

Fanatic tempers

FROMPAGE 1
their burial at Muslim graveyards and removal of the members of the sect from government offices.

Fanatics are set to attack the sect's headquarters in Bakshibazar on August 27, according to a decision of Aamra Dhakabashi, a cultural organisation that threw its weight behind otherreligious outfits.

When the zealots went to drive away Ahmadiyyas from their mosques in Patuakhali on May 12, Chittagong on May 28 and Khulna on August 13, law enforcers led them to hang signboards that branded the mosques as 'Kadiani (Ahmadiyya) Places of Worship'.

"It (resisting the zealots) is not concern of my ministry. The home ministry is to act on this," State Minister for Religious Affairs Mosharef Hossain Shajahan told The Daily Star.

But State Minister for Home Lutfozzaman Babar said on Sunday he would have details about the issue and asked the correspondent to contact the police.

But Inspector General of Police (IGP) Shahudul Haque said: "Police had no option but to allow anti-Ahmadiyya groups to hang the signboards as several thousands went there."

The Ahmadiyyas follow the same rituals as Sunnis who are 90 percent of Bangladeshi Muslims, apart from their belief that Imam Mehdi, the last messenger of Prophet Muhammad, has already arrived to uphold Islam as it was preached 1400 years ago. But the Sunnis believe Mehdi is yet to come.

Trampling Ahmadiyyas' fundamental rights, the government on January 8 banned their publications for what it said was "objectionable material which hurt or might hurt the sentiments of the majority Muslim population of Bangladesh".

The same day, the government issued an official circular to central, divisional and district officers naming 20 Ahmadiyya books, booklets and leaflets as banned.

The government tried to justify the ban saying it did so to save the Ahmadiyyas from the wrath of agitating zealots. "The home ministry suggested the ban and I agreed. I feared the situation might take a violent turn," Mosharef said.

The order was not published in the official gazette until yesterday and Foreign Minister Morshed Khan tried to defend the government in a BBC Radio interview, saying no gazette notification was made.

But the police have reportedly been instructed to remove the Ahmadiyya publications in a drive that they carried out in parts of the country.

"We cannot go for legal steps against the ban as the government is yet to inform us nor did it publish the

order in official gazette," Ahmadiyya spokesman Tareq Mobasher told The Daily Star.

The Islami Shashantantra Andolon, International Majlishe Tahaffuze Khatme Nabuwat, International Khatme Nabuwat Movement Bangladesh, Hifazate Khatme Nabuwat Andolon, Khatme Nabuwat Committee Bangladesh and Khatme Nabuwat Andolon Parishad Bangladesh (KNAPB) also intensified torture, including killing, beating, excommunicating and house arrest of the Ahmadiyyas living in Bangladesh since 1912.

At least eight people of the community were killed in Bangladesh since independence, with a preacher murdered in Jessore on October 31 last year as the latest victim.

The bigots raided several Ahmadiyya mosques across the country, including one in Nakhhalpara in the capital and seized Ahmadiyya publications.

"We will make it an issue in the next general election if the government does not declare the Ahmadiyyas non-Muslim," a KNAPB leader threatened at a press conference Sunday, claiming that Jamaat-e-Islami, a ruling coalition partner, is supporting them.

Abdul Awal, missionary of Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat Bangladesh, told The Daily Star: "The government caved in to the bigots, making them stronger."

"This is not what Bangladesh and its constitution stands for. It is the total failure of the government to uphold citizens' rights," he said.

"We have seen an ugly display of Talibanism over the last 11 months," he said, asking all to unite against it.

Civil society, political parties, rights organisations, including the United Nations Human Rights Commission, Amnesty International and US State Department called on the government to lift the ban, ensure safety of Ahmadiyyas, uphold their fundamental rights and try their attackers.

Admitting that the ban restricts Ahmadiyyas' fundamental rights, Mosharef said it might have prompted the anti-Ahmadiyya groups to move further for declaration of Ahmadiyyas non-Muslim.

But he is against lifting the ban and resisting zealots from going to Ahmadiyya mosques at this moment. "A fanatic group is there to add fuel to anti-Ahmadiyya groups' wrath." On the signboards, he said, "We may remove them later."

The IGP suggested: "A decision should come from the higher authorities and the civil society must raise their voice against the anti-Ahmadiyya move."

United opposition

FROMPAGE 1
forces: Bangladesh state and people's security" organised by Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD-Inu) at its office in the city.

The assembled political leaders and academicians called for a greater unity of the pro-liberation forces to fight back the recent uprising of Islamist terrorists.

Among the leaders, AL General Secretary (GS) Abdul Jalil said it is high time to unite and eliminate the fundamentalist forces.

"In the ruling coalition, the BNP is no more the dominant factor now, but Jamaat-e-Islami is," Jalil said, adding national unity is a must to face the anti-liberation forces, for which the goals and implementation strategies have to be set through discussions.

The AL GS said criticising the AL's shortcomings would not help in any way address the spectre of fundamentalism haunting the entire country, and added in the left-leaning 11-party alliance there is a section opposed to a unified movement with the AL.

Leaving that section aside, Jalil urged Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB), Workers Party and others to join the broad opposition unity.

CPB President Manjurul Ahsan Khan said it was the United States that created the Islamist militant forces across the world for its own interests.

He also criticised both the country's major political parties -- the AL and the BNP -- for not daring to make proper investigation into the bomb attacks when in power, as, he alleged, US intelligence agencies are active behind the scene.

On Unity Khan said, "Unity is already there; we are not divided." He also said it has to be kept in mind that piety, communalism and fundamentalism are not the same, adding most of the alems in the country are not communal. "So we have to respect the religious rights of people."

JSD President Hasanul Haq Inu said communalism, fatwas and militant activities are pushing the country towards a bloody civil war. To quell the evil there is no alternative to removing the alliance government and forming a national front to root out the country's extreme communal forces.

Earlier, JSD (Inu) GS Syed Jafar Sazzad presented the keynote paper to the roundtable, in which he observed bomb scare and insecurity have gripped the entire nation.

In all the bomb blasts, both during

the previous government of the AL and the present one, the administration and the detective agencies utterly failed, as they could neither take precautionary steps nor arrest the persons responsible for the crimes.

But, Sazzad questioned whether it really was failure of detective agencies and administration or whether the government obstructed proper investigation by them.

The JSD GS said ruling coalition partners Jamaat and Islami Oikya Jote (IOJ) have been all through denying their involvement in the bomb attacks. But, as the majority of persons arrested so far in the cases directly or indirectly belong to Jamaat and the IOJ, they cannot escape their liability only by claiming innocence.

The keynote paper said Jamaat by its very nature is an armed force. It has been running militant operations in Chittagong, Cox's Bazar, Satkhira, Rajshahi and other parts of the country. Its student wing has seized control of many educational institutions including Chittagong University, Rajshahi University and Islamic University through killings and other criminal activities, it added.

Prof Mesbah Kamal of Dhaka University (DU) said the general mercy given to the war criminals of the Liberation War was a historical mistake. He demanded of the AL to implement its election pledge of punishing the war criminals if voted to power.

Workers Party GS Bimol Biswas, Jatiya Party (Monju) Secretary General Sheikh Shahidul Islam and Additional Secretary General Sadeq Siddiqui, and DU Assistant Prof Gobinda Chakraborti also spoke in the roundtable.

After deluge

FROMPAGE 12
agricultural rehabilitation programme could provide help in terms of free seeds and fertilisers to a maximum of 35,550 farmers, though the official figure put the total number of flood-affected small and marginal farmers in Narsingdi at 138,951.

Again, of the 35,550 beneficiaries, official sources said only 13,500 farmers could expect free seeds of aman (5 kilograms each) and fertiliser (25 kilograms each) in the current month. The vegetable farmers would have to wait for at least two more weeks to get the government's seed help and the other farmers would get the input assistance only in the winter season.

Administrator of UNDP visits Rangamati today

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangamati

The visiting United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) administrator reaches Rangamati today to see the progress of some UNDP-funded development work.

According to an official itinerary, Mark Malloch Brown is also expected to meet indigenous leader Jyotirindra Bodhipriya Lama, chairman of Chittagong Hill Tracts Regional Council, and some leaders of non-indigenous community during his daylong stay.

The top UNDP official is due to visit Chittagong Hill Tracts Development Facility field office in the town, which is implementing a one-year UNDP-funded pilot project titled 'Promotion of Development and Confidence Building' in the conflict-torn hilly region, it added.

Local administration took necessary security measures for his visit, sources said.

New bird

FROMPAGE 12
threat," Oliveros said, but its limited distribution makes it vulnerable to habitat loss and predators introduced to the island such as cats and rats.

Oliveros told AFP his group, Wild Bird Club of the Philippines, had checked with international experts at Birdlife, and learned that this species had never been recorded before.

Related to the far more common Moorhen, rails are a type of ground-feeding, ground-nesting birds with straight, pointed bills.

Oliveros said the expedition gave the bird the scientific name of Gallirallus calayanensis because they wanted its island habitat to get more attention.

One specimen of the bird has been sent to the National Museum, he added.

Birdlife International said on its website that the new bird was most similar in appearance to the Okinawa Rail from the Japan's Ryukyu Islands to the northeast, although there were differences in voice and colour.

Oliveros said the two birds were likely to be closely related as they were both found in the east Asian region.

Birdlife added that the expedition team would do further research on the bird's habitat and numbers, while working with the community to minimise threats and protect the forest.

The government's Protected Areas and Wildlife Bureau said Calayan was not listed under the official protected wildlife areas but the discovery of the new bird species might help in efforts to have the area covered as well.

Eighteen of the 20 living species of flightless rail are considered threatened, and the majority of rail species which have become extinct since 1600 were also flightless, Birdlife added.

No plan

FROMPAGE 1
World crude oil prices spiralled to a new high of \$46.91 a barrel Monday, raising fears of local price hike.

Bangladesh consumes 1.5 lakh metric tonnes (MT) of diesel, 50,000 MT of kerosene, 13,000 MT of octane, 13,000 MT of petrol and 22,000 MT of jet fuel a month. Annual consumption of petroleum products comes to about 38 lakh MT.

"Seventy five percent of the total consumption is diesel and kerosene used to a large extent by farmers and rural people. So any price hike would hurt them most," Mosharraf said.

But BPC Chairman AKM Zafrullah Khan yesterday said the spiralling oil prices have already affected the corporation. It counted Tk 40 crore in loss in June and Tk 70 crore in July because of the market heat-up. August figure for loss may further rise, he said.

Mustafizur Rahman, research director of the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), said, "Surging crude oil prices on the international market will not have any negative impact on domestic consumption if the government, which controls the oil sector, does not kick up prices."

Mustafiz said although the price rise would compel the government to pay more in import bills, the country has sufficient foreign currency reserves to meet the extra obligations.

The BPC sources most of its oil from Kuwait Petroleum Corporation under a state-to-state contract. It also imports from Indian Oil Corporation and Extrap, the Singapore concern of London-based oil major Exxon-Mobil.

In April this year, the BPC imported octane at \$47.43 a barrel, kerosene at \$42.08, jet fuel at \$40.9 and diesel at \$40.36. In June, the rates were \$51.85 for octane, \$44.64 for kerosene, \$44.87 for jet fuel and \$44.55 for diesel. The price further rose in July with the BPC paying \$51.01 for octane, \$48.68 for kerosene, \$47.93 for jet fuel and \$47.52 for diesel.

SC chides govt

FROMPAGE 1
and again with the same matter. If it believes court is its guardian, its action should show it. It should maintain dignity and supremacy of the court, the bench observed.

The seven-member Appellate Division led by Chief Justice Syed JR Modassir Hossain also laughed at the excuses the government makes to repeatedly seek additional time to implement the court orders.

The attorney general while submitting his appeal for a four-month extension said, "Some steps among the 12 Supreme Court directives have been already taken and summaries of two rules have been sent to the Prime Minister's Office for approval of the president."

He added approval of the summary of two rules would expedite the process of fully implementing the 12 directives for separation of the judiciary.

The court rejected his argument and said on August 7 the government informed it that two rules were sent to the office of the president, but now it is saying those were sent to the Prime Minister's Office. There is difference between the two offices, it observed.

If the government gets four more months, it will again seek extension

after three months. It has become a routine and people do not want to watch the same drama over and over again, the court noted.

It asked the attorney general if the government would fully implement the directives this year. The attorney general said the law ministry can specify the time and he will inform the law ministry of the matter.

The lawyer of the petitioner, Barrister Tania Ameer, was not allowed to make submission.

The Supreme Court on April 19 gave the government three months when it sought extension of the deadline for the 18th time. But before granting time, it asked the government to cite specific reasons and later expressed satisfaction at the attorney general's explanation of government steps for separation of the judiciary.

After the 18th extension of the SC deadline, Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Moudud Ahmed said the government would comply with the court orders by the fresh deadline and would seek no more extension.

The SC in a groundbreaking 12-point directive in December 1999 asked the government to separate the judiciary from the executive.

Govt positive

FROMPAGE 12
The visiting Tata team comprising Resident Director MA Pathan and General Manager Sukaran Singh also held meeting with Mahmudur Rahman and isleamt to have sought an appointment with Industries Minister Maulana Matur Rahman Nizami.

The three ministers, Bol executive chairman and prime minister's principal secretary are all members of a committee constituted to review Tata's proposal. The committee, headed by Nizami, is expected to sit in a meeting on August 22, officials concerned said.

Pneumonia

FROMPAGE 12
infection of the lower part of the lungs has infected 13,408 newborns in flood shelters since August 1.

Doctors said every day about 10 to 15 pneumonia-infected children are reporting to different medical camps in flood-hit areas.

Diarrhoea outbreak, meanwhile, continued to spread in the flood affected areas. According to health directorate sources, two more patients died of the water-borne disease while 5,926 more people were added to diarrhoea-infected patients yesterday, bringing the tally of sufferers to 1,76,041 since July 1.

Another 2763 dysentery patients reported to various medical camps yesterday. A total of 31,830 people fell sick of the disease, which infects the intestine.

Skin and eye diseases also soared in flood shelters with 26,494 patients reporting to medical camps. Snake bites claimed lives of 64 people in flood affected areas so far including two yesterday.

Another 44 people fell victim to dengue in the capital. A total of 2,097 people have been treated for the mosquito borne disease, which claimed five lives since June, in various city hospitals since the monsoon set in, health directorate sources added.

Forest dept

FROMPAGE 1
Partex Group, majority owned by ruling BNP lawmaker MA Hashem.

The 39.10-acre plot was recorded as forestland under the gazette notification No. 23694 in 1984.

Environment and Forest Minister Tariqueul Islam bore out the forest department's ownership claim of the plot as a gazetted forestland and said cases have been filed against its grabber.

The minister said the forest department has long been in possession of the plot and planted trees on it on a participatory basis under social afforestation programme more than eight years ago. After maturity, the trees were logged in June last and the proceeds distributed among the seven beneficiaries.

Forest department officials alleged the Partex Group with the help of hired musclemen took possession of the land by force and has started constructing roads and infrastructure on it.

The Partex Group chief, MA Hashem, however, raised counter accusation against the forest department of grabbing his land, which he claimed he had purchased from private owners long ago.

He said he has all necessary documents to prove his ownership of the land, where the group plans to set up Partex International University.

"[When I bought the land,] I obtained clearance from all authorities concerned including the Army, as there is a cantonment adjacent to the plot, and have been paying the land taxes duly for long," Hashem said.

He alleged "The foresters [in June last] cut down and took away a huge number of trees by force from my land and also attempted to seize the plot with the help of police."

The BNP lawmaker said his group would sue the forest department for what he said was forcible grabbing of his land in a magistrate's court.

According to forest department's

According to Tata's proposal, it will set up a 1,000-mw gas-based power plant and a 4.2 lakh metric tons capacity steel mill somewhere between Iswardi and Siraiganj. It will also set up a fertiliser factory in Chittagong with annual production capacity of 10 lakh metric tons.

Tata is willing to implement the projects in two phases -- in the first phase, it will set up a 500-mw power plant and a 1.2 lakh metric tons capacity steel mill. The capacity will be doubled in the second phase. The capacity of the fertiliser factory will be 10 lakh metric tons from the beginning.

As natural gas is the key for all these industries, Tata wants an agreement for gas supply for 20 years. In response, Mosharraf Hossain said the government has such agreements with companies like Lafarge and AES and it can sign an accord with Tata as well if other conditions are fulfilled.

The minister, however, declined to talk about price of gas right at this moment as he said it will vary in different aspects. "The tariff of gas will depend on quantum of export of the products -- steel and fertiliser," he later told the news agency in support of his contention.

The proposed investment would generate 8,000 jobs and products made by the steel mills and fertiliser factory would be sold in the international market. It will need initially 200MMCFD of gas and another 150MMCFD will be required on completion of the second phase.

If the government gives green signal to Tata's proposal following approval by the committee headed by Nizami, it will sign a memorandum of understanding (MoU).

Earlier, Tata had made the proposal when a 16-member Bangladesh delegation led by Bol Executive Chairman Mahmudur Rahman visited Tata International on July 14 and had extensive talks with its Managing Director Sudhir Deoras.

records, the land has been under illegal possession from May 21 last. Since then the forest department has lodged four general diaries (GDs), two first information reports (FIRs) and one record correction case to recover the land. The department also obtained a stay order from a court on all construction work on the plot.

Forest officials said the Partex Group has posted armed musclemen on the plot and begun construction of roads and other infrastructure by felling trees.

They said there is no scope of doubt about the plot being a forestland, adding many such forestlands have been illegally grabbed by people showing fake documents.

"We have undertaken an initiative to gradually recover forestlands from such grabbers," said a high official at the Environment and Forest Ministry.

He also pointed out that, "Though the Partex Group now claims it purchased the land long ago, it never made that claim in the past."

Buriganga

FROMPAGE 1
100 feet, the river shores were under threat of collapse, prompting the brick kiln owners to build the dyke.

"As soon as the dyke was built, the river changed its course and we became its prime targets," said Nazir Hossain, who lost six rooms of his house and was trying to retrieve his possession from the remains.

"On Friday we were alarmed when a four-storey building slightly tilted towards the river. By Monday, several houses were gone into the river," said Nazir.

"We have been living in Basila for generations and never witnessed anything like this," said Faruk Sardar, a local.

America's Games

FROMPAGE 1
van den Hoogenband in the final of the 200m freestyle, will go for two golds in the 200m butterfly final and the 4x200m freestyle relay.

Meanwhile, the USA's collection of multi-millionaire NBA superstars face a volatile atmosphere as they take on hosts Greece looking to recover from their shock opening 92-73 loss to Puerto Rico.

The Americans currently lag behind in the medals table lying in fourth place with three golds while China, who picked up five of the 14 on offer Monday, lead with 10.

Having lost for the first time in 25 outings since the Barcelona Games, the US basketball team need only finish in the top four in their six-team group to reach the quarterfinals.

Greece are coming off a 76-54 rout of Australia and will be backed by 12,000 passionate home supporters, anxious to forget the doping scandal surrounding sprinters Kostadinov Kenteris and Ekaterini Thanou.

Back in the sporting arenas, China's medal charge faltered slightly when 50m pistol hopefuls Tan Zongliang and Xu Dan both failed to reach the final, eventually won by Russia's Mikhail Nestruev.

In the football tournament, half of the quarterfinal placings will take shape with South Korea and Mali facing each other in Saloniika with both nations virtually guaranteed a spot in the last eight.

Argentina are already through where they look likely to be joined by Tuesday's opponents Australia.

Saifur

FROMPAGE 12
Brown, who arrived here on a three-day visit to see flood damage, told newspapers the UN had its estimate based on the government assessment and it is subject to change. "The figure may be reworked if the damages appear to be too much. It's too soon to speak about the final number," the UNDP administrator said.

The government and the donors are jointly assessing the flood damage and a final estimate would be available soon, he added.

Brown said the UN launched a \$210 million aid appeal immediately after the recession of floodwaters and that he was optimistic about a positive response from the donors if the government seeks assistance after assessing the damage.

Saifur said the damage is huge and different ministries are coming up with varying estimates. The government has not arrived at the final estimate. "It is too early to say exactly how much resources we will be needing..."

The government will make a realistic assessment to come up with a figure that is credible to the international community. "We'll definitely get their support if our estimate is plausible..."

The finance minister said Britain and the UNDP have proposed to help modernise the police administration to improve law and order situation.

Dhaka may request

FROMPAGE 1
secretary asked to schedule the talks date for August 5. The Indian side is yet to make any reply to Dhaka's request, sources said.

"We are preparing to send another letter, requesting them to inform us a convenient date for the talks," a top water resources ministry official, preferring anonymity, told The Daily Star on Monday.

"Bangladesh also wants to learn about the progress of the mega Indian river-linking project," he added.

According to sources, the commission was scheduled to hold its 36th meeting in Dhaka yesterday but New Delhi cancelled it citing a secretary-level talks of the Joint Committee of Experts (JCE), a JRC body, should be arranged before the ministerial level sitting.

The Indian side, however, missed the scheduled JCE meeting last month.

In its last letter on the issue, New Delhi said they needed to settle some issues such as: formula of sharing waters of Teesta river and constructing dam on its part of Muhuri river before sitting for the next secretary-level meeting, sources added.

The last JRC meeting was held in August 2003 in New Delhi. However, according to the 1972 Ganges water-sharing treaty, the commission is supposed to meet four times every year.

"Bangladesh is continuously hammering the Indian side on the issue. We want to reach a concrete point on water-sharing of seven important common rivers," the high-profile official said.

The JCE, headed by the water resources secretaries of both countries, has been working for last seven years to chalk out ways for a permanent or long-term water-sharing plan for Teesta, Dharaala, Dudhkumar, Monu, Khowai, Gomti and Muhuririvers.

15 injured

FROMPAGE 1
going treatment in Jessore General Hospital.

The superintendent of police said Jessore town has been put on high alert. But no-one was arrested in this connection.

The OC said that 10 of the 11 severely injured are AL leaders and activists.

In the instant reaction, the AL brought out a procession to protest the bomb attack. The president of Jessore district AL and former lawmaker, Ali Reza Raju, and General Secretary Shahin Chakladar visited the injured in hospital.

Gujarat riots

FROMPAGE 12

"This unprecedented judgement is an indictment of the Gujarat government and the police," said Father Cedric Prakash, a social activist in the western state who has campaigned on behalf of riot victims.

"It is clear that the Supreme Court has realised that the police and the government have not done their duty," said the Roman Catholic priest. "We had given up hope but this judgement reaffirms our faith in the judicial system."

The Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) which rules Gujarat reacted cautiously.

"The BJP has always believed that the victims should get justice and the guilty should be punished but what is unfortunate is that the entire Gujarat episode has been politicised, which is most inappropriate," BJP spokesman Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi told the Press Trust of India news agency.

The BJP headed India's coalition government during the riots and refused to dismiss Gujarat's headline leader, Chief Minister Narendra Modi.

India's left-leaning Congress-led government, which defeated the BJP in an upset in April-May national elections, has vowed a more rigorous prosecution of Gujarat riot cases.

V.K. Gadvi, a Congress party leader in Gujarat, said the Supreme Court ruling showed Modi should go.

"On moral grounds the whole Gujarat government should quit as they have been found incapable of doing

justice," Gadvi said.

The Supreme Court decision to throw open investigations in Gujarat came after it intervened in two riot cases which had been widely publicised after two women victims went public with their accounts.

In April, India's top court ordered a fresh trial of 21 Hindus acquitted of torching to death 12 Muslims at a Gujarat bakery.

The Supreme Court ordered the retrial to be held in the neighbouring state of Maharashtra to protect Zahaera Sheikh, whose father was killed in the Best Bakery and said she retracted testimony at the original hearing due to threats by Hindu hardliners.

This month, the Supreme Court also shifted to Maharashtra the trial of 20 men accused of killing 14 Muslims, including two women who were gang-raped. The sole adult survivor of the massacre, Bilkis Bano Yakub Rasool, said she could not testify in Gujarat because authorities were not cooperative.

The court Tuesday asked for the Gujarat police committee to submit reports every three months on their progress in looking anew at the riot cases.

Gujarat police chief A.K. Bhargava said the police would comply and examine between 200 and 300 cases a month.

"We will be reopening the cases and if evidence is found then there will be reinvestigation," he said.

7 killed in Baghdad

FROMPAGE 12
his murder