

'Foreign prisoners suffer for lack of legal aid'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Most of the foreign prisoners in Bangladesh and its neighbouring countries languish in jail due to lack of access to legal aid, said speakers at a roundtable yesterday.

In most cases, the speakers said, the foreign citizens imprisoned belong to lower income group and lack financial ability and moral support to seek legal aid.

Moreover, it becomes hard for them to seek legal support in a foreign land even if they can afford it. "There are a number of cases where a person remained imprisoned even 10 years after serving their prison term," said Fazlul Huq, executive director of Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (Blast).

Blast organised the discussion on "Foreign Prisoners and Access to Justice" in the capital yesterday.

The speakers said in some cases, citizens of neighbouring countries are caught for travelling without valid documents like passport and visa. Sometimes, the fishermen cross the maritime border in bad weather in their ignorance and get arrested.

"At least 64 Bangladeshi fishermen are languishing in a jail of West Bengal," said Justice DK Basu, chairman, Legal Aid Services-West Bengal (Lasweb). He added 37 of the Bangladeshi nationals are languishing in Midnapore jail of West Bengal. Sixty-two Indians are detained in

SEE PAGE 11 COL 4



PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

A woman balances herself as she walks on a makeshift pathway carrying food to the flood shelter at Haidar Ali High School and College in Manda, Mugda yesterday. Although the floodwaters have receded in most areas in the capital, thousands of flood-hit people still cram into the schools that are supposed to open tomorrow, according to a government announcement.

CPD DIALOGUE ON EXPORT

EC ready to relax rules of origin

It needs just proper request from govt, says EC ambassador

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The ambassador of European Commission (EC) yesterday said the EC is ready to relax the rules of origin and reduce derogation of garments exported from Bangladesh, if the government makes a proper request for that.

Speaking at a national dialogue

organised by the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) in the city, Head of EC Delegation in Bangladesh Esko Kentschynskyj also underscored the need for diversifying export items, which Bangladesh's export basket badly lacks.

Kentschynskyj's remarks came in response to speakers' observation that Bangladesh's exports to Europe and

Japan would increase manifold if the rules of origin were relaxed and trade barriers removed.

The speakers also detailed a number of reasons including non-tariff barriers and lack of capacity building and policy support from the government, for which the country cannot fully utilise various

SEE PAGE 11 COL 4

BCL LEADER MURDER

All accused acquitted

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

A court yesterday acquitted all the 29 charge-sheeted accused of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) leader Sanjit Kumar Pal murder.

Judge Mohammad Habibur Rahman of Additional District and Sessions Judge's Court-3 gave the verdict.

Sanjit was bombed to death at a party meeting at Awami League office in Shiromoni in Khanjahan Ali thana on November 23, 2001. The bomb attack also hurt 10 others. A case was filed with Khanjahan Ali Police Station the following day.

The acquitted, among others, are former chairman of Fultala upazilla Akram Hossain, Chairman of Atra-Gilatala Union Parishad Mir Kaised, Chairman of Shiromoni UP Jahangir Hossain and Islami Chhatra Shibir leader Prof Golam Quddus.

Rab nabs 3, seizes firearms

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Rapid Action Battalion -1 yesterday arrested three people and seized three sophisticated revolvers, two single-barrel bore guns, a pipe-gun and 100 bullets from a house in Gopalpur in Tongi.

A Rab team raided the house owned by Shadat at about 1:15pm and arrested Rubel Khan Hridoy, Pradeep Baruya and Maksuda Begum. Following their information, Rab members recovered the firearms but could not arrest Shadat.

Rubel told reporters that local

SEE PAGE 11 COL 1



PHOTO: STAR

Myanmar nationalists demonstrate from a human chain they formed in front of the High Court building yesterday to press for restoration of democracy in their homeland and release of democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi.

Revenue collection slips in first month

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

The government's 'challenging' revenue earning target has missed the mark in the very first month of the ongoing fiscal year and the prospect for the month ahead also appears bleak because of the devastating floods.

The National Board of Revenue (NBR) could net Tk 1,804 crore against a target of Tk 1,959 crore in July, leaving a deficit of Tk 155 crore, according to

the NBR officials.

The revenue collection target for the ongoing 2004-2005 fiscal year has been set at Tk 32,190 crore, which is around 19 percent more than last fiscal year's projected revenue earnings. It is about 24 percent higher than last fiscal year's actual revenue collection.

Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman in his budget speech had

SEE PAGE 11 COL 8

Vietnamese parliamentary team arrives

BSS, Dhaka

A seven-member Vietnamese parliamentary delegation led by Madam Bui Thi Bin, MP and vice-chairman of Vietnam's Council of Nationalities, arrived here Saturday on a five-day visit.

Chairman of the parliamentary standing committee on Ministry of Cultural Affairs Prof Shahidul Islam and high officials of the parliament secretariat received the delegation at the Zia International Airport.

The delegation will call on Speaker of the Jatiya Sangsad Muhammad Jamir Uddin Sircar, Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan and State Minister for Cultural Affairs Begum Selima Rahman during the visit.

Besides, the delegation will have a meeting with the standing committee on the cultural affairs ministry at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban.

It will visit National Mausoleum, National Library and Archives, National Museum and Ahsan Manzil in the capital.

The delegation will leave Dhaka on August 11.

Iranian consul detained by Iraq militants

Iraq PM asks insurgents to quit Najaf; 43 more killed in fighting

REUTERS, AFP, Najaf/ Baghdad

An Iraq Islamic group said yesterday it has "detained" the Iranian consul in the central Iraqi city of Karbala for stirring sectarian strife, Al-Arabiya television reported.

The Islamic Army in Iraq, in a statement read by the Dubai-based channel, said Faridoun Jahani was "detained for stirring sectarian strife and for activities outside his diplomatic duties".

Meanwhile, Iraq's interim prime minister yesterday ordered Shia fighters loyal to a radical cleric to leave the holy city of Najaf but the militiamen were digging in and the death toll from days of clashes mounted.

Clashes erupted again around midday in Najaf and also the squalid

Baghdad district of Sadr City, witnesses said.

Other flashpoints in Iraq were tense following three days of fighting between US troops and militiamen loyal to Shia Muslim cleric Moqtada al-Sadr that has killed hundreds of people and challenged the authority of Prime Minister Iyad Allawi.

The Health Ministry said at least 43 people had been killed in Najaf and Baghdad in the last 24 hours till last morning.

"We hope that this thing ends as soon as possible," a heavily guarded Allawi told reporters at the start of a visit to Najaf, 160km south of Baghdad.

"I believe gunmen should leave the holy sites ... quickly, lay down

SEE PAGE 11 COL 7

MERCANTILE BANK

HC asks BB why Jalil should not be dropped as chairman

UNB, Dhaka

The High Court yesterday issued rule asking Bangladesh Bank as to why direction should not be given to remove Awami League (AL) lawmaker M Abdul Jalil from the post of chairman of Mercantile Bank Ltd for violating banking rules.

The rule is returnable in two weeks.

The rule came upon a writ filed by Shakil Akhter, a sponsor-director of Mercantile Bank who was dropped from the board of directors,

SEE PAGE 11 COL 6

FENCHUGANJ POWER PLANT

Canadian senator censures govt

move for re-tender

SHARIEF KHAN

The government's decision to invite fresh tenders for the 90-megawatt Fenchuganj power plant ignoring a Canadian company's offer has drawn criticism from Canada of the project management.

Canadian Senator Mac Harb, who had lobbied for removal of quotas and tariffs on Bangladeshi exports to Canada, in a letter to Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan last week urged the government to review the decision and allow a negotia-

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SEE PAGE 11 COL 7