

Gram Sarkar

FROM PAGE 1
lawmaker and brother of the prime minister, at a BNP upazila council in Feni, reflects the thought working at the centre of the process. "We will have to make sure all Gram Sarkar units are filled with our party men," he said on August 13.

The government passed the Gram Sarkar Act on February 27 to form the Gram Sarkar units to ensure grassroots-level participation in development and that they assist the Union Parishad but not act as administrative bodies.

The Gram Sarkar concept received opposition within the government and outside, as it wants to select its members instead of electing representatives. Moreover, a writ is pending with the High Court on the legality of the Gram Sarkar formation.

The law dictates that 13 members of a unit will be selected from voters of an area, with two elected members of the union parishad in the lead.

A unit should be formed in the presence of at least 10 per cent of voters in a ward, but it is still confined to paperwork as the government bent it at will.

Only 40 voters turned up in a ward of Kurigram, home to 1,500 voters, but the official registered 71 signatures and formed the 15-member unit.

Although barely 16 out of 1,600 voters were present in Shibganj, Bogra, the official pushed ahead with formation of the unit.

Only 55 voters were present in Chuadanga, although there are 1,800 and the official handpicked

JCD men

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injured in the attack.

Seriously injured Ripon, Masum and Delwar were sent to university medical centre.

The JCD activists also ousted Shuvro and Ripon from the hall and ordered them to leave campus.

Meanwhile, the Progressive Students Alliance (PSA), the Sammilita Sanskritik Jote (SSJ) submitted a memorandum to the JU vice-chancellor, proctor and provost of the MB hall yesterday demanding punishment to the JCD cadres involved in the attack.

Earlier, the PSA-SSJ brought out a procession on the campus at around 11:30am demanding exemplary punishment to the JCD cadres and naming of the central auditorium as Shaheed Zahir Raihan Auditorium.

The JCD activists on the other hand gheraoed the scheduled syndicate meeting for three hours Sunday afternoon and demanded withdrawal of expulsion order against its three activists, removal of Shaheed Salam-Barkat hall Provost AKM Shahnawaz and naming of the auditorium after late president Ziaur Rahman.

The VC had an hour long meeting with the JCD leaders and reportedly agreed to discuss their demands in the coming syndicate meet.

The VC however could not be contacted for comment.

Jamal abduction

FROM PAGE 12
Meanwhile, no further development was reported in another millionaire businessman Rezaur Rahman Zakir murder case till yesterday.

Zakir went missing since he left his city residence at Shah Garibullah Housing Society under Khulshi thana on August 11 and his dead body was recovered from Boalkhali the following day.

No-confidence

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Pakistani troops into India's Kargil sector in Jammu and Kashmir in 1999 had taken all by surprise.

The opposition leader said people wanted to know from the government what was achieved by spending Rs 8,000 crore and deploying five lakh soldiers along the border with Pakistan soon after the terrorist attack on Indian parliament in December 2001.

Deputy Prime Minister LK Advani, who spoke just after Sonia, termed "incorrect" the charges against the government and said he was disappointed by the note of aggression in her speech.

Refuting the charge against the government of jeopardising the country's security, Advani said it was the BJP-led coalition government that had brought under control the proxy war unleashed by a country in India's western neighbourhood and destroyed all modules of Inter-services Intelligence in the country.

He said democracy has strengthened over the last five years and recalled the Congress' chiefs' justification of imposition of emergency by the government headed by Indira Gandhi in 1975.

Before the debate began, Vajpayee, addressing members of Lok Sabha belonging to the ruling coalition, said his government was ready to fight out the challenge posed by the no-confidence motion but wondered why the opposition had brought the motion to the floor.

"We have long been waiting for the motion," he said and hoped the ruling National Democratic Alliance (NDA) would emerge victorious in the trial of strength.

Meanwhile, Sonia Gandhi-led main opposition party Congress decided yesterday defiance that it would not boycott Defence Minister George Fernandez's speech in the

two members for the unit in their absence. In Ukhia, 60 of 3,200 voters turned up, leading the official to suspend formation of the unit.

In Gournadi, the voter turnout was lower than the number of the Gram Sarkar members: as few as 11 of 987 voters arrived.

In Bogra's Rajapur, the official appointed a farmer as a member in the teacher category and a landowner as a landless farmer.

The official in Puthia, Rajshahi, saw that none of the voters showed up in the designated place for Gram Sarkar formation. The official sought the help of the local BNP leader who said all voters went to attend a rally of the prime minister. Another BNP leader came forward, collected 73 signatures and submitted a list of the Gram Sarkar members to the official.

Numerous clashes and scuffles have taken place since the government made efforts to form the Gram Sarkar. The feuds surfaced mainly between two rival groups of the BNP, followed by supporters of the BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami, and a small number of incidents took place between the BNP and the Awami League.

In Nilphamari's Jaldhaka and Domar, BNP and Jamaat activists clashed when the two parties could not reach a consensus over the Gram Sarkar representation.

Clashes also took place in different unions of Pabna, Gaibandha, Khulna, Gazipur, Chandpur, Bagerhat and Bogra, among other places.

By exception, there are instances of rush of voters and competition among members that made the local body formation difficult.

In Bhairab, four candidates arrived to fill the slot of distinguished personality, required for the 15-member body. The candidates are a khadem of a mosque, a fruit vendor, a milkman and a small trader.

To decide on the candidature, the government official asked the candidates to assemble their supporters in cues. The milkman outperformed others by drawing more supporters to his cue. The rest were made members in the farmer category.

OIC secy gen

FROM PAGE 12
Maldivian President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom's special envoy and Health Minister Ahmed Abdulla conveyed his government's decision in this regard when he made a courtesy call on Prime Minister Khaleda Zia at her office here on Sunday.

"The Maldives always supports Bangladesh," a spokesman of the Prime Minister's Office quoted Abdulla as saying.

He further said the Maldives and Bangladesh extend cooperation and support to each other in various regional and international forums and hoped that such interaction would strengthen in future.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia also hoped that cooperation between the two fraternal countries in various international forums would continue to expand.

The Maldives special envoy praised the role of Bangladesh leadership in strengthening regional cooperation, particularly development process under the purview of Saarc.

The Maldives special envoy extended an invitation from President Gayoom to Prime Minister Khaleda Zia for her to visit his country. Khaleda reciprocated by inviting the Maldives president.

Notice on 2 OCs

FROM PAGE 1
Joypurhat Abdul Jalil Mondol, they were also charged with ignoring orders of superior officers.

Departmental investigation into the incident found that six policemen were injured because of the negligence of the two officers, said Mondol.

According to the SP, Shafi went to the 'high risk' spot with a negligible number of forces and Haque did not conduct any advance study that he was ordered to do.

"Most bullets of the policemen were damp and their rundown rifles did not function properly during the fight with the militants," said Rezaul, a sub-inspector of Khetlal thana.

"They suddenly besieged us while we were waiting in front of Montejar's house for reinforcements," said a policeman present at the raid.

Police believe that Montejar, a former leader of Jamaat-e-Islami Bangladesh, was one of the masterminds of the attack.

Police, however, recovered photos of Montejar Rahman and his eldest son Momninul Islam yesterday evening and decided to publish those in newspapers.



PHOTO: STAR

The new extension of arrival and departure halls at Zia International Airport is ready for inauguration by Prime Minister Khaleda Zia tomorrow.

LDC leaders' team

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Commerce and Industry (DCCI) and a member of the WTO Advisory Committee, decided not to attend the Cancun meeting.

Hyder is learnt to have written to the commerce ministry that he was unable to attend the meet on 'personal grounds'.

Manzur, on the other hand, told The Daily Star that he has other engagements during the Cancun talks.

"I cannot attend the meet on personal grounds," Manzur said.

Bangladesh's negotiation stands every chance of being affected at the Cancun meeting in absence of expert opinions, sources in the business circle feel.

The fifth ministerial meeting of the WTO is slated for September 10 to 14 in Mexico. Though the outcome of the meet is still in doubt, experts observe that the future of the global trading arrangement would be shaped up in the meet.

Bangladesh as the coordinator of 49 LDCs is expected to play a vital role at the meet. A conference of LDC trade ministers in Dhaka in June adopted a 16-point demand.

Sources said both Debapriya and Hyder played vital role on behalf of the government in convincing the

LDCs to include temporary movement of natural persons in the 16-point Dhaka Declaration.

Besides, they prepared the country position paper and negotiation points for Bangladesh for the just concluded Montreal meet, a mini-ministerial gathering attended by trade ministers from both developed and developing countries, to finalise the agenda for Cancun talks.

"The Bangladesh delegation will not be weak in the absence of three persons, as the delegation members basically have no role over there. All preparations have already been taken here," Commerce Minister Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury told The Daily Star.

Asked why then he is taking a 14-member delegation to Mexico, he said the team members will be attending the talks for their own capacity building.

"But the fact remains that broad-based alliance building has a crucial role in multilateral negotiations and the non-government sources, business and other trade networks provide inputs during the negotiations. Bangladesh will be deprived from such access," said an NGO source.

The other members of the delegation include Commerce Secretary Suhel Ahmad, Permanent Representative to the WTO Dr Toufik Ali, First Secretary Toufir Rahman, Chairman of the Tariff Commission Mohammad Ali Taslim, Deputy Chief of the Tariff Commission Dr Mostafa Abid Khan, Deputy Secretary of the commerce ministry Nasir Ahmad and Senior Assistant Chief of the commerce ministry Abu Yousuf.

Representatives included in the delegation from the private sector include President of the International Chamber of Commerce in Bangladesh (ICC-Bangladesh) Mahbubur Rahman, Vice-president of the ICC-Bangladesh ASM Kashem, former president of the MCCI Latifur Rahman, former president of the Bangladesh Textile Mills Association Matin Chowdhury and President of the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association Kazi Moniruzzaman.

Meantime, CPD is going to hold a symposium on post-Doha marginalisation of LDC concern in collaboration with a number of international NGOs on September 12 in Cancun.

Full benefit

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stringent measures will be taken against them, he added.

Currently, teachers and employees of the government educational institutions enjoy cent per cent MPO benefit, while non-governmental institutions get 90 per cent.

Earlier, the ministry served notices on 2,188 schools, 1,213 colleges and 3,772 madrassah to explain reasons behind their poor performance in last year's public examinations.

Eighty per cent examinees of those institutions failed in Secondary School Certificate (SSC), Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC), Degree, Vocational, Business Management, Dakhil, Alim, Fazel and Kamel examinations, education ministry officials said.

The government is also considering to drop 290 non-governmental institutions including 230 madrassahs, 39 schools and 21 colleges from the MPO list for their inability to produce a single successful student in the SSC and HSC examinations of 2001 and 2002, the officials added.

Ctg mob

FROM PAGE 1
went to Aushit's house to collect the fare of their rented Maxi on Thursday.

Aushit hired the Maxi on the eve of his daughter's wedding on August 6, but did not pay up the fare. Later he locked in a quarrel with the two brothers.

Bodies of the two brothers who remained missing since Thursday were recovered from Barkol canal flowing through Patiya and Anowara border on Saturday and Sunday.

Meanwhile, the critically wounded victim of Sunday's mob beating succumbed to his injuries at Chittagong Medical College Hospital yesterday afternoon.

Three alleged muggers were killed and one critically injured in mob lynching while escaping with Tk 25,000mugged from two BRAC workers at Kanaimati village under Chandanais thana at around 1.30pm Sunday.

The dead were Abu Bakar Mithu, 25, Javed, 25, and Borhan, 25.

Besides, four alleged muggers were lynched by mobs in Patiya and Sitakunda in two separate incidents on August 2, while another mugger was beaten dead at Station Colony under Kotwali thana in the city on August 8.

Birthday

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"For whom should we arrange such a programme? ... We don't seek for merriment when my little doll is away," said Nazrul Islam, Naushin's father, in a choked voice. "Any programme at home will increase her mother's sorrow. If she were with us we might have thought otherwise," he added.

The relatives of Naushin will say prayers at her grave at Uttar Badda. At 1:40pm on May 9, 2002, a gang of four criminals shot Masud and mugged Tk 30,000 and a mobile phone from him. While running away, they shot indiscriminately at the chasing mob and one of the bullets hit Naushin.

She was rushed to a local clinic and later to Dhaka Medical College Hospital where doctors declared her dead.

On July 30, a court in Dhaka sentenced rigorous imprisonment for life to four muggers -- Mohammad Moslem, Mohammad Saiful Islam Ratan, Abdullah-al-Mamun alias 'Ragkata' Mamun and Sumon alias Baitta Sumon. Each of them was fined Tk 50,000 and will have to serve one more year behind bars if they failed to pay the fines.

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Netrokona by-polls

FROM PAGE 1
yesterday.

Awami League's campaign procession with 36 motorbikes and dozens of microbuses full of slogan-chanting supporters was led by Major General (ret'd) Abdus Salam, former lawmaker from Nandail, Mymensingh.

BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, Jamaat General Secretary Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mujahid, Jatiya Party (Nazir-Monju) Secretary General Kazi Firoz Rashid and Islami Oikya Jote Secretary General Azizul Haq together held a public meeting at Kendua playground and several other public meetings at other places yesterday.

Although all seven candidates are campaigning hard, most people believe the election would be hotly contested by two leading candidates -- the four-party alliance candidate Khajida Amin, also the widow of late Nurul Amin Talukdar, and the AL candidate Advocate Jubed Ali.

At least two dozen former and sitting ministers are now in the constituency to seek votes for their party candidates. Interestingly, none of the VIPs and VVIPs arriving in Netrokona has been allowed to stay at any of the state-owned guesthouses. Officials here said the Election Commission has strictly forbidden use of state property by anyone during the campaign or the election.

All campaigning ends at midnight today.

EC ready for by-polls

FROM PAGE 1
UNB adds: Forty Awami League (AL) lawmakers will tour the Netrokona-3 constituency from today to keep a close watch on the August 21 by-elections.

Since the last general election in 2001, this will be the first by-polls the main opposition party will be contesting and in "all seriousness", the party leaders said.

"The AL lawmakers, divided into 20 groups, would watch the by-poll," AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil told the news agency yesterday.

Of the total 124 centres in the two thana areas that constitute the constituency, police and intelligence sources have identified 78 risky centres -- 59 in Kendua where the number of registered voters is 183,779 and 19 in Atpara with 89,692 voters.

The AL has asked the chief election commissioner to take additional security measures for 16 risky centres in Kendua and 13 in Atpara that it identified as risky.

AL presidium members Tofail Ahmed, Motia Chowdhury, Kazi Jafarullah MP, Deputy Leader of the Opposition Abdul Hamid Advocate MP, Mohammad Nasim MP and party organising secretaries Sultan M Mansur Ahmed and Abdur Rahman are now in Netrokona conducting their last-ditch campaigns.

However, in spite of all the meet-

Janmastami

FROM PAGE 12
Puja Committee has planned a three-day programme that includes Padabali 'kirtan', discussion and cultural show on the Dhakeswari Mandir premises.

The committee will also bring out a colourful procession today.

President Iajuddin Ahmed, Prime Minister Khaleda Zia and Awami League President Sheikh Hasina, in separate messages, have greeted Hindus on the occasion.

The president urged for ensuring socio-economic development and welfare of the people "through expanding and strengthening the bond of brotherhood and affection, as ordained by Sri Krishna".

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia hoped that Lord Krishna's birthday celebration would help further consolidate the peace and discipline in social and national life.

Opposition leader Sheikh Hasina called upon all to follow the path shown by Lord Krishna for peaceful coexistence irrespective of religions.

ings, rallies and processions projecting the candidates, election fever among people of the constituency was yet to catch on.

After visiting a "risky" centre at Narayanpur in Atpara on Sunday, where most voters are Hindus, Opposition Chief Whip Abdus Shaheed alleged that the minorities had received threats from cadres of the ruling BNP.

AL leader Motia Chowdhury, addressing the minority voters on the Narayanpur Government Primary School premises, urged them to go to polling centres without fear and cast their vote for 'Boat', the election symbol of the AL.

The two arch-rivals in the race are Advocate M Jubed Ali (Awami League-boat) and Khadja Ameen of the BNP-led four-party alliance (paddy sheaf).

Tasmanian tigers

FROM PAGE 12
thylacine, a dog-like marsupial with tiger-like stripes, died in captivity in Hobart in 1936 and was believed to have been extinct on the Australian mainland for 2,000 years.

Melbourne researcher Michael Moss, who made the FoI requests to the Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) and Parks Victoria, said the government was ignoring strong anecdotal evidence the Tasmanian tiger was alive and breeding in Victoria.

But Moss said several recent sightings were made by credible witnesses, who gave detailed descriptions of the striped marsupial.

Many more reported sightings were ignored by sceptical park rangers and never officially recorded, he said.

"If this was in Tasmania there would be the biggest hunt on ever -- but because it was in Victoria no one takes it seriously," he said.

"I think every bushwalker down on the promontory and in the Grampians has a right to know these animals might be there."

Parks Victoria officer Glen Jameson, who compiled reports of thylacine sightings in the Warrandyte area between 1991 and 1999, said they could be an example of "mass sociogenic illness".

But he believed they were noteworthy because the people spoke with conviction, sincerity and did not come forward "in an atmosphere of media hype regarding Tasmanian tiger fever".

Launch strike

FROM PAGE 1
with some high officials yesterday morning checked the papers of some launches at the Sadarghat terminal and found those valid.

"It is not possible to check papers of all vessels in a day. I have seen papers of some of those and did not get anything wrong with them," said Zulfikar.

At a meeting on Sunday, the launch owners had asked the secretary to visit the terminal and examine papers of their vessels. The chairman of Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA) and the director general of shipping department accompanied the secretary yesterday.

Kalimullah yesterday asked the secretary to inform the nation through the media that they (launch owners) were running their business properly. But the secretary said he had no authority to issue any 'character certificates'.

Mamun thanked the government for hearing them and meeting their 'just demands'.

He also said they will form a committee comprising some launch owners to monitor whether any launch violates the rules.

In reply to a question, the

shipping secretary said some launches were built 10 to 12 years ago but some rules were made only two or three years ago. So, the owners have been given time to comply with those rules, he added.

In statement later, Shipping Minister Akbar Hossain thanked the launch owners. He regretted the sufferings of passengers due to the strike

As the striker was withdrawn, launches anchored at mid-Buriganga for the last six few days started to come to the terminal and passengers were gathering.

Our Correspondent from Barisal reports: Launch services on the 28 local and 34 inter-district routes from Barisal resumed at 2:00pm Monday after six days of continuous strike.

MV Kirtankhola-1, Suravi-4 and Parabat 3 and 8 left Barisal for Dhaka Monday evening.

Earlier, running under the special BIWTC services in the face of the launch strike, ferry vessel Birsrestho Mohiuddin Jahangir with 2,000 and Rocket steamer PS Turn with 1,000 passengers reached Barisal Monday morning.

Biosafety body

FROM PAGE 12
has been reached that the science and ICT ministry would give lead in biotech research and the environment and forestry ministry in biosafety rules, but no initiative has been taken so far to form the body.

Finally, the agriculture ministry has asked 10 agricultural research institutions under the National Agricultural Research System (NARS) to form their own biosafety committees.

In the biosafety guidelines, it was clearly mentioned that the science and ICT secretary would become the ex-officio chairperson of the NCBB and a scientist would act as its member-secretary, with the other members drawn from among bioscientists, environmental scientists, medical scientists, representatives from the ministries, farmers, NGOs, chamber bodies and writers.

But afterwards, the Ministry of Environment and Forestry put its claim on the chairmanship of the NCBB on the argument that it is the lead agency of the government as a signatory to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety and Convention on Biological Diversity. It is primarily the task of this ministry to look after the biohazards and biosafety issues associated with the application of crop biotechnology in Bangladesh.

The protagonists of the frontier technologies have long been waiting to see lifting of all legal and institutional barriers so that the country can pursue agro-biotechnology to overcome land

scarcity and other limitations.

Prof. Zeba Islam Seraj, who teaches molecular biology and biochemistry at Dhaka University, said further delay in the NCBB formation would frustrate the scientists working in the area and dim Bangladesh's prospect for quickly enhancing crop production.

Non-formation of the NCBB cast a long shadow over Bangladesh's prospect for an early entry into the world of crop biotechnology, which the neighbouring India has already started tapping to derive maximum benefits.

A couple of years back, India's Genetic Engineering Approval Committee (GEAC) gave approval to commercial cultivation of bioengineered seed Bt. Cotton. Similarly, Pakistan has also constituted a National Biosafety Expert Committee (NBEAC) with experts from all their relevant institutions for updating the laws. But Bangladesh is lagging behind in harnessing crop biotech at a time when the country has just been included in the consortium of four south and southeastern countries for a \$15 million 'Programme for Biosafety Systems' (PBS) and 'Agricultural Biotechnology Support Project-II' (ABSP-II), both funded by USAID. In this consortium, comprising Bangladesh, India, Indonesia and the Philippines, all but Bangladesh have their biosafety regulatory body.