

Jessore rifle loot Court sets all 27 accused free

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, *Khulna*

All the 27 accused in the sensational Akij Jute Mill rifle loot case have been exempted from the charge. They include 18 cadres of outlawed Purba Banglar Communist Party (PBCP). First class Magistrate of the Cognisance Court, Jessore, Ashoke Kumar Devnath received the final report exempting them on February 7. ASP of CID Mowla Bux submitted the final report on November 28 last year recommending exemption

Last day of CHT road blockade ends peacefully

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Bandarban*

The last day of the two-day road blockade in the three hill districts enforced by the Parbatya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samity (PCJSS) passed off without violence yesterday. A large number of security forces were deployed in the districts to avert untoward incident like on the first day. Our Bandarban correspondent reports that although fewer number of rickshaws and other non-motorised vehicles plied in the district, long route buses stayed off the road. The road blockade did not succeed in the district's Lama, Ali Kadam and Naikkhanchangaria area. Examinees who came to sit for the test for the primary teachers' appointment suffered greatly due to the lack of public transports. The PCJSS yesterday afternoon held a meeting in the Bandarban District Press Club and declared a protest rally in Rangamat on February 23. It also threatened that if their demands were not met by February 23, it will declare the next course of action from the Rangamat rally. The PCJSS called the 48-hour road blockade in the three hill districts to press for their four-point demand including full implementation of the CHT peace accord. Its other demands include withdrawal of all army camps, police and armed police battalion from the hill districts, handover of charge of the CHT affairs ministry to a fully-ledged minister of ethnic origin and appointment of an indigenous leader as chairman of CHT Development Board.

Anti-graft body bill

FROM PAGE 1
told newpersons after the meeting. The parliamentary body, comprised of eight BNP legislators, held a series of meetings to finalise the report and suggested dropping the eligibility of an officer of the armed forces to become a commissioner of the commission. The proposed bill said people with 20 years of experience in law, education, administration, the judiciary or armed forces would be eligible for the posts of commissioner.

The committee inserted a new sub-clause in the bill, proposing financial autonomy for the commission like the Supreme Court and the Jatiya Sangsad. The meeting also finalised the structure of the five-member selection committee of the commission bringing together a judge of the appellate division of the Supreme Court as its chairman and a judge of the High Court Division, the chairman of the Public Service Commission, the comptroller and auditor general and the last retired cabinet secretary as its members. The selection committee will propose the names of six people to the president for appointment as the commissioners, of whom the presi-

Dhaka may sign

FROM PAGE 1
They said Bangladesh could not sign the deal at the Phuket ministerial as the commerce ministry failed to act in time. The foreign minister said he explained to the Phuket meeting Bangladesh's inability to sign the deal at the moment. All member states have accepted the explanation and given Dhaka the option to sign it whenever it wants to. He also said the member states agreed to amend the FTA deal and resolve issues, if need be, when Bangladesh decides to sign it. Morshed said Bangladesh played a vital role in the BIMST-EC since its inception and advanced the cause of the least developed countries (LDCs). Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan and Myanmar have been listed in the seven-member grouping as LDCs. Khan claimed Dhaka raised around half a dozen issues to derive additional benefits and facilities for the LDCs and three to four of them have already been resolved. However, he admitted that the issue of compensation for any revenue loss due to eventual dropping of tariffs remained unresolved, but hoped that it would be solved through discussion. On why Nepal, Bhutan and Myanmar did not wait for Bangladesh although it advocated for the LDCs, Morshed said every-

of the accused from the charge of looting 12 rifles and 700 ammunition from the mill at Abhoyanagar upazila on January 20 in 1999. He stated in the report that he failed to get any evidence to prove guilt of the accused. The PBCP cadres are Mahmud Hasan Shimul, Nurun Nabi, Berha Babu, Mehadi Hasan Litu, Jalal, Abdul Aziz, Hazerat Ali, Shahidul, Jahangir, Mahbub, Abul Kalam, Nasiruddin, Azizur, Akhtar Ali, Jalaluddin, Babul Hossain, Krishnapada and Iqbal Kabir.

Mysterious death DIG begins separate probe

UNB, *Cox's Bazar*

The additional deputy inspector general of police of Chittagong Range, acting on a home ministry order, yesterday launched a separate probe into the deaths of two foreign pilots here. Additional DIG AKM Mahfujul Huq met Dr Shafiqul Islam, acting resident medical officer (RMO) of Cox's Bazar General Hospital, who reportedly carried out autopsy of the body of Cuznetov Aleg, the first victim of mysterious death, a Moldavian ground engineer of a Ukrainian chartered plane of ATL. Mahfujul and local Superintendent of Police Syed Taufiq Uddin Ahmed also talked with other 21 crew, who were asked to stay at International Plaza Hotel. Sources said police are investigating whether the pilots died after taking Methanol on their own or someone had encouraged them to drink the spirit. Co-pilot of a Ukrainian cargo plane and a national of Moldavia Ivor Nikolavich died Saturday at Chittagong Medical College Hospital (CMCH) soon after being shifted from Cox's Bazar General Hospital in a critical condition, while Aleg died the previous day. Four local private airlines -- ATL, THT, Budget Airways and Air Parabat -- with chartered aircraft from Ukraine are reportedly engaged in transporting shrimp fry from Cox's Bazar to Jessore for farms in Khulna.

dent will choose three. Initially, the bill kept the provision of a six-member selection committee with the finance and law ministers on it. The delay to constitute the commission, a poll pledge of the four-party ruling alliance leader BNP, has drawn flak from the civil society, especially from lawyers, and the opposition.

Cabinet okays

FROM PAGE 12
to formulate strict laws against illegal occupation of lands by any individual, group or circle. Longer duration of imprisonment and increased fine against the crime might help reduce the crime, it added. The committee further recommended setting up national and district level committees to crosscheck allegations against illegal land occupants. The cabinet also decided to constitute another cabinet committee to draw an inland transport policy after scrutinising a draft policy put up at the meeting. Cabinet members, state ministers, cabinet secretary, principal secretary to the PMO and secretaries concerned attended the meeting.

body was in a hurry to boost trade and investment. On why Bangladesh was not in a hurry, he said there is 'enough time' for Bangladesh as the agreement comes into force from 2006. Initially, the grouping was limited to five states -- Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, Sri Lanka and Thailand, while Nepal and Bhutan joined it recently. He ruled out the possibility of any harm to bilateral ties with any member states due to Dhaka's non-signing of the agreement. He also ruled out any chance of a complete pullout from the grouping. Morshed said the ministerial adopted a joint statement, which said the grouping would work towards trilateral highway linkage among Bangladesh, Myanmar and Thailand on coastal shipping, human resource development, management and sustainable utilisation of fisheries resources in the Bay of Bengal. If three of the member states take up a development plan like the trilateral highway, it will be considered a BIMST-EC project. So, Bangladesh's plan to construct highway with Myanmar and Thailand and India's plan to construct a similar highway with Myanmar and Thailand will be considered as BIMST-EC projects.

FM's life worth Tk 50 lakh!

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan would get Tk 50 lakh if he fell sick after taking chicken. Thai Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra made the offer jokingly at a dinner hosted by him in honour of the BIMST-EC foreign ministers. Morshed Khan said this at the end of a press briefing at the foreign ministry yesterday. Foreign ministers from Bangladesh, Myanmar, India, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Nepal and Bhutan attended the dinner held in Pukhet, Thailand, on the concluding day of the BIMST-EC meet. Khan mentioned that for fear of bird flu he refused to take chicken when the Thai prime minister himself offered it at the dinner. The PM then jokingly said he would give him (Khan) Tk 50 lakh if he fell sick after taking chicken. Thakshin asserted that bird flu was fully controlled in his country and there was nothing to worry about taking chicken. Khan said the Thai prime minister is a very dynamic and romantic person, and a very good friend of Bangladesh.

Integrated

FROM PAGE 12
secretaries were present. The meeting also decided to form a cabinet committee on the issue. The initiative to resolve the problems of all kinds of transports through coordination is rational, Communications Minister Nazmul Huda told the BBC Bengali Service last night. He added that separate land transport, shipping and civil aviation policies are already in place.

Local coalition

FROM PAGE 12
Monirampur Police Station for their alleged corruption. At the rally, Bangladesh Islami Oikya Jote lawmaker Mufti Mohammad Wakkas warned of tougher programmes if their demand was not met. Wakkas said, "The police officials falsely implicated two UP members in a rape case, releasing the real culprits from police custody." On January 9, the police officials recorded charges against Abul Kalam and Akbar Ali, members of Kanpur UP, in the case of raping a mentally retarded woman on October 26, 2003, sources said. Earlier, they freed the accused in the case from the police station reportedly in exchange for cash, locals alleged. Shahid M Iqbal Hossain, president of local BNP and chairman of Sadar UP, chaired the meeting while among others, 17 UP chairmen, 204 UP members and leaders of different political parties, were present at the gathering.

NWD facility

FROM PAGE 12
unhappy without the facility, as they could neither subscribe to International Subscribers' Dialing (ISD) nor make long distance calls within the country. Despite an official order to provide the NWD on demand, many weren't able to get the facility due to lengthy subscription procedures and non-cooperation of a section of BTBT officials. The demand for NWD subscription went up by the thousands after introduction of the reduced call rate for some international destinations including the USA, Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia, Italy, Germany, France, Singapore and Malaysia. The facility will also be provided for Hong Kong soon. The service will be available from BTBT exchanges all over the country but subscribers choosing not to have the facility have been asked to send a request to that effect to BTBT's divisional engineers concerned. The BTBT also asked its subscribers to use the password printed on the reverse side of their phone bills to stop outgoing calls should the need arise. The measure has been taken to check abuse of the NWD facility. The password to unlock the system is also printed on the same page.

Kamal speaks

FROM PAGE 12
change of the present situation only through a democratic way, and midterm polls are not unusual in democracy." "What is needed today is unity of people so that they can rescue the country from criminalisation of politics and criminalisation of the economy," Dr Kamal observed. The Gano Forum leader said, "Our first priority is to create public awareness about present-day mis-rule." Asked about any dialogue with the main opposition Awami League on anti-government agitation, Dr Kamal said, "We will place our proposals to Awami League leaders if they call us." Referring to recent killings in Khulna, he said it seems the government is failing to discharge its primary duty to protect the lives of citizens. He stressed the importance of impartial and effective law enforcement. Other Oikya Prochesta leaders, who spoke at the press conference included Saifuddin Ahmed Manik, Shamsuddoha, Fazlur Rahman, Matin Chowdhury, Ajay Roy, Jahirul Islam and Shamsul Alam Dudu.

Newsmen assaulted

FROM PAGE 1
ground, but they left as a large crowd gathered and begged for his life. "No doctor of Natore Hospital came to my house to treat me for the wounds for fear of life and I am not at all safe in Natore," a horror-stricken Iqbal said in a faint, trembling voice. Two other journalists who received death threats asked not to publish their names. Sporadic violence marked the hartal when journalists came under increasing pressure to leave the scenes.

Govt mulling new ways to free Bablu Nasir promises rescue in 2-3 days

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Bandarban*

The authorities are charting new ways to rescue abducted hillside resort hotelier Hasan Mahbub Bablu after the efforts in the past week failed. A closed-door meeting between government officials, security forces and intelligence agencies, chaired by Civil Aviation and Tourism Minister Mir Mohammad Nasir Uddin in Bandarban last Sunday, weighed alternative ways after the methods Bablu's relatives proposed proved futile, sources say. The authorities would not however tell the press what methods are going to be employed for the rescue. The minister during his visit to Bandarban announced that Bablu would be rescued in two or three days. Bablu was abducted by armed men on the night of the Eid-ul Azha while working at his resort hotel.

Habiganj Gas Field survives fire scare

UNB, *Habiganj*

Firefighters tamed a raging fire at a gas field only half a kilometre off the Habiganj Gas Field at Shahjibazar yesterday. The afternoon flames almost reached north of well No. 10 of the gas field, fire brigade officials said. Despite hectic efforts by security personnel around the gas field, it spread quickly, they added. Fire fighting units rushed to the stretch of long dry grass and doused the inferno using fire-fighting gears at well No. 1. The blaze moved towards the gas field when contractors there tried to burn roots of long grass for safety of the area.

JS extension

FROM PAGE 12
hold," a senior BNP leader said, requesting anonymity. "We will hold a high level meeting to discuss the issue of raising the Jatiya Sangsad seats before placing the plan in the cabinet," Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Moudud Ahmed told The Daily Star yesterday. "The meeting will be held at a time the prime minister agrees to." The alliance leaders at the meeting decided that 100 general seats and 50 reserved seats for women would be added to the Jatiya Sangsad, keeping pace with the rising population. Opposition political parties, including the main opposition Awami League (AL), and the press piously the alliance plan, saying a national consensus should be reached on such an important decision. AL president Sheikh Hasina termed the plan 'a gerrymandering ploy' bent on marginalise her party. Lawmakers of the key ruling party, the BNP, at a parliamentary party meeting asked the government to go slow on the Jatiya Sangsad expansion plan and hold discussion at different levels before adopting a final decision. Policymakers of the government are also divided on raising parliament seats although the plan figured in BNP's poll pledges.

Ruling bigwigs split

FROM PAGE 1
seek advice from Prime Minister Khaleda Zia, but the ministry did not send his note to the Prime Minister's Office 14 days into the handover of the verdict. The apparent official stonewalling caricatures what Law Minister Moudud Ahmed told the press on January 28 that the issue would be settled in a couple of days. "We will send the report to the prime minister in a few days," Moudud told The Daily Star last night. "Some ministers are lobbying for the judge. They don't want to see him removed," said a policymaker, asking not to be named. The ministers believe if the government acts on the council recommendations, it will lose morally as the ruling coalition appointed Shahidur despite a serious objection by the Bar that earlier accused him of embezzling fund from the lawyers' association when he was its treasurer, he said. The council in its report says it has not been proved beyond doubt to convict Shahidur of taking bribes in the bail fix, but he should no longer hold the post because of circumstantial

Ajker Kagoj reporter Shibli Noman and photojournalist Nazrul Islam Zulu were assaulted allegedly by BNP cadres at Basudevpur crossing on the Natore-Naldanga Road at about 12:00pm. The attackers snatched their identity cards and threatened to torch their motorcycles. Prothom Alo reporter Anu Mustafa and The Daily Star correspondent Anwar Ali were waylaid at Basudevpur crossing when they were returning from Shahpara, the scene of arson attacks on AL leaders' houses. Some BNP activists threatened to torch the motorcycles of Janakantha photojournalist Selim Jahangir and Prothom Alo photojournalist Azharuddin in front of Dulu when they were taking photos in the morning. Pickets damaged some rickshaws and rickshaw-vans in the town during the hartal. Gama's father Rafiqul Islam Talukder yesterday filed a case against 16 AL leaders and activists, accusing them of killing his son.

Israel court hears barrier case

REUTERS, *Jerusalem*

Israel's Supreme Court has considered the legality of a West Bank barrier the government says stops suicide bombers but which civil liberties groups say violates the rights of Palestinians. There was no immediate indication at the end of the two-hour session yesterday when the judges would rule in the case heard ahead of World Court deliberations on the same issue later this month.

Shop owners, staff force CCC to restore power at Ctg market

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, *Ctg*

Agitating shop owners and employees of Shah Amanat City Corporation Market put up barricade on the road in front of Chittagong New Market yesterday, forcing authorities to restore power at the market that remained snapped for the last six days. Sources said a short-circuit was believed to have caused the power disruption at 261 shops of the market on February 3. But electricity department of Chittagong City Corporation (CCC) failed to reinstate power at the market despite repeated appeals from shop owners. "We took to the street and put up barricade on the road at around 12:30pm as the CCC was not paying heed to our inconvenience," said a shop owner. They removed the barricade after an hour when power supply resumed. They alleged resumption of power was delayed as shop owners refused to pay the CCC electricity department Tk 41,000 as bribe.

JP too kicks

FROM PAGE 12
meeting, dubbed the remarks of the ruling BNP's frontline leaders as irresponsible. On Sunday when Rabbi asked Speaker Jamir Uddin Sircar about the reason for the restriction on Ershad and his family, Salauddin told the House: "Morshed Khan (now foreign minister) and I were barred from going abroad when Ershad was president. The reason for Friday's restriction is the same as before." Huda said in a lighter vein that the former military ruler might have been stopped at the airport to protect the right of his wife (Rawshan Ershad), a lawmaker. Ershad-led JP with 14 seats in parliament had earlier walked out of parliament on November 16 last year, protesting anomalies in relief distribution among near-famine-stricken people in the north and went back to the House three days later.

evidence and in the backdrop of the situation. "But a cabinet minister and a state minister are trying to save the judge," another cabinet member said, requesting anonymity. He said a set of lawyers with close ties to the coalition was also trying to talk the government out of the possible action against Shahidur and argue it is not mandatory for the government to implement the council's recommendations. The argument in Shahidur's defence presents a contrast to what Moudud said earlier -- "the government will act in line with the council's recommendations". A policymaker told The Daily Star last night: "The government will take steps by the weekend despite pro-Shahidur lobbying." The council was formed on October 29 last year upon a presidential directive following an allegation against Shahidur by Supreme Court Bar Association President Rokanuddin Mahmud. Shahidur has been on leave since the allegation was raised.

Ekushey Book Fair Publishers bring 58 new books

DU CORRESPONDENT

Different publishing houses brought 58 new books at the Amar Ekushey Book Fair 2004 on the third day of the fair yesterday. Among the newly published books, Shirin Publications brought five books, Progati Publications and Agami Prokashani each came with three books. However, lesser book lovers thronged the Bangla Academy premises yesterday than the previous days, publishers at the fair said. They said the sale usually gets momentum after a week when book-worms will crowd the stalls with more books making way into each stall. They said novels and books of prominent writers like Humayun Ahmed, Dr Humayun Azad and Dr Muhammad Zafar Iqbal were selling better. Meanwhile, the traditional discussions and cultural programmes centring the book fair were held at the Academy premises yesterday. Mohammad Shahajahan Mian, Nazma Begum, Mustafa Mazid, Khaled Hossain and Zobaidda Gulsan Ara took part in yesterday's discussion on 'Jangonama: Middle Age War Epic'. A discussion on 'Current children literature of Bangladesh' will be held today at 4:00pm at the fair premises followed by a cultural programme. The book fair will remain open to all from 2:00pm to 8:00pm every day and from 11:00am to 8:00pm on weekends, Bangla Academy sources said adding that on February 21, the fair will be open from 8:00am to 9:00pm.

8 die, 48 injured

FROM PAGE 12
The three-wheelers and rickshaws skidded off the bridge and crushed on the slope. Seven of the injured were admitted to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital. However, another victim, also unidentified, died after admission there. Meanwhile, a speeding Pirojpur-bound bus dashed into a roadside ditch near Ikri Bridge at Bhandaria in Pirojpur as the driver lost control over wheels, police said. Manoranjan Dhar, assistant education officer of Mollaharhat upazila under Bagerhat, and helper of the bus Mamun and two unidentified men died on the spot while 40 others were wounded in the accident, police added. Critically injured Altaf and Shahin were sent to Sher-e-Bangla Medical College Hospital in Barisal while the others were admitted to local hospitals. In another accident at Baldipakar in Rangpur, Zulfikar Ali Swadhin, a lecturer of Hena Memorial College, died on the spot when a bus hit his motorcycle from behind on Sunday.

Janajudhha

FROM PAGE 1
gunpoint from their houses and took them to nearby Hogladanga field. Later the gunmen shot and slaughtered them at dead of night. They might have been killed for acting as police informants, some villagers said. Janajudhha has claimed responsibility for the double murder and accused them of 'anti-people activity, like extortion and women repression'. A case was filed. There have been no arrests. Our Kushtia correspondent reports that in Jhenidha, Jamal, 35, and Asad, 32, armed cadres of the outlawed Ganobahini, were hacked to death sometime Sunday night at Harinakundu upazila in the district. Police said Jamal and Asad set out from their houses together on Saturday afternoon. They hailed from Bhaina village of Harinakundu. Police recovered their bodies from a fallow land in Narayanpur village the same day. Janajudhho has claimed responsibility for the murders on telephone to some local newspaper offices. Police said the slain outlaws were wanted in several criminal cases. Meanwhile, our Pabna correspondent reports that five people were wounded in a clash between police and a group of outlaws in late Sunday night in Shakhnapara village under Atailuk thana in the district. Police acknowledged the incident. According to Pabna Police Control Room sources, 46 rounds of ammunition were traded in the one-and-a-half-hour clash that ensued when police raided the house of Jabbar Driver where the outlaws were staying.

Just-repaired

FROM PAGE 12
kilometres of lanes and by-lanes in the 360 square kilometre DCC area that remained without roadworks for several years. Some DCC engineers blamed foreign donors for such indiscriminate road digging. Before blaming Wasa, Desa, Bangladesh Telegraph and Telephone Board and Titus Gas, one should look at the way the donors are releasing funds for installation projects, an engineer said requesting anonymity. "In many cases, donors suddenly release funds and ask service providers to complete the tasks in a stipulated time," said the engineer. "No matter how much co-ordination we maintain with one another, with the receipt of funds for work organisations concerned become desperate to obtain our permission to dig," he continued. "The matter becomes an issue of national interest and DCC's elected leaders then consent to the digging." Sources said the latest permission given by the DCC to dig city roads was a direct result of such behaviour by the donors.

Dhaka should not stay

FROM PAGE 1
"Getting a compensatory mechanism for possible revenue loss was a non-negotiable position for Bangladesh as it thinks revenue loss would be substantive. It might be the best possible decision for Bangladesh as it was not prepared well for the deal now," said Ananya Raihan, research fellow of the Centre for Policy Dialogue, an independent think-tank. It is possible to overcome the present situation if Bangladesh do good homework for the advanced level of the deal such as preparing positive and negative lists of commodities, he observed. "Dhaka may keep those items [on] the negative lists that it imports heavily and depends for revenue income and put those [on] the positive lists that it imports few and not dependent that much for revenue earnings," Raihan added. The deal would not pose much risk to Myanmar because it has huge natural resources and will try to gain by exporting them to other countries of the grouping, he said. Raihan added that Nepal and Bhutan signed the deal just to get legitimacy as members of the grouping. "India has signed FTAs or going to do it with all of our neighbouring countries. If Myanmar, Nepal or Bhutan can do it, we cannot afford to do away with it," said Abdul Awal Mintoo, president of the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FCCI), the country's apex trade body. "Myanmar and Thailand are in the BIMST-EC and if there is a deal with Malaysia and we are not in this regional grouping it will leave a serious negative impact on us," he added. President of Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) Quazi Moniruzzaman said Dhaka should

remain in the regional blocs but before signing the deal it should weigh possible risks and gains. "Bangladesh opened its market much earlier for which industries suffered a major setback. So, we should not make the same mistake again. We have some strength and at the same time our industries have limitations also and this should be kept in mind," he noted. Citing an example, the BGMEA president said there are possibilities that Bangladesh can export readymade garments (RMG) to the regional countries. "If local garment manufacturers are allowed to import duty-free fabric and if the regional countries also allow duty-free RMG import from Bangladesh along with that deal, we would be able to do good business."

B Chy lunches

FROM PAGE 12
Sources close to the meeting said the political situation, particularly Chowdhury's current initiative for "alternative politics" and his future course of action, came up for discussion during the luncheon meeting. The British high commissioner, ambassadors of Germany, France, Italy, Netherlands, Sweden and Denmark, and the Head of the EC Delegation were present in the meeting that lasted for more than two hours. Commenting on the importance of the luncheon, a source, however, said it is the usual practice of the EC Delegation here to host "EU Lunch" on last Thursday of each month for eminent personalities. In 1993, the EC Delegation held a similar lunch with opposition leader Sheikh Hasina.

Role of civil society

FROM PAGE 1
The problems of election financing must be addressed if Bangladesh is to secure long-lasting progress in lowering corruption. The report observes that in each of the last two elections, the electorate rejected the party in power and brought about change through democratic means. "The prospect of electoral defeat could bring a measure of accountability and strengthen the political institutions of governance, but this may not necessarily happen," it noted. "The authorities had to develop a better understanding of the political

incentives at work to help nudge the system toward constructive checks and balances as opposed to unproductive confrontation." The WB appreciated the government's reform measures but said crime, corruption and lack of governance have increased cost of business and discouraged investment and stood as major impediments to development. Stressing importance of good governance and responsive administration, the WB report says, "The capacity of civil service has been declining for want of good recruits, effective leadership and proper training. This is compounded by the politicisation of the civil service, inadequate attention to following the rules of business, and a reluctance to impose discipline for fear of retaliation from powerful staff association." On law and order, it says, "The army's deployment under Operation Clean Heart demonstrated that crime can be curbed but the effects appear to have been only temporary. A longer-term strategy to reform and strengthen the police and the judiciary is essential for sustainable improvement in the law and order situation." The WB also placed stress on 'home-grown strategies' tailored to the circumstances of Bangladesh and strong political commitment. It mentioned four risks for the government to consider. The first one is the political risk arising out of the government's reform measures. Since it came to power, it has retrenched thousands of workers without any resistance. But this can become a tool of the confrontational nature of politics. The fact is the WB suggested creation of sufficient new jobs. Describing external risks, the WB noted the government should try to address the nosedive of remittance, lack of export diversification and lack of preparations to handle post-MFA export market.

Travel agent

FROM PAGE 1
The Daily Star, his voice trailing off to whisper, before he was taken into the operating theatre. Kamal's brother Anwar Hossain, owner of nearby Shalwa Overseas, said: "I rushed to the scene and found my brother lying lifeless and Bazlu writhing in pain in a pool of blood." "Kamal wanted to file a case against the extortionists who repeatedly demanded money from him. But he did not do so in fear of his life," Anwar said. Kamal, from Shaighar village of Brahmanpara upazila in Comilla, left behind his wife Nasima, son Mahin, 6, and four-year-old daughter Tanha.

Blue kerosene fails

FROM PAGE 12
Bangladesh Petroleum Dealers' Association (BPDA). "The government's decision to vary prices of those petroleum oils has fuelled the tendency to adulterate," Kabul said at a press conference in the city yesterday. He said repeated requests from petroleum dealers for a uniform price have fallen on deaf ears. "It seems the government has so far failed to come to terms with the underlying reason behind adulteration, which is the big difference in the two prices, and have always blamed us for the matter," he said. Kabul expressed his discontent over allegations of adulteration against petroleum dealers. He said they purchased the oils from government depots, which are the only importers of petroleum oils. "So there is no chance of corruption on our part." He said due to a discrepancy of Tk 3 per litre between the two fuel prices, farmers are mixing kerosene with diesel to run agricultural machinery, creating an unusual pressure on the annual kerosene

consumption. "This new phenomenon has upped kerosene consumption significantly," Kabul said, adding that the practice also reduces durability of machines. The demand for diesel was 1,60,000 tonnes in 2001-2002 while that of kerosene was 35,000 tonnes. Kabul also denied the government's allegation of smuggling diesel to India taking advantage of comparatively lower prices here. He said if the allegation is true then "why is the government creating pressure on farmers by increasing the diesel price rather than taking steps to check smuggling." The BPDA urged the government to ensure adequate supply of diesel for farmers of the country's northern and southern regions during irrigation period. BPDA Senior Vice-president Shahjada Anwarul Kadir, Advisor Abul Kalam Azad and Organising Secretary AKM Azizul Haq were also present at the press conference held at the National Press Club.