JS nod to RAB

FROM PAGE 12

ment formed as many as 23 Rapid Action Teams by employing selected officers from the regular police force.

As the scope of work of these teams (each comprising 12 policemen) expanded, the government felt it necessary to give the specially trained law enforcing team an institutional shape.

The bill says all Rapid Action Battalions should be under the direct control and superintendence of an officer not below the rank of deputy inspector general (DIG) of police or an equivalent in any other force.

It'll enable the government to order the RAB to investigate any offence at any time.

The commanding officer of a RAB will have the authority to investigate an offence or direct a subordinate officer to investigate, and the investigating officer will follow the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1898, or any other law depending on the nature of the offence.

As per the bill, upon completion of investigation a RAB investigator will submit the report to the officer-in-charge (OC) of the Police Station concerned and the latter (OC) will forward the same to court within 48 hours.

The RAB members will be able to exercise the powers and functions of a police officer under the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1898.

The passage of The Bangladesh Flag Vessels (Amendment) Act, 2003 will create a level playing field for both local and foreign ship operators as it will suspend for two years the rule that currently forces the foreign flag vessels to take waiver certificates for loading and unloading cargoes at Bangladesh ports.

With its passage vessels registered in Bangladesh would no longer enjoy priority over foreign-registered vessels in carrying cargoes from seaports in Bangladesh.

The third bill The Bangladesh Standards and Testing Institution (Amendment) Act, 2003 has raised imprisonment term from six months to two years and fine from Tk 15,000 to Tk 50,000 for trade mark fraudulence.

It also gives legal coverage for abolition of the Department of Agricultural Marketing and Grading and helps reshape the Council of Bangladesh Standard and Testing Institution (BSTI).

Environment, spl courts bills tabled in Sangsad

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Moudud Ahmed yesterday tabled two bills in parliament suggesting work expansion scopes for special courts and tribunals and environment courts.

The Environment Court (Amendment) Bill, 2003 and The Special Court (Additional Charge) Bill, 2003, the proposed laws aim to expand the scopes of the environment and special courts and tribunals to ease the overburdened district and session judge's courts.

If and when necessary, the laws enable transfer of cases to such courts and tribunals.

Under the current law, environment courts only take up environment-related cases. These courts would take up other cases for disposal, the law minister proposed in the amendment bill.

The other bill, The Special Court (Additional Charge) Bill, 2003, proposed the special courts and tribunals formed by the government for speedy disposal of specific cases would be declared 'Court of Special District Judge' and 'Special Court of Session'.

The cases lying with the courts of district and session judge's court could be transferred to such courts too.

The bill noted the district judge's courts and the session judge's courts are burdened with thousands of non-disposed cases for a long period while environment courts have only a handful of cases.

Both bills were sent to the concerned parliamentary standing committee for scrutiny.

Militant camps

FROM PAGE 12

terror camps worry India, all not quiet on eastern front" the report said, without identifying, that the intelligence officials "have expressed serious concern on the issue, and with fresh evidence coming to light, the (Indian) External Affairs Ministry is expected to take up the matter with Dhaka."

Quoting the unidentified intelligence report the Pioneer wrote, "these training camps are set up by ULFA, KLO, and Chakma Liberation Front with the active support and patronage of Bangladesh Government."

It said, that the Indian government raised the issue with Bangladesh authorities who denied such Indian claims and that "there seems to be a deadlock on the issue."

Quoting unidentified sources, the daily reports that while ULFA and KLO training camps have been organised by the BDR sector headquarters, training camps of Chakma National Liberation Front have been organised partly by 103 and 105 Infantry Brigade of the Bangladesh Army at Khagrachhari and Rangamati.

The Pioneer also sought to give a break up of the camps with their locations.

The same report also made the usual allegation that the Indian home ministry has been regularly receiving reports of "increased ISI activity in Bangladesh and tacit support extended to them by the authorities."

A Bangladesh diplomat described the report as "baseless, a figment of imagination" and "nothing but rabidly anti-Bangladesh propaganda with the single objective of maligning Bangladesh that India does from time to time using Indian as well as foreign media."

Sujan murder case

FROM PAGE 12

alias Apu have been absconding since the murder while nine others are on bail.

The IO submitted a prayer seeking court order on arrest of the absconders and attachment of their moveable property.

Forty-three people have been shown as prosecution witnesses in the charge sheet.

Sujan, 35, a former BNP MP from Brahmanbaria-6 constituency and former vice president (VP) of Haji Mohammad Mohsin Hall Students Union of Dhaka University, was abducted by his rivals. He was found dead near the Doyel Chattar on the Dhaka University campus on July 3, 2001.

The victim's mother, Hena Akhter, filed an abduction case with Motijheel Police Station accusing Dr Raushan Alam, Giasuddin Jalali, Khorshed Alam and Phool Miah the same day.

But in the charge sheet, the IO said that names of eight others were included later as their involvement in the murder was revealed during investigation.

Lightning kills 8 in 3 districts

BSS, *Rangpur*

Eight people were killed and five others injured in three separate incidents of lightning in Panchagarh, Thakurgaon and Dinajpur districts yesterday.

Lightning killed housewife Romicha Khatun, 34, and farmer Abdul Khaleque, 30, of Panchagarh district while they were working in the field, police sources said.

Housewife Banu, 35, and Paresh Chandra Roy, 27, of Dinajpur district were struck by lightning. They died on the spot. Three others -- Ashik, 10, Nasima Begum, 18, and Abdul Jalil, 40 -- of the district were seriously injured in the incident.

In Thakurgaon, Paresh, 20, Rahima Begum, 18, Abdul, 35, and Manik, 28, were killed by lightning. Two others, Boidar, 45, and Sohagi, 40, were injured in the incident, the sources said.

Hasan better

FROM PAGE 12

after their birth.

Dr Ruhul Amin, Associate Professor and paediatric surgeon of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University Hospital (BSMMU), went to Khulna to conduct the operation along with a team of surgeons and anesthetists. But, one of the twins suffered severe respiratory problem forcing the doctors to cancel the rare surgery there.

The conjoined twins along with their parents were later flown in to Dhaka where a team of surgeons led by Dr Amin conducted the seven-hour operation.

Islami Bank Hospital, a subsidiary organisation of Islami Bank Bangladesh Limited, is bearing all expenses including operation and treatment of the survivor.

8 remanded in Khulna cops murder

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, *Khulna*

Eight of the 17 arrested in connection with the killing of two policemen were placed on a three-day remand yesterday by the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court, Khulna.

They are PBCP armed cadres Zakir and Humayun, UP member Jahangir, Waliur, Rafiqul, Afzal Hossain, Shushanta and Murad.

A special team comprising senior officers of the district police will interrogate the eight.

Sub Inspector Shamsul Huq and Havildar Abu Bakar Siddique of Rupsha Police Station were gunned down at Bamandanga Bazaar at 10.30am on July 3.

Sirajul Islam officer-in charge (OC) of Rupsha police station filed a case as complainant naming 17 people as accused.

Rumi suicide case: Charges framed against 3 accused

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, *Khulna*

The Speedy Trial Tribunal, Khulna, on Tuesday framed charges against three accused in college girl Farzana Afrin Rumi suicide case.

The accused are Sajjad Hossain Rony, Hasan and Taimur Rahman Babu. They claimed themselves innocent and sought justice after the charges were framed at noon.

Cross-examination of 16 prosecution witnesses will begin on July 16, court sources said.

Farzana Afrin Rumi, 22, daughter of BFIDC accounts officer Abdul Bari of Pabla under Daulatpur Police Station was molested by four youngmen at their residence on April 14, this year.

Immediately after the incident, tormented Rumi committed suicide by hanging herself from a ceiling fan in her bedroom.

Abdul Bari filed a case with Daulatpur police station accusing Sajjad Hossain Rony, Hasan, Taimur Rahman Babu and Mizan. Of them, Mizan has been absconding since the incident.

The investigation office (IO) of the case submitted a chargesheet to the CMM's court against all the four FIR named accused on April 30. On June 25, the case was referred to the Speedy Trial Tribunal.

Flood status

FROM PAGE 12

marooned. They are in need of flood shelters and medical aid. Outbreak of diarrhoeal diseases has been reported from some places.

Our Bogra correspondent said flood situation in Sonatola, Sariandikandi, Sherpur and Dhunat upazila further worsened due to rise of water level of the Jamuna and the Bangali rivers.

The Jamuna is flowing 33 cm above danger level in Sariakandi upazila. But the Korotoa is still below the red mark.

Governance

FROM PAGE 12

the regulatory performance of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Bangladesh (ICAB), Saifur said he is contemplating to provide the regulatory authority with a body comprising professionals to monitor the standards of accounts and audits.

Addressing the function, Peter L Pattison, officer in charge, Bangladesh Resident Mission, ADB said financial market governance would be the main theme for future ADB assistance in the financial sector.

"Institutional capabilities to enforce good corporate governance, financial reporting, and disclosure have to be strengthened," he said.

Pattison said corporate governance is the process of management and control of corporate assets to protect investors' interests. The process structures how a company's management, board and other stakeholders interact in a cohesive way to achieve the company's corporate objectives.

Alan G Rosenberg, ADB team leader, ADB TA project to SEC said corporate governance stimulates investment in a market through which money pours in and investment flows in different sectors.

The two-day workshop was split into five technical sessions.

DETAILS ON BUSINESS PAGE

Bumper

FROM PAGE 1

Opposing him, Additional Attorney General AJ Mohammad Ali contended that the government had not issued any such order. Mere newspaper reports cannot be taken into cognizance.

Sources said the order prohibiting extra bumper was issued by the Dhaka Metropolitan Police and not by the government. Fitting an extra bumper to a motorised vehicle is punishable under Clause 42 of the Vehicles Act, police had said.

Court sources said a similar writ filed in 1996 by an advocate, JN Deb, of the Supreme Court is pending with the High Court. It challenged a press release published in the daily Ittefaq on August 8 in 1996 and after hearing on August 26 of that year, a rule nisi and a stay order were issued by the High Court and accordingly removal of bumpers from the vehicles was stopped.

The news of issuance of the rule nisi was published in different newspapers on August 27, 1996.

The writ petition No-3461, 1996, is still pending for hearing before the High Court.

On July 2, Communications Minister Nazmul Huda directed the traffic department of the Dhaka Metropolitan Police to order for removal of extra iron bumpers from all vehicles in the capital following the death of the doctor.

The minister also said a drive would be conducted in other parts of the country as well.

But owners and drivers of vehicles, particularly cars, expressed their dissatisfaction over the decision saying it will increase the vulnerability of the vehicles to damage caused by rickshaws and other vehicles.

A citizen, however, told The Daily Star yesterday that it was not at all clear how a rickshaw could damage a car and whether the bumper could protect a car from being knocked by heavier vehicles.

600 feared drowned

From page 1

vors said.

Till 9:00pm yesterday, rescuers could not locate the sunken launch in the mighty river, about 200 feet deep at the spot.

Rescuers feared that many bodies might have been carried downstream by furious currents.

A pall of gloom descended on the Meghna bank at Chandpur as lamenting relatives and survivors milled around in a daze, looking for the missing.

Rescue vessel MV Rustam reached the spot early yesterday morning, but could not swing into rescue operation because of strong currents.

Alongside Rustam, a 16-member team of Bangladesh Navy including 14 divers, reached the scene in a naval ship in the evening. The vessel is capable of searching wrecks at a maximum depth of 120 feet. They were doubtful if the launch could ever be found.

Salvage tug MV Hamza was expected to reach the spot last night. Earlier, search vessel Sandhani, with a capacity of 50 feet below, reached the scene.

"We are receiving unconfirmed information about bodies floating in the river in locations as far as Bhola," said a rescuer, fearing that almost all of the missing might have died.

With strong and unpredictable currents, finding bodies and remnants of the sunken launch at the river bottom might prove a failure, a Rustam operator said.

"It's likely that most bodies have drifted away from the sunken launch," he said. "Their bodies might float in the downstream within a couple of days."

His assumption evokes the memory of a launch accident in 1994 when the MV Dinar sank with over 400 passengers, but the vessel could not be salvaged.

The representatives of the launch owner said 210 passengers were rescued and sent to their homes on board another launch, a claim that could not be confirmed immediately.

Water Resources Minister Hafiz Uddin Ahmed and State Minister for Religious Affairs Mosharref Hossain Shahjahan visited the spot and arranged for the home return of some of the survivors.

Deputy Commissioner of Chandpur district Abdur Rab Hawladar said a local-level probe into the accident was ordered.

He claimed that 261 people were rescued so far.

President Iajuddin Ahmed, Prime Minister Khaleda Zia and Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina expressed deep shock at the loss of lives and property in the capsize.

Khaleda directed the authorities concerned to gear up the rescue operation and find out the cause of the accident.

She also instructed them to provide necessary treatment to the injured and take necessary steps to stop recurrence of such incidents.

Nothing goes right

FROM PAGE 1

the responsibility of design and plan approval for passenger vessels from the BIWTA because of the leverage of a strong nexus.

The nexus of BIWTA officials is accused of approving flawed designs for the vessels and help their owners tamper with the original designs in exchange for money.

The engineers said all launches have been modelled on a Danish design of the 1980s. They said there are no guidelines for construction of launches. A set of guidelines was formulated in 2001, but it was not made effective as yet.

The government also failed to implement some decisions taken recently to ensure safety and security of passengers largely because of non-cooperation of the launch owners.

After the MV Mitali tragedy in April, a ban was imposed on launch travels between 4:00pm and 8:00pm for two months, but the authorities withdrew the embargo under pressure from the launch owners association.

An inquiry committee was formed after every disaster, but none of its recommendations was implemented, said the sources.

Shipping Minister Akbar Hossain claimed that a number of decisions for ensuring safety and security of passengers have been implemented.

But some could not be implemented because of lack of funds and non-cooperation of the launch owners and passengers, he said. Although the government requested passengers through media not to board overloaded vessels, the campaign did not work.

He said the government is planing to set up seven radar stations to give cautionary signals of sudden storms or nor'westers. The Tk 12 crore plan for the radar stations is awaiting approval from the planning ministry.

A trustee board has also started functioning for giving proper compensations to the victims of launch disasters, he said.

The government had imposed another ban on 40 big passenger launches identified as unfit, but backtracked on the decision immediately after pressure from the launch owners.

But the launch owners said the decision should be implemented in phases not to disrupt waterway communications.

Officials told The Daily Star that the shipping ministry gave all vessels two to six months' time to improve flawed designs to be fit for plying and threatened not to renew their registrations in failure.

Although a number of internationally reputed foreign consultants suggested that the government set up an inland shipping safety administration, it is yet to come into being.

4 NCBs write off

FROM PAGE 12

we did not have enough provision to write off more loans," said a top bank official.

Sonali Bank had a total classified loan of Tk 5,217 crore with a provision to write off Tk 757 crore. The bank has written off bad loans equivalent to almost the entire provision amount in the last six months. In the future, there will be little provision to write off bad loans further. "But we will try to write off more by creating more provisions from our income," said a Sonali Bank official, who wished not to be named.

Janata Bank had a total classified loan of Tk 2,548 crore with the provision of Tk 325 crore.

Janata Bank Managing Director Murshid Kuli Khan told The Daily Star his bank plans to write off Tk 400 crore this year. In July, the bank will write off Tk 50 crore bad loans.

"Besides we have moved to recover the loans written off," he said. "Cases have been filed (against the defaulters) and we are trying to recover loans by creating a debt unit cell."

Agrani and Rupali banks have a combined bad loans of Tk 4,400 crore with provisions of Tk 800 crore. But the banks wrote off only about one-third of the provision.

Officials of the two banks put down such low write-offs to paper works, which took a great deal of time.

Among the private banks, three have written off default loans worth about Tk 400 crore, sources said, adding that other banks were also writing off their shares of bad loans. But details about them were not available as yet.

The 29 private banks have a total of Tk 5,483 crore in default loans -- more than 50 per cent of which is covered by provisions.

The central bank believes that these banks have been able to write off a major chunk of the bad loans by the end of last month. A source said the NCBs, private and specialised banks wrote off about Tk 2,000 crore in bad loans till May 2003.

Bus strike on Rangamati-Ctg road continues

BSS, *Rangamati*

Bus service between Rangamati and Chittagong remained shut for the second consecutive day yesterday prompting the district administration to issue a stern warning against the transport workers.

"We have asked the Rangamati Motor Malik Samity to call off their strike and resume the bus service by tomorrow," Deputy Commissioner of Rangamati Dr Zafar Ahmed told BSS.

Otherwise, he said, they will face legal action.

Rangamati Motor Malik Samity enforced the strike for an indefinite period protesting the launch of a new luxury bus service on the route.

Probe bodies

FROM PAGE 1

Meghna near Chandpur. Shafiqul Islam, engineer and ship surveyor of the Mercantile Marine Department of Khulna will lead the three-member committee. The other members of the committee are--First Class Magistrate Fazlur Rahman and Inspector Shafiqur Rahman.

The committee has been asked to focus on five major issues during the inquiry. The terms of the investigations are -- they have to find out the reason of the accident and assess the damage, point out the violation of rules of Inland Shipping Ordinance (ISO) which caused the accident, identify the persons or organizations responsible for the accident and make recommendation for avoiding such accidents in the future.

Another committee is formed to investigate the cause of sinking of MV Sadia after it had collided with a cargo vessel on the same day in the river Meghna. The two-member committee is headed by Fazlu Rahman, special officer of marine safety department.

Around 11 workers and passengers are missing, though the launch was anchored by the shore.

According to newspaper report, the collision occurred between MV Sadia and the sand carrying cargo vessel Al Amin in the Meghna estuary where a number of rivers meet.

The committee members have already reached there and have started investigation, according to shipping ministry sources.

All went wrong from the start

FROM PAGE 1

hundred people still remain missing, "definitely goes to the operators of MV Coco".

Several owners of passenger vessels and officials said if a vessel develops a technical fault prior to its departure and is deemed unfit for departure, it must either find an alternative vessel from the company's fleet and replace it, or inform the authorities (the port officer) about their inability to offer the service.

When most of the port officials, including the inspectors of the BIWTA and the shipping department, were busy elsewhere, the operators of MV Coco made no effort to follow the rules. Instead, as The Daily Star investigation reveals, the operators asked the passengers to board Nasrin-1. All Lalmohon-bound passengers arriving at the Sadarghat in the afternoon were told by shouting kulis (porters) about Coco going out of order and Nasrin-1 being their only option for the day.

"The operators and managers of MV Coco control the powerful 100-member 'development committee' of the Sadarghat launch terminal and they do not care about anything. They enjoy absolute liberty as the law-implementing officials are always busy pleasing them," said an owner of a large passenger launch company requesting anonymity.

Manager of the Messrs. Rahman Shippers Bangladesh Ltd., the company that owns Coco, Quamrul Islam told The Daily Star that they did not deem it necessary to inform the officials because the vessel was out of order only for a day.

"We would have informed them if the vessel was out of order for over a week," Islam said.

Officials concerned of the BIWTA and the department of shipping were once again trading accusations. They blamed each other for failing to ensure safety of the passengers saying, " It was not our responsibility."

A BIWTA official in Sadarghat said it was the responsibility of the department of shipping to ensure safety of the passengers as the BIWTA had no official powers to deal with an offender on the spot.

"We can only file a case against an offender to the Naval Court run by the department of shipping. Under the Inland Shipping Ordinance, we cannot catch an offender on the spot," said the official requesting anonymity.

Asked what they did when they found an overloaded vessel leaving or arriving at the port, the official said they checked the "load level markings" engraved on the front side of the vessel. "If it is within the safety level, we let it go. If not, we take measures with the help of police to take off the extra load and make it safe. About Nasrin-1, the official, as expected, failed to clarify as to how it had left the port so overloaded.

The officials of the department of shipping said there is only one terminal inspector responsible for ensuring safety in Dhaka, Munshiganj and Manikganj. The terminal inspector is not assigned to a specific launch terminal. He has to move from port to port and conduct random checking. "On Tuesday he was busy until midnight checking illegal vessels which ply the river Buriganga," they said.

" The BIWTA is supposed to do this job. Otherwise why should they have so many police and ansars be put under them?" asked an official again requesting anonymity.

BBC rejects deal

FROM PAGE 12

ons 45 minutes of an order to do so.

The MoD added that Mr Gilligan "also raised the issue of Alastair Campbell". It described the official as an expert on WMD who advised ministers and had contributed to the dossier but was not in charge of drawing it up.

He was not a member of the intelligence services or the defence intelligence staff.

According to the MoD's statement, when Mr Gilligan asked about Mr Campbell's role on the 45-minute issue, the official "made no comment and explained that he was not involved in the process of drawing up the intelligence parts of the dossier".

When Mr Gilligan asked him why the 45-minute point was in the dossier, the official says he commented that it was "probably for impact". He said he did not see the 45-minute intelligence report on which it was based, adding that "as an expert in the field, he believes Saddam Hussein possessed WMD".

Despite the clear inference in the statement, the MoD said it did not know "whether this official is the single source quoted by Mr Gilligan". It added: "Mr Gilligan told the [Commons foreign affairs committee] he had only one source for his story".

The MoD described the official as middle-ranking. The official, it said, agreed that the MoD could pass his name to Ann Taylor, former leader of the Commons and chairman of the parliamentary intelligence and security committee, "in confidence, should they wish to interview him as part of their inquiry".

The MoD said later that the official would not be charged under the Official Secrets Act but disciplinary action was being "looked at".

But within two hours the BBC came back with a counter-statement that said: "As we have said before, Mr Gilligan met several people in the period before the story was broadcast and discussed weapons of mass destruction in various ways with a number of them. His Today programme story was based on only one of those conversations."

Young man dies

FROM PAGE 12

one-day police remand.

However, Farid went to toilet at around 1:30pm and fell seriously ill as soon as he came out. He was rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) where the on-duty doctors declared him dead.

"The man was on heroin and died normally" said Deputy Commissioner of South Zone Khan Sayed Hasan.

According to a source, Farid had committed suicide but Assistant Sub-Inspector Selim disagreed to the suggestion.

Several marks on the victim's body were found, pointing to his drug addiction, hospital sources said. The autopsy was carried out yesterday.

Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate Noni Gopal Biswas did the inquest report.

8 villages

FROM PAGE 12

According to a source, the Tk 20 crore dams and spurs complex constructed during the AL period have not been properly maintained since the present government assumed power.

About 30 metres of the Betuli Solid Spur built along the Jamuna river a few years back at the cost of Tk 13 crore, also went under water.

Water gushing through the breaches on the dams have washed away Shubhagachha, Ghati Shubhagachha, Maddhyapara, Doel, Tarakandi, Boro Sura, Tire Shubhagachha and Aman Mehar villages making hundreds of people homeless.

Many of them are living in makeshift houses on Kazipur-Sirajganj road, flood control embankment and other higher places in Kazipur upazila.

"Repair funds were allocated only in May this year. But by then flood water had started engulfing the areas making repair works impossible,' Sub Divisional Engineer Anwar Hossain of water development board said.

Some 30,000 people of seven upazilas of the district have become homeless as flood water started swelling and submerging villages in Kazipur, Ullapara, Shahzadpur, Chowhali, Kamarkhand, Belkuchi and Tarash.

About 1,500 houses have been washed away in the past 24 hours. As most of these villages are inhabited by weavers, the handloom industry is also seriously affected.

About 31 meters of the Betil Solid Spar, constructed a few years back at a cost of Tk 13 crore, went under river Jamuna Tuesday dawn.

Saifur off to Washington to talk with donors

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman leaves for Washington today on a three-week visit to meet president of the World Bank and senior officials of the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

During the meeting, Saifur will apprise donor officials of the current budget, three-year poverty reduction programme and other reforms in the economic sectors of Bangladesh, sources said. He will also inform them about the cabinet's approval of a bill to form an independent anti-corruption commission.

Economic reforms apart, the donor officials may look into government initiatives to improve law and order and good governance in Bangladesh during the meetings, sources added.

The finance minister will also meet expatriates in US and UK, while returning home, to identify the problems in sending back remittances.

Saifur, who was hospitalised recently, will also undergo treatment during the visit. He will return on July 28.

Remu dies

FROM PAGE 12

was too late, there was no ventilator available and Remu died gasping for breath," said Dr Naz who witnessed Remu's death in ward 17.

The gynaecology and obstetrics department records show that three other women, in their late twenties and mid thirties, died in this department in the last ten days simply because of the lack of intensive care system in the ward.

The DMCH records show that as many as 152 women died in 2000 and 99 women died in 2000 from complications like continuous bleeding, severe infection, jaundice, hazardous anaesthesia and ruptured uterus. Most of them could have been saved if the department had proper facilities for intensive care, doctors said.

"Sadly this is an everyday affair we have to deal with. If by mercy of God any bed is available in the general ICU of the hospital, which is of course very rare, patients can be saved. Nevertheless, in most cases, patients requiring ICU support die simply because we don't have a maternity ICU of our own," said Dr Rowshanara Khanam, senior consultant of maternity unit 2.

Acknowledging the problems, Professor Sayeba Akhter of DMCH said, "As a rule, all maternity wards, irrespective of pre-delivery or post-delivery situation, should have own ICUs for emergency patients."

She added, "Almost every day we have to fight with the ICU department to accommodate some of our severely ill patients but due to bed shortage they cannot make room for our patients."

Dr Akhter also said that she had requested the DMCH authority several times for a separate maternity ICU but to no effect.

PM on gas export

FROM PAGE 1

for the purpose could also be used for supplying gas to the country's western zone.

Responding to queries during the prime minister's weekly question time in parliament, she mentioned the IOCs are not feeling encouraged to invest in gas exploration having failed to sell their portion of the explored gas properly.

"We're unable to buy all the gas the IOCs have explored by now and then we could not make payment properly for the volume we're buying. As a result, outstanding dues are accumulating," the premier said.

Turning up at parliament 25 minutes behind schedule, the PM responded to six questions and over a dozen of supplementary queries also. Yesterday's sitting of parliament, which was scheduled for a 4:00 pm-start, eventually got off at 4:25pm though quorum was completed at 4:10pm.

Quoting reports of expert committees formed by the government last year, Khaleda informed the House that over the last four years Bangladesh had to buy gas worth Tk 3,800 crore in foreign currency from the IOCs. The government thus incurred a loss of Tk 1,500 crore due to high buying price and low selling price.

"We need more investment in this sector from the International Oil Companies (IOCs) and we've to encourage them into gas exploration," she said.

"To have a gas reserve for a period beyond 2020, we'll have to explore further to discover more gasfields. We've to encourage the IOCs into investment in the sector," said the prime minister.

She also claimed that, during the last five-year plan, the then Awami League government had contemplated gas export and had signed six production sharing contracts.

More bullets

FROM PAGE 1

With this haul, a staggering 99,357 rounds of ammunition and 175 kg of explosives have been recovered from Kahalu upazila since June 28, district police said.

Bangladesh Rifles is assisting Kahalu and Dupchachia police in the ongoing hunt for some 1000 bullets and 25 kg of explosives that police think might still be found in the area.