

Target to stabilise

FROM PAGE 1
envisaging 100 per cent safe motherhood, and providing emergency obstetric services (EOS) at all levels.

It also gives special attention to family planning (FP) services mainly to increase contraceptive prevalence rate, by offering choices to women, expanding clinical services from all static healthcare facilities and making home family planning services available.

Adolescent health is one of the priority areas of the policy, proposing school-based reproductive education for young people, and education of parents on the significance of reproductive health education for their children.

On adolescent health, the policy also focuses on late marriage for girls, spacing of childbirth and mass awareness on transmission of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases.

"It is a comprehensive document but the main challenge of the policy is how we are going to translate it into action. A very positive aspect of the policy is that it involves all ministries and calls for equal responsibilities," said Md Fazlur Rahman, director general of Family Planning Directorate.

40-45 varsities

FROM PAGE 1
evaluation committee that submitted its report to the prime minister on Sunday recommending closure of eight private universities for violating rules and regulations.

Sources pointed out that most private universities run primarily to serve commercial ends with flashy advertisements and alluring promises. In some cases, feuds between corrupt board of trustees and vice-chancellor damaged congenial academic atmosphere at the institutions.

On media reports mentioning a number of private universities as top performing ones, Asaduzzaman said, "We did not rate for any university in our evaluation report. We just examined overall academic atmosphere at the private universities on the basis of some basic criteria like number of full-time teachers, infrastructure, curriculum, examination system, grading system, and library and laboratory facilities."

It is true that most of the private universities have failed to attain the goals for which they were set up, said a member of the evaluation committee. "But a powerful political and trade lobby has been active to keep them running," he added seeking anonymity.

Many of the private universities function with an acute shortage of teachers, want of funds and lack a congenial academic atmosphere. A number of them have opened departments and outer campuses for which they neither have approval nor teachers, he said.

"Our impression is that these institutions should not be allowed to function as universities any longer. But the matter rests on the government."

Another committee member,

"The policy incorporates almost all the visions of the International Conference on Population Development (ICPD) held in Cairo, Egypt," a top official said.

It also seeks to address high rates of malnutrition, decline in arable land, pollution of environment and water resources, poverty, fast urbanisation and growing unemployment.

The draft NNP stresses equal rights of women and men, their (women's) participation in all spheres of policy-making, proper protection and shelter for the elderly and minimum required calories (as recommended by the UN) for all growing children.

To prevent people from migrating to metropolitan areas from rural areas, the policy proposes to increase employment opportunities in agriculture sector and also seeks to develop satellite towns, expand healthcare and educational facilities and scope of employment in the cities.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia chaired the weekly cabinet meeting held at her office that approved the draft NPP. Health and Family Planning Minister Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain placed it at the meeting.

Advani takes over as BJP chief

REUTERS, Bombay

The Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) brought back hardline leader Lal Krishna Advani as party chief yesterday after last week's loss in state elections in the major industrial state of Maharashtra.

The appointment of Advani, a former deputy prime minister, came as the ruling Congress party and a regional ally haggled for the post of chief minister of Maharashtra, marring their morale-boosting victory.

Maharashtra, of which Bombay is the capital, is India's second-most populous state and the country's financial and film hub. The election win is expected to strengthen Congress at the national level and help push through economic reforms opposed by Communist allies.

It is also a huge loss of face for the BJP in what was its first major political test since it was booted out of power in New Delhi by an alliance led by Italian-born Sonia Gandhi's Congress party in May.

"We are disappointed with the results of the Maharashtra election," party president Venkaiah Naidu told reporters while announcing his resignation.

"In view of the challenges before the party and the country and the forces which are raising their heads against our ideology the party needs a senior to guide its forward movement. We came to the conclusion that Advani will be party president."

Despite the win, the Congress faces the prospect of giving up the post of chief minister of the prized state to its ally, the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP), after the NCP won 71 seats to 69 for Congress in the 288-member state legislature.

Two days after election results were declared and many meetings later, the two sides had yet to resolve the row.

Though Congress and the NCP are expected to share the spoils of office in a coalition state government, the post of chief minister is considered prestigious.

Rab seizes

FROM PAGE 12
local and 1,056 cartons of foreign-made polyester cotton. It also recovered 446 cartons of Indian cotton from a warehouse.

Customs officials said the cotton was seized as the owner failed to show any valid documents.

However, Amin Uddin, owner of the warehouse, claimed himself as a cotton trader and said customs clearance is not required to run the business.

Our Pabna Correspondent adds that Rab men yesterday seized arms, ammunition and drugs from Fateh Mohammadpur in Iswardi.

The Rab men raided a house in the area and arrested three brothers — Rashed Akhtar, Jahid Akhtar and Shahed Akhtar.

Following their statements, Rab men seized an Italian pistol with three bullets, a rifle, seven bullets, a magazine, phensidyle and alcohol.

Same model

FROM PAGE 1
(IO) of the Sylhet shrine case, told The Daily Star last night he received a three-page Scotland Yards report from Police Headquarters yesterday.

The CID was tasked with the probe into the incident that followed a blast at the same shrine on January 12, which killed five people.

The Scotland Yards collected some evidence from the spot and sent the report after testing those at its laboratory.

"Testing the lever of the grenade that was hurled on May 21, the Scotland Yards said it is similar to those of ARGES model," said the CID officer.

Police arrested 13 people in connection with the May 21 grenade attack but failed to squeeze information out of them that may lead to unravelling the mystery of the attack. Eight of them are now on bail.

Asked about the status of investigation, IO Munshi Atiq said yesterday, about five months into the incident, "We're still trying to find a clue."

Austria is the origin of the ARGES model grenade and ARGES (Armaturen Gesellschaft m. b. H.) of Austria is a recognised manufacturer and supplier of NATO-qualified high explosives. Some other countries including China and Pakistan also manufacture this grenade, according to information available on the Internet.

Open market

FROM PAGE 1
Yusuf in the chair yesterday.

Under the OMS, each person will be allowed to buy three kg of rice at the highest everyday.

Around 10,800 dealers who are mostly grocers have already been selected to sell rice in the open market.

The ministry directed the local administration to take adequate measures for ensuring smooth selling of rice under the OMS.

Currently, course rice is selling between Tk 17 and Tk 18 a kg in different markets in Dhaka.

Most AL lawmakers

FROM PAGE 1
Besides, party's senior leaders occasionally join the Business Advisory Committee meetings.

An AL deputy on condition of anonymity said the party strategy on the parliamentary bodies appears to be very much confusing. "If the party high command does not want to participate in the committees then why they sent our names to the ruling party for inclusion in the committees," the angry lawmaker said.

He also questioned why the party is participating in several standing committees while abstaining from joining most of the committees.

Talking to The Daily Star, a number of AL lawmakers said by joining the House proceedings they could gear up the oust-government movement both in and outside parliament. They believe the parliamentary standing committees are the right place to discuss corruption and irregularities of the ministers.

When the AL lawmakers were included in the committees just before prorogation of the last session, most of them were ready to join the committee meetings but party General Secretary Abdul Jalil asked them not to join until a fresh decision is taken.

Junior and new lawmakers are frequently asking their seniors to make the party stance clear but they are not getting satisfactory answer, sources said.

Even some of the senior lawmakers are in favour of joining parliament and standing committees. Party Presidium Member Suranjit Sengupta told The Daily Star they should join both the

parliament session and committee meetings to discuss issues like price hike of essentials, law and order downside and reform of caretaker government system.

"I personally believe, we should not give walkover to the government to run the House at their will. We can put pressure on the government revealing its corruption and misdeeds through the parliamentary bodies," Sengupta said.

He however said it is the party high command who will take the decision on the matter.

Deputy Leader of the Opposition Abdul Hamid yesterday told The Daily Star that they would take the decision about joining the upcoming session and participation in the parliamentary bodies at the party's parliamentary party meeting before the session.

Another senior AL lawmaker said, "As long as we use the title of lawmakers we should join both the parliamentary proceedings and standing committees."

Referring to the resolution of the standing committee on home ministry that observed the present law and order is much better than any previous period, a senior AL lawmaker said if they were at the meeting it would have been difficult to take such a resolution.

About the upcoming parliament session, lawmaker Shahjahan Khan said he would submit a number of notices demanding discussion on price hike of essentials, law and order and probe into the August 21 grenade attacks. "But I don't know whether we will join or not."

AL calls Rab

FROM PAGE 1
'crossfire', the AL leaders also demanded punishment of the Rab members and those who raised the force for violating human rights.

The AL leaders at a news conference at the party's Dhanmondi office expressed their apprehension that the government may indemnify the Rab against the killings.

They inferred the opinion from the indemnification of the armed forces for killing over 50 people during the Operation Clean Heart.

"The Rab cannot be a law enforcing agency. This is a killing force and violator of human rights," said AL presidium member Suranjit Sengupta.

The AL held the conference to protest reported torture of two teenage brothers under the Rab custody for their confessional statements on the August 21 carnage. The Rab reportedly detained the boys in an unknown place for four days.

AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil said the government itself has become a weapon of torture and violator of constitutional rights of the people.

Asked whether the AL will take legal action challenging the Rab activities and against its members, Jalil said, "We'll take the right decision in time."

Suranjit said, "The Rab has killed dozens of people in the name of crossfire. This is simply murder as these people were killed without any trial. That is why we demand the government disband the Rab."

"How can it be 'crossfire' since

there is no evidence of the Rab's being shot at," he said, asking, "Is crossfire a one-way shooting?" I'm quite sure the government will go to parliament to indemnify the killings under Rab custody," he added.

He firmly said the Rab and those who have created it will have to face trial for custodial deaths and torture.

Jalil said the Rab tried to force the boys confess that they had hurled grenades at the rally at the directive of some AL leaders. One was released after four days and his younger brother sent to jail after spending 11 days in the RAB custody, he added.

Demanding compensation to them, he said, "They were subjected to heinous methods of physical torture including electric shocks."

On their identity, the AL leader said, "We're not mentioning their names for security reason. They may fall victim to crossfire."

Accusing the government of involvement in the grenade attack, Jalil demanded interrogation of the prime minister's son Tarique Rahman and brother Sayeed Iskander.

He reiterated the AL demand for the name the foreign force, as claimed by the judicial commission chief and the prime minister, involved in the attack.

AL leaders Akhtaruzzaman, Mostafa Jalal Mohiuddin, BM Mozammel and President of Sechchma Sebak League Bahauddin Nasim were present.

Durga Puja

FROM PAGE 1
Committee yesterday urged the government to take extensive security measures to ensure smooth celebrations of the Puja.

They alleged at a press briefing at Dhakeswari National Temple yesterday that the government has not deployed additional police and paramilitary forces in the Mandaps although idols of Durga were destroyed at different places of the country.

The destroyer of Ashur, Durga is lion-borne and wields arms in her ten hands. The goddess and her children — Lakshmi, Saraswati, Kartik and Ganesh — descend on earth on the Shasthi for four days on invitation from the devotees through Bodhon rituals.

Mahasaptami, the first day of Durga Puja, will be celebrated tomorrow.

Mahastami, the most important day of Durga Puja, celebrates the goddess's victory over Mahishashur, the demon, symbolising the win of good over evil. Devotees recite hymns and offer flowers on this day seeking blessings of Durgalinashini Durga, the saviour from all evils.

Bhog or food is offered to Devi Durga on Mahanabami, which is later distributed among the devotees.

Mahadashami is the day when the devotees bid farewell to the goddess along with her children and immerse the idol in the river.

As many as 17,500 Puja Mandaps, 139 of them in the capital, have been put up across the country for the celebrations.

The general secretary of Bangladesh Puja Uddapan Parishad said they have directed their district committees not to use loudspeakers and musical instruments during Iftar, Tarabi prayers and Sehri.

He said 'dhak' (drum) can be used

Bhomra port idle for strike in India

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sathkira

Export-import through Bhomra land port came to a halt yesterday as Ghojadanga Nagarik Committee on the other side of the border enforced an indefinite strike.

The committee formed by the locals went on the strike demanding reconstruction of a 13-km road from Bashirhat to Ghojadanga land port.

Over 200 trucks loaded with imported goods like onion, apple, orange and tomato remained stranded at Basirha since yesterday morning.

An official of Bhomra C&F (Clearing and Forwarding) Agents Association yesterday said the imported goods worth several crores of taka would be damaged if the strike was not withdrawn within the next two days.

When contacted, Ghojadanga C&F Agents' Association President Gopal Sarkar said the authorities concerned did not take any measure to repair the road despite repeated requests by the locals. So, they formed a committee and enforced 'bandh' to realise their demand, he added.

Supply worries

FROM PAGE 12
Friday's close.

New York's main crude oil price bolted to a record 55.00 dollars a barrel Friday, before closing at a record settlement of 54.93 dollars.

In London Brent North Sea crude oil for December delivery won 47 cents to 50.40 dollars in electronic deals on Monday. It later stood at 50.35 dollars in electronic trades.

Brent had hit a record 51.50 dollars a barrel last Tuesday ahead of expiry of the November contract.

With no major easing of supply shortage foreseeable, New York crude futures would continue to climb towards 60 dollars and beyond, said Gerard Rigby, Singapore-based deputy head of trading for China Aviation Oil.

"At some point these numbers are going to start hurting people quite severely and demand will be affected," he said.

"Sixty dollars is a psychological barrier but, if it hits 60, why not 70 dollars? Anything is possible in this market because there is no spare capacity."

World oil prices have nearly trebled from about 20 dollars a barrel in New York at the start of 2002, surging by almost 70 percent in New York since the start of this year.

Adjusted for inflation, however, they remain far below the levels reached in the wake of the 1979 Iranian revolution when prices surged to upwards of 80 dollars a barrel in today's money.

Motijheel OC

FROM PAGE 12
the BNP-led alliance and the accomplices of the killers in August 15 tragedy and November 3 jail killing in 1975.

In the case, 30 people including AL leader Zillur Rahman MP, were shown as prosecution witnesses.

Sahara in her complaint mentioned that she was present at the rally when Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina was delivering her speech at about 5:30pm. The attack left 19 people killed and 200 including the plaintiff injured, she noted.

The complainant alleged that miscreants of the ruling alliance had threatened to kill AL President Sheikh Hasina when she was in Istanbul. Hasina also received another death threat while she was staying at her Sudha Sadan residence.

After the incident the AL president asked the government to ensure her security but the alliance government ignored the matter, the complainant said.

350 cargo

FROM PAGE 12
A section of the ship owners are now putting pressure on the probe body after detection of the irregularities, the sources said, adding, they have already demonstrated against the incumbentsurveyors.

Earlier, Magistrate Munir Chowdhury, who was appointed to discipline Sadarghat last year, also reported to the ministry about such violation and accused some vessel owners of malpractice.

Experts said rampant violation of the ISO rules while building cargo and passenger vessels is one of the major causes of river mishaps in the country.

JCD agitation

FROM PAGE 12
barring the patients from getting treatment there.

They also locked the main door of the hospital director.

Normalcy was restored after the director received a memorandum from the 'agrieved job seekers' and assured them to give his reply today.

The JCD men along with the job seekers started the agitation on Sunday demanding cancellation of recent appointments of some 3rd and 4th class employees, which they alleged have been made through corruption and irregularities.

On the other hand, sources concerned claimed the appointments were non-political ones.

13 killed in blasts across Iraq

Britain mulls troop movement

AFP, Baghdad

Thirteen Iraqis were killed in bomb blasts around the country, officials said yesterday, as Britain was widely expected to move some of its soldiers to more dangerous areas in Iraq to help US forces.

Hopes rose for fresh talks to end a military stand-off around Iraq's Sunni Muslim rebel stronghold of Fallujah after the US military freed a key negotiator, although troops were encircling the city for a fourth straight day.

British Defence Minister Geoff Hoon is due to make a statement to parliament on troop deployment in Iraq amid widespread reports that some forces are to be moved from the relative calm of southern Iraq into areas around Baghdad, thereby freeing up US forces for attacks on cities like Fallujah.

Iraqi and US-led forces are desperate to crush the insurgency ahead of planned January elections and interim Prime Minister Iyad Allawi has warned Fallujah that it could face an invasion if it does not hand over public enemy number one Abu Mussab al-Zarqawi.

But violence continued to shake Iraq, with 13 people killed in a string of car bombings across the country over the past 24 hours as Muslims mark the holy fasting month of Ramadan.

At least six people, three of them Iraqi policemen, were killed when a car packed with half a tonne of explosives exploded late Sunday as a police convoy drove past a coffee shop, the interior ministry said.

Another 26 people were wounded, among them policemen.

Muslims, who fast during the day, often stay out late at night during Ramadan, visiting with friends at places like the coffee house.

Another five Iraqi civilians were killed and 15 wounded when a car bomb exploded on Sunday on a bridge in the northern Iraqi city of Mosul, the US military said on Monday.

And on Monday, another two Iraqis died in separate roadside bomb blasts around the Iraqi capital, police said, while overnight seven policemen, a woman and her three-year-old child were hurt in a gunfight between police and insurgents in Baquba.

US and Iraqi troops ringed the Sunni Muslim bastion of Fallujah for a fourth straight day, hoping to flush out fighters loyal to Zarqawi, whom they believe is also holed-up in the city and is wanted for a string of deadly attacks

Ex-air force chief

FROM PAGE 1
statement.

A government circular on May 21, 2001 stated that Jamal Uddin Ahmad had been promoted to the air marshal rank.

"The then air force chief, Jamal Uddin Ahmed, was promoted to the rank of air marshal on May 21, 2001, the day of his retirement, although there was no such post in the organogram of the Bangladesh Air Force," the defence ministry said.

The promotion order of Jamal Uddin Ahmed lacked the president's consent as well, added the ISPR statement.

The promotion was not fair and lawful. So, to uphold the government rules and regulations, the circular containing the promotion order has been scrapped, said the ministry handout.

The Ministry of Defence on October 10 scrapped the four-star

and the beheading of hostages.

In a positive sign amid the escalating tensions, Iraqi officials said US troops had released Sheikh Khaled Hamoud, a key Fallujah leader involved in talks with the interim Iraqi government to avert an all-out battle.

"The Americans handed him over to us and we brought him back to his house," said Salam Mohammad, a police official from the flashpoint city.

It was not possible to obtain an immediate comment from the US army, which has neither confirmed nor denied it arrested Hamoud.

Hamoud is a member of a delegation working on a peace deal with the authorities but negotiations collapsed on Thursday after Allawi ordered them to hand over the Jordanian-born Zarqawi.

Another of Hamoud's colleagues, Sheikh Abdul Hamid Jadu, said the release was a positive move that could see the Fallujah team return to the negotiating table with the government.

"If the US bombing stops that would be another positive indication and the negotiating channels could be reopened," Jadu said. "From the beginning we have been calling for a peaceful solution."

Bent on wresting control of the city - which has been a no-go area for US troops since April - from the rebels, US and Iraqi forces traded fire with insurgents over the weekend around its outskirts, as American aircraft pounded rebel positions.

With US soldiers concentrating on Fallujah, Washington has asked its top ally Britain to send some of its 8,000-strong contingent based out of Iraq's second city of Basra in the south to redeploy in previously US-patrolled hotspots, media reports said.

Australia, another top US ally, said it has turned down a UN plea for a contribution to a military force to protect its personnel in Iraq but would train a contingent of Fijian troops to do the task.

The UN has been hampered by a shortage of adequately trained security forces in its aim to assume a wider role in Iraq and assist the Baghdad administration with planning for the national elections in January next year.

general's rank of former army chief Mustafizur Rahman on the recommendation of a parliamentary standing committee.

The parliamentary body termed Mustafizur's promotion unlawful and said there is no such post in the organogram of the Bangladesh Army.

Responding to a query Chairman of the parliamentary standing committee on defence ministry Mahbubur Rahman yesterday told The Daily Star that scrapping the air marshal rank of a former air force chief did not warrant any recommendation.

"As we recommended that former army chief (Mustafizur Rahman) be stripped of his four-star general rank for unlawful promotion, the same applies to the air force chief (Jamal Uddin Ahmed) as his too was unlawful," said Mahub, former army chief and now the defence advisor to the prime minister.

Price mismatch

FROM PAGE 1
prices at growers' level, wholesale level in northern districts and retailers' level in Dhaka.

The prices go up to such an intolerable level mainly because of illegal toll collection from trucks carrying vegetables and other essentials to the capital, hoarding and syndication by dishonest traders, sources concerned said.

Commerce Minister Altaf Hossain Chowdhury told reporters last week that his ministry had asked the home ministry to curb the menace but the prices continued to soar with the advent of Ramadan to the utter helplessness of the common people.

The minister whom the prime minister summoned on Sunday to her office to ventilate dismay at the price spiral, said yesterday the prices would come down if extortion on transport could be stopped.

The Daily Star correspondents from Rangpur, Rajshahi and Bogra reported that crop loss to this year's floods and heavy rainfalls certainly had some impact on the market but middlemen have exploited the situation to the detriment of the consumers.

The middlemen who buy vegetables from the farmers and supply them to the wholesale markets in cities are making huge profit, they said.

Our correspondent from Chittagong reports an unbearable price hike of daily essentials at all kitchen markets in the port city has made the life of the city residents miserable.

The prices of both coarse and finer varieties of rice, vegetables, gram and lentil have shot up further at both wholesale and retail markets during last three or four days.

While visiting Kazi Dewry and Sholoshahar kitchen markets, it was found cucumber was selling at Tk 30-35 a kg, palwal at Tk 30-32, aubergine at Tk 40-45, potato at Tk 14, papaya at Tk 10-12, bitter gourd at Tk 28, Kankrol at Tk 28 and tomato at Tk 60-65.

"The prices of almost all commodities have shot up," said Abdur Razzak, a government official of C&B Colony, at Sholoshahar gate number-2 kitchen market.

Our Sylhet correspondent says despite the government's assurance of keeping the prices at tolerable limit during the month of Ramadan, the prices of vegetables and other goods continued to rise at the local markets.

The prices of rice increased by about 20 percent in the last couple of weeks while aubergine and green chilli prices have broken all previous records. The prices of powdered milk have also risen and some brands have disappeared from the markets.

The recent floods and torrential rain are often blamed for the price hike of vegetables and rice but some retailers and consumers here told this correspondent that a section of traders were playing a dirty game with the essential commodities during Ramadan.