

Drive brings no result on second day

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The joint forces intensified search for hardened criminals in Khulna city and other areas in the district, but could not arrest anybody till yesterday evening.

They are trying to arrest alleged criminals ward commissioners Mohammad Hossain Mukta and Golam Mawla Shanu, former ward commissioner Asaduzzaman Litu, outlaws Monoranjan Gosain alias Mrinal of the New Biplobi Communist Party (NBCP) and Abdur Rashid of the Purba Banglar Communist Party (PBCP).

Litu is the prime accused in journalist Shamsur Rahman (Janakantha) murder case. He has been absconding since July 16, 2000.

Mrinal is wanted in 48 murder cases recorded with different police stations in Khulna and Jessore districts.

Shanu, released on bail recently, went into hiding on Friday. He is a chargesheeted accused in Awami League mayoral candidate SMA Rab murder case.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 6

Indian team arrives to finalise Dhaka-Agartala bus service

BSS, Dhaka

A five-member delegation from Indian State of Tripura arrived in Dhaka yesterday to finalise route fare and other issues relating to Dhaka-Agartala bus service.

As per decision of the recently held Bangladesh-India Joint Economic Commission (JEC) meeting the bus service is scheduled to start on August 9 this year.

However, before formal launch of the bus service, delegations from Bangladesh and India are supposed to visit each other's country.

Bangladesh delegation led by BRTC Chairman Advocate Taimur Alam Khandkar is expected to visit Tripura on August 1.

The Indian delegation led by commissioner of Tripura, Dr Sriker, is expected to hold a meeting with the communication minister and other officials concerned today.

It was learnt that both sides have already agreed to select one of the two proposed routes for the bus service. The routes under consideration are Dhaka-Bhairab-Akhaura-Agartala and Dhaka-Comilla-Akhaura-Agartala.

NETROKONA POLLS Seven files nomination

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Netrokona

Seven nomination papers were filed yesterday for parliamentary by-election in Netrokona-3 constituency scheduled for August 21.

The ruling coalition nominated Khadiza Amin, widow of Nurul Amin Talukder who died in June this year.

Main opposition Awami League (AL) has nominated a candidate as well. This is the first time since the general elections in October 1, 2001 that the AL is participating in any parliamentary by-polls.

The seven candidates are Khadiza Amin (Four-party alliance), Zubed Ali (AL), Ali Osman (JP-Ershad), Abdul Ali (JP-Monju), Abu Jaber Sarker (Krishak Sramik Janata League), Krishak Mohammad Sadeq (Krishak Sramik Mukti Andolon) and Abdul Wahab (Independent).

Correction

The caption of the front-page photograph of our yesterday's issue was garbled due to some technical errors. The caption should read: "To encourage day-time travel on river routes to avoid launch disasters overnight, the BIWTC launched the MV Sela at Sadarghat yesterday. The first four trips between Dhaka and Barisal via Chandpur will be free." We regret the inconvenience.

WB nudges govt to downsize NCB staff

Identify possible troublemakers to oppose step

NAZMUL AHSAN

The World Bank (WB) has asked the government to initiate steps for rightsizing the employees of four nationalised commercial banks (NCBs), saying the state-owned banks are overstuffed by 30 to 50 percent.

The NCBs Sonali Bank, Agrani Bank, Janata Bank and Rupali Bank currently have 61,000 staff.

The WB also recommended listing Rupali Bank with the Privatisation Commission by July 31 for its divestment.

But before starting the manpower cut, the WB has asked the government to identify possible troublemakers within the banks, who might oppose the move.

"Identify clear troublemakers and those who are negative influences on the banks, who should be especially targeted for separation," the WB said in its draft aide memoire, submitted to the government recently.

The aide memoire followed a visit by an eight-member WB

mission under a proposed state-owned enterprise and NCB reform project between June 29 and July 4.

The WB suggested finalising the package for those employees to be offered voluntary retirement scheme and incentive package for those to be retained.

It said a similar package can be offered to the employees of the Bangladesh Bank (BB) for their retrenchment.

Those BB staff above 45 years or those who have completed more than 10 years in service will be eligible for voluntary retirement. They will be given three months' basic salary. Their housing loans will be adjusted against voluntary compensation scheme and the balance will be written off.

The BB employees will also get pension or gratuity. In addition, they will enjoy medical facilities even after retirement.

The WB has recommended setting up of a sign-off committee with each NCB to identify the staff to be retained.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 8



RAVAGES OF RIVER: The floodwater-swollen, fierce-flowing Padma devours its bank at Louhajang with a vengeance as flooding keeps a tight grip on central districts including Munshiganj. The remnants of the Public Library, top, are on the verge of collapse and the helpless family of Bazu Munshi, bottom, picks the last things in the rubble of their home, the most part of which at Baro Nawpara has slipped into oblivion along with the village.

PHOTO: STAR

University jobs to be put under lens

1973 Act may be amended for smooth institutional functioning

MUSTAK HOSSAIN

The government is evaluating all appointments made in public universities in the recent past, Education Minister Dr Osman Faruk said in an interview with The Daily Star.

"The education ministry has asked the University Grants Commission (UGC) to assess the appointments to find out irregularities, if there were any," he said.

The minister in the interview on Sunday also said the government is considering amending the University Act, 1973 as "it is believed to have been hindering smooth functioning of public universities".

Referring to recent appointment controversies at Shahjalal, Jahangirnagar and even at Dhaka universities, he said evaluation of the recruitment was now necessary.

The UGC has already asked the public universities to stop fresh appointments for two months in line with the government's decision within which it will examine

irregularities in appointment, promotion and upgradation of teachers and submit a report to the ministry.

There are widespread allegations that public universities often recruit teachers and other staff in excess of allocated posts with "political motives" and press the UGC for additional funds.

The Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), a civil society think tank, in a dialogue last month severely criticised the faulty recruitment procedures at public universities.

"Public universities do not hire teachers but hire voters," said Dr Md Masum, member secretary of the organisation's task force on education policy.

On amendment to the university act, the education minister said his ministry has asked the UGC to

SEE PAGE 11 COL 3

Swelling Padma devours buildings at Munshiganj

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The monsoon-swollen Padma with turbulent currents has washed away the health complex and unspecified numbers of houses, shops and mosques in the Louhajang upazila in Munshiganj, one of the worst flood-hit districts, in the past few days.

The police station building and the official residence of Louhajang upazila nirbahi officer are under the threat of collapse. The river erosion is going on just 100 yards off 15 government buildings, including post office, and bank branches.

Waterborne diseases like diarrhoea and dysentery are meanwhile spreading fast to most of the 26 flood-hit districts in the aftermath of gradual recession of waters.

Over the last two days, around 150 people have been admitted to hospital with diarrhoea in different upazilas in Sirajganj, one of the worst-affected districts.

Next comes malaria that has become commonplace among residents of the affected districts where the water bodies with stagnated water created breeding grounds for mosquitoes.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 1

Caretaker issue sent to CJ for full bench hearing

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday observed that the 13th amendment to the constitution, making provisions for caretaker government during the national elections, had gone against the spirit and structure of the constitution and a referendum was needed before the president assented to it.

However, the court did not deliver the final verdict and referred the matter to the chief justice for constitution of a full bench of the High Court Division to decide whether the 13th amendment had actually amended the constitution or not.

A High Court Division bench of the Supreme Court, comprising Justice Shah Abu Nayeem Mominur Rahman and Justice Abdul Awal, gave the ruling hearing a writ petition filed by Advocate M Salimullah challenging the 'constitutionality' of the 13th Amendment.

The court referred the matter as a High Court Division bench of Justice Md. Mozammel Huq and Justice Md. Abdul Matin on July 25, 1996, summarily rejected a writ petition challenging the 13th Amendment, observing that the 13th Amendment 'had not in fact

amended the Constitution'.

Differing with the 1996 verdict, the court observed that the 13th Amendment had actually amended the Constitution. Articles 58A, B, C, D, and E provisions of the caretaker government are a new addition to the Constitution. "Addition of any new provision amounts to an amendment, according to Article 142 of the Constitution," observed the court.

According to Article 48(3), the president has to act in accordance with the advice of the prime minister excepting in appointing the prime minister and the chief justice. But the 13th Amendment provides that the president shall appoint the chief advisor to the caretaker government without consulting the prime minister. The amendment also provides that Article 48(3) shall remain ineffective during the tenure of the caretaker government, which amounts to an amendment of the Article 48(3), the court maintained.

The 13th Amendment (Article 58A) provides that most of the provisions of Articles 55, 56, 47 and 57 shall remain ineffective during the tenure of the caretaker government. The court observed that it amounted to amendment to Article 56 of the Constitution.

The court said that according to Article 56, the head of the executive government i.e. the prime minister is to be appointed from amongst the elected representatives of the people i.e. the members of parliament. A democratic structure of the government is the basic principle upheld in the Constitution. But the caretaker government is to be run by non-elected persons. So, it goes against the basic spirit of the Constitution.

The court observed that the 13th Amendment had gone against the preamble and Articles 48(3) and 56 of the Constitution. According to Article 142, referendum is a must for amending the preamble or any provisions of Articles 48 and 56. So, referendum was a must for the 13th Amendment, the court observed.

The present writ was filed on January 25, 2000 upon which rule nisi was issued. After a lengthy break the rule came for hearing on July 20 when the government attorney suggested that the case be heard by a Full Bench. The counsels for the petitioner and the Awami League, an added party to the case, agreed

SEE PAGE 11 COL 2

Blair suffers as probe into Kelly's death begins

REUTERS, Beijing

Prime Minister Tony Blair pledged to cooperate fully with an inquiry launched on Monday into the suicide of a scientist sucked into a vicious row over Britain's reasons for waging war on Iraq.

Blair called for a period of calm and respect for the dead man's family, but his waning popularity has taken a further hit and jitters about a fight between the government and the BBC -- which claimed London hyped intelligence on Iraqi weapons to justify war -- spread to financial markets.

The premier said he would testify to judge Lord Hutton, who has been asked to determine what pushed weapons expert David

Kelly to slash his wrist last week.

"I will do what the judge in charge of the inquiry wants me to. I shall cooperate fully," Blair told reporters in Beijing, the latest leg of a Far East tour.

In a statement asserting his independence, Hutton signalled he may range beyond the death to wider aspects of the Iraq war.

Blair justified the war by saying Saddam Hussein had to be disarmed of banned weapons, but months after military action finished none has been found.

"It will be for me to decide...the matters which will be the subject of my investigation," the judge said.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 4

Newsweek finds KSA involvement in Sept 11 attacks

AFP, Washington

A congressional inquiry points to suspicion over a potential role played by Saudi Arabia in the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks that killed more than 3,000 people, Newsweek writes in its Monday edition.

The conclusions of a congressional joint intelligence inquiry, to be

released Thursday, claim the Federal Bureau of Investigation failed to follow through on important evidence relating to the al-Qaeda network's presence in the United States, the weekly magazine said.

The report to be released contains evidence suggesting that Omar al-Bayoumi, a key associate of hijackers Khalid al-Mihdar and

SEE PAGE 11 COL 7

No love lost between Samad, Suranjit

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Long-lasting discord between two senior leaders of the Awami League (AL), Abdus Samad Azad and Suranjit Sengupta, reached its peak over a decision taken by the Sunamganj district unit.

AL sources said the discord is mainly about gaining supremacy in party politics in the district.

Suranjit Sengupta was announced persona non grata in Sunamganj on July 15 by a section of the district unit. Suranjit blamed Abdus Samad Azad for instigating the local leaders to take such a decision.

A noisy argument ran between the two AL leaders on this issue at the AL Central Working Committee (ALCWC) meeting held on Friday.

"I raised the matter before the ALCWC meeting demanding disciplinary action against the persons for taking such a decision against a senior central leader," Suranjit told The Daily Star.

"All my colleagues supported me, but the acting president disagreed with the motion of the meeting."

SEE PAGE 11 COL 8

Judge receives showcase notice for 'not respecting' another judge

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Second Assistant Judge, Dhaka, Yusuf Ali received a showcase notice when he failed to show due respect to the District and Session Judge's Court.

On July 17, Judge ATM Fazle Kabir issued the order as to why a proceeding of contempt of court should not be taken against the second assistant judge for violating his (district judge) order by not sending a civil suit file to the District and Session Judge's Court though he (district judge) directed the assistant judge to send it for several dates.

The district judge issued the order following a petition submitted by the Government Pleader (G P)

SEE PAGE 11 COL 6



A forest guard, with a run-down rifle slung over his shoulder, walks through a stump-ridden clearing of the Sundarbans. The guards are too ill-equipped to fight the gangs of poachers, illegal loggers and other criminals who pillage the world's largest mangrove forest.

PHOTO: AKM MOHSIN

Sundarbans safe haven for poachers, criminals

SHARIEF KHAN

Forest guards fail to protect the world's largest mangrove forest, the Sundarbans, from gangs of marauding poachers, illegal loggers and other criminals, as they are easily outgunned.

Poaching of deer and tigers and illegal logging apart, incidents of robbery have sharply increased at the world heritage site over the years, said forest officials.

Over 30,000 fishermen working in the forest with permission from the forest department are prime targets for the robbers, who are backed by 15 influential fish traders and bailed out in underhand dealings after their arrest.

As a temporary measure, the Bangladesh Coast Guard more than a week ago launched a combing operation with backups from navy, BDR, police and VDP (Village Defence Party). About 600 personnel deployed in the anticrime operation code-named Operation Golden Tiger roam the waterways crisscrossing the forest in 10 ships and a number of speedboats.

"Criminals have retreated to their hideouts for fear of the coast guards," said a forest official. He believes such an operation is not a permanent deterrent to criminals and said the operatives will creep back in after the coast guards pull out.

"Unless they give us modern arms and ammunition, the criminals will always dominate the forest," he said.

As the custodian of the 5,770 square kilometres forest laced with 1,700 square

SEE PAGE 11 COL 4