embezzling funds and causing US\$4.5 million in loss to the country.

The government paid a Chinese contractor, CWHEC, Tk 141.65 crore for developing the project site of Meghnaghat phase 1 power plant. Although the task was completed as per specifications, the minister ignored the PDB's opinion and arranged an additional payment of \$4.5 million for remedial works on the project site.

## AL programme on Bangabandhu's homecoming day

UNB, Dhaka

Awami League has chalked out programmes to mark the Homecoming Day of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman on Thursday (January 10).

The programmes will begin through hoisting national and party flags atop the party's central office, Bangabandhu Bhaban and party offices across the country at 6 am.

Wreaths will be placed at the portrait of Bangabandhu at Bangabandhu Bhaban at 8:30 am.

A discussion meeting will also be held at Bangabandhu Bhaban as part of the programmes which will be presided over by acting AL president Abdus Samad Azad.

Renowned intellectuals and party's central leaders will attend the meeting.

On January 10, 1972, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman returned home, ending his captivity for nine months in Pakistan during the War of Liberation.

## Madrasah teacher held with fake money

BSS, Panchagarh

The BDR personnel yesterday arrested one madrasah teacher with forged currency notes of Taka 500 denomination and handed them over to the police.

The arrested person, Golam Mostafa is an inhabitant of Bamerpara village of Beghara union under Boda upazila and a teacher of a local madrasah.

Acting on a tip-off, BDR personnel of 22 battalion arrested Golam Mostafa and seized five forged notes of Taka 500 denomination.

Golam Mostafa told police that he had been associated with a local forgery ring for long and as per his confession, police lodged cases against him and his four accomplices.

Golam Mostafa was produced before the court yesterday. The court sent him to the jail, rejecting his bail prayer.

## Envoy to Canada

FROM PAGE 12

Bangladesh mission in Jeddah and Alternate Permanent

Representative to the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC).

While he was Ambassador to Uzbekistan, he was concurrently accredited to Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.

He represented Bangladesh at innumerable international conferences and was member, Board of Governors of Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies.

He knows English, Bengali, Arabic, Japanese, French, Russian and Italian.

Married with Sheezan Khan, they have a daughter, Umama Zainab Khan.

## First Test

FROM PAGE 1

The tourists warmed up for the two-Test series with a three-day match against the Bangladesh A team that ended in a draw at the BKSP on Monday.

But the tame finish of the three-dayer will have little bearing for wicketkeeper Khaled Mashud's men as they will be fighting to survive Wasim Akram's deadly inswingers, Danish Kaneria's leg-break bugs and may be Shoab Akhtar's thunderbolts.

Off-spinner Fahim Muntasir will be the lone debutant for the home team. Bangladesh made two changes from the side that toured New Zealand last month.

SQUADS

BANGLADESH: Mehrab Hossain, Al-Shahriar, Mohammad Ashraf, Sanwar Hossain, Habibur Bashar, Aminul Islam, Khaled Mashud, Fahim Muntasir, Enamul Hoque, Monjurul Islam, Mohammad Sharif, Khaled Mahmud, Javed Omar and Hasibul Hossain.

PAKISTAN: Taufeeq Omar, Shadab Kabir, Younis Khan, Inzamamul Haq, Yousuf Youhana, Wasim Akram, Rashid Latif, Saqlain Mushtaq, Waqar Younis, Danish Kaneria, Imad Razzak, Shoab Akhtar, Faisal Iqbal, Naved Latif and Mohammad Sami.

(More stories on Sports pages)

## Food poisoning

FROM PAGE 1

He said they had rice, dal and curry cooked with chicken's gizzard and liver at dinner at about 8.00pm. "The problem began at about 10.00pm when the policemen felt severe pain in the abdomen," said Constable Md. Iman Ali at the hospital.

The affected policemen were taken to the hospital at about 4.00am in two police vans.

As there was no available bed at the Razarbagh Hospital, the affected police personnel lay on the floor at different wards. A few were cured and left the hospital and the rest were improving, hospital sources said.

Meanwhile, Inspector General of Police Modabbir Hossain, DMP Commissioner Abdul Quayyum, DIG of Armed Police Battalion Mainuddin Chisti and other high officials of the Police Department visited the affected policemen.

The on-duty doctors told the inspector general that all were given proper treatment and now out of danger.

## 'Donor dictated poverty reduction strategy won't benefit poor'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The 'poverty reduction strategy' (PRS) now being prepared by the government under the dictate of donors will bring a "new calamity" for the country.

This was stated by MM Akash, Chairman of People's Empowerment Trust (PET), a think tank, here yesterday.

The way the 'poverty reduction strategy paper' (PRSP) is being prepared will not benefit those for whom it is meant. Rather, the people and the government will have to bear all the its bad effects as was in the case of 'structural adjustment policies' earlier, he said at a press conference held at the office of the Dhaka Reporters Unity.

He said the paper is being prepared through a "defective process".

The country is now passing through a "severe economic crisis" due to recession in the United States and adverse affects of economic policies adopted earlier.

"We apprehend that the total scenario would compel the government to agree to the terms and conditions of donors in preparation of the PRSP. This will be reflected in the country's next national budget," he said.

Officials of Action Aid, Bangladesh also attended the press conference.

Akash said without participation of the grassroots level people, PRS will not help poverty alleviation and empowerment of the poor.

"We are not against preparation of the poverty reduction strategy. We feel that without participation of the civil society and representatives of the grassroots level people, it will be counterproductive".

Donors have long been imposing

development strategies on countries like Bangladesh, which do not benefit the people.

The PET and the Action Aid will jointly organise exchange-of-opinion programmes at divisional headquarters to create awareness and help preparation of an PRSP which would really benefit the people, he said.

Political leaders, parliament members and representatives of grassroots level people will take part in the programmes.

The programmes will be held at Sylhet on January 10, Barisal on January 17, Khulna on January 24, Chittagong on January 31, Rajshahi on February 7 and at Dhaka on March 5.

## Pak-WI series

FROM PAGE 1

Rana told this news agency. "The PCB is working out a revised programme to be released shortly. There will be no side game and the West Indies are due in Sharjah on January 25."

Pakistan and West Indies were due to play three Tests and as many one-day