

Deploy Rab to free

FROM PAGE 16
directed the ministry to take immediate steps to get rid of the extra workforce.

Mongla port is held hostage by criminals, observed the committee members, and came up with the unanimous recommendation for Rab deployment to prevent crime, watch over port operations and relieve it of mafioso.

Abdul Jalil, chairman of Mongla Municipality and convener of the Save Mongla Movement, raised allegations against Shipping Minister Akbar Hossain, accusing him of neglecting the port.

"In the last three and a half year, you visited Chittagong Port hundreds of times, but the port at Mongla only twice" he asked the minister at the meeting.

"We have already asked the home ministry to take actions against the mafioso, committee chairman G M Siraj told reporters after the meet. "Home is investigating it and we hope will take action this month based on the probe findings."

"The number of criminals lording it over at the port they control might be around 200. But we have sent to Home specific allegations against 11 Mafia-men," Siraj said.

The home ministry on March 15 sent the list of mafioso to the inspector general of police to take actions, sources said.

But, Siraj is convinced that "The local police administration does not have the capacity to act against the mafioso or the criminals."

Sources said the parliamentary body criticised the shipping ministry's reluctance to make the port functional.

"Honourable minister, why are you ignoring our demands for initiating steps to make the port functional," Khulna City Corporation Mayor Taibur Rahman asked Akbar at the meeting.

In response, Akbar told the JS body to implement the recommendations by itself, meeting sources said.

Faulting the minister's remarks, the meeting reminded him that they are not executives. "We have the authority to advise and recommend. It's the ministry's job to plan and implement the recommendations," a committee member said, with others echoing him.

"We've decided to save the port and the ministry has to carry out the

task," the committee chairman told reporters.

HC asks why transfer of 5 lower court judges not illegal

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court (HC) yesterday issued a rule upon the government asking it to show cause in two weeks as to why the transfer of five senior assistant judges disregarding the opinion of the Supreme Court (SC) should not be declared illegal.

An HC division bench comprising Justice Md Abdul Matin and Justice AFM Abdur Rahman issued the rule following a writ petition filed by Dr Shahdeen Malik.

Dr Malik in the petition said the government had earlier sought the opinion of the SC on the proposed transfer of 21 senior assistant judges. The SC approved the transfer of 12 but turned down the proposal for the transfer of nine others.

The government then sought reconsideration of the opinion of the SC but it did not approve the transfer of five of the 12 senior assistant judges and the non-approval was communicated to the government on March 13.

The Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs however issued a notification on March 22 transferring the five judges disregarding SC opinion, Dr Malik submitted.

The five judges are Begum Umme Habiba, Md Shamsul Alam, Mohammad Shahiduddin, Miah Mahmudur Rahim and AKM Mostakinur Rahman.

Meanwhile, the same HC division on Saturday issued another rule upon the government regarding the transfer of three joint district judges and one assistant judge following a writ petition filed on behalf of the four.

The law ministry on March 29 issued transfer orders of joint district judges Mir Shaiful Alam, Salehuddin Ahmed and AKM Abul Kashem, and Assistant Judge Nirmal Chandra Paul violating the provision of article 116 of the constitution, said the petition.

Former law minister Abdul Matin Khasru and barrister M Moksudul Islam moved the case for the petitioners.

AHSANULLAH MURDER Court to hear arguments tomorrow

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday ended examination of witnesses from both sides and fixed tomorrow for arguments in the Awami League (AL) lawmaker Ahsanullah Master murder case.

Judge Shahed Noor Uddin of the Speedy Trial Tribunal-1 set the date after recording statements of three defence witnesses.

The prosecution tomorrow begins arguments taking points from the first information report (FIR), chargesheet, inquest and post-mortem reports and statements of 34 prosecution witnesses.

The defence lawyers will begin their arguments after the prosecution ends their turn.

Three witnesses -- Rina Sultana, wife of accused Mahbubur Rahman, Liakat Hossain and Shahid Miah on behalf of Mahbub and Dulal -- gave their statements yesterday.

Rina told the court her husband was with her at their village home in Narayanganj when Ahsanullah was assassinated on May 7 last year.

She added that Fayeze, sub-inspector (SI) of Criminal Investigation Department (CID), demanded Tk 2 lakh for her husband's release after the CID arrested Mahbub on May 14.

The SI took the money from her the next day but they did not release her husband, Rina said. Rather, the investigation officer (IO) brutally tortured her husband for giving confessional statement, she added.

Shahid and Liakat told the court Dulal was with them at a local mosque at around 11:00am during the attack on the AL lawmaker.

Nine of the accused including Nurul Islam Sarker are now behind bars, while Alam, Pappu Sarker, Mohammad Ali and Monir are out on bail. Chhatra Samaj leader Nurul Islam Dipu and 16 others are on the run.

Next polls

FROM PAGE 1
national election instead of boycotting it if it has any confidence and faith in the people. She said the opposition will be isolated further from the people if it stays away from the polls.

The prime minister said Awami League also came to power in the 1996 polls held under the caretaker government.

Water Resources Minister Hafizuddin Ahmed, State Minister for Religious Affairs Mosharef Hossain Shahjahan, State Minister for Cultural Affairs Selima Rahman, Prime Minister's Political Secretary Harris Chowdhury, Mayor of Barisal City Corporation Mujibur Rahman Sanwar MP, Nazimuddin Alam MP, Hafiz Ibrahim MP and Chairman of Charfashion Pourasava ANM Aminul Islam also spoke at the meeting.

PDB

FROM PAGE 1
hardly add a few more years to its life span, the official said, "this is just a waste of a good Tk 110 crore from the debt relief fund."

This is not the first time this business lobby has pushed the PDB to take initiative to spend money in the name of the Haripur power plant, according to sources. The PDB floated a tender in 1999, when the Awami League was in office, to expand the plant's capacity by 109mw by spending Tk 416 crore from a Japanese fund. The expansion project was originally conceived in 1991 and had become irrelevant by 1999.

This process went on even after the change of government although a Japanese study stated that it is much more cost effective to undertake a new project instead of going for the expansion.

Three bidders -- Marubeni, Mitsubishi and Mitsui -- turned up at the PDB tender for the expansion. At one point, allegations were raised that the project's consultant, Mott Macdonald, had taken the side of Marubeni. The local agent of Mitsubishi is also the agent of Mott Macdonald.

In 2002, the government had to give up on the expansion project due to scathing criticism, including those from the Economic Relations Division (ERD).

Sources said the same agent is now pushing for the latest deal.

However, a PDB high official defended, however, the process. "There are very few power companies interested in pursuing new power projects in Bangladesh." Without going into the reason for the 'loss of interest' of the power companies, he said, "We think the rehabilitation project is doable."

MP's son

FROM PAGE 1
three-day remand for Noman's friend Billal Ahmed after Tejgaon police produced him before court with a prayer for seven days' remand.

In the remand prayer, the investigation officer (IO) of the case said on the day of the incident Noman, Billal and five to six others beat up traffic constable Abdul Majid after he stopped the car for defying the red signal.

Tejgaon police arrested Billal from their Asad Gate house early yesterday.

8 hurt as JCD, Shibir

FROM PAGE 16
activists are also taking treatment at DMCH.

Four injured Shibir activists were released after first aid at DMCH. Meanwhile, additional police have been deployed on the madrasa campus as tension gripped the campus following the incident.

The Shibir men attacked room No 119 of the hall after an altercation with the JCD men over a lost cellphone set of a Shibir activist, police said.

Shibir said a JCD member stole the cellphone set but the JCD denied this.

"At around 2:00am, some 50 Shibir men attacked our room with iron rods, long knives and fire-arms. They broke open the door of the room and began to beat us," a JCD activist who stays in room No 119 told this correspondent.

Later the JCD brought out a procession on the campus and vowed to resist the ICS men in the Madrasa at any cost.

"We would not tolerate the Shibir's move in any educational institutions in the city if they try to establish supremacy through attacking our leaders," said a top JCD leader seeking anonymity.

Meanwhile, Shariful Islam, sub-inspector of the Lalbag Police

Station told The Daily Star over telephone at 8:00pm that Alia Madrasa JCD leaders were preparing to sue the Shibir men.

JCD President Azizul Baree Helal, however, said they did not direct their activists to lodge case against Shibir.

Workers Party

FROM PAGE 1
contradicted on the recovery of arms from his possession at the time of arrest.

Lt Col Farhad Ahmed, commanding officer of Rab-6 (Khulna), denying the allegation of torture said, "It is an absurd allegation that Sarker died from torture after four months of his arrest."

Sarker was being taken to Jessore Central Jail on March 31 when his condition deteriorated. He was then admitted to Jessore General Hospital, instead of jail hospital, where he died at 11:30pm on Saturday.

Workers Party President Rashed Khan Menon, General Secretary Bimal Biswas condoled the death of Sarker. The leaders blamed the Rab torture and negligence of the jail authorities for Sarker's death. They also demanded investigation into the matter and punishment of the persons responsible.

Special drive on to net

FROM PAGE 16
progress of investigation into the murder case by the monitoring cell in its 42nd meeting held last week in Dhaka.

The special combing operation was, however, ordered by the Inspector General of Police (IGP) Ashraf Huda while holding an important meeting on Saturday with ten police superiors of Khulna division, commissioner and all deputy commissioners of the Khulna Metropolitan Police (KMP).

According to a senior KMP officer, Shahabuddin Laskar alias Dhira (40) is the godfather of a group of armed cadres having close links with an underground party. A cloth merchant by profession, the alleged Jamaat leader is also an illegal arms trader and has connections with militant leader Mufti Abdul Hannan, said a reliable source of an important intelligence agency of the government.

Intelligence agency sources said that journalist Belal was a Jamaat-Islami activist. A diehard prolester of politics of violence, he had strained relations with Shahabuddin as the latter formed a group of armed cadres to hit his opponents in any political parties including the party he belongs to.

Relations between Belal and Shahabuddin soured absolutely since 1997 when Belal reportedly opposed Shahabuddin's three attempts on the life of a prominent Awami League (AL) leader. The AL leader, the present secretary of the party's Khulna city committee, survived the bomb attacks in 1997 and 1998.

Shahabuddin Laskar was seen in the Khulna Press Club canteen several times a week before the bomb attack on Belal. He had also threatened Belal with death twice in last two years, said a source of Jamaat-e-Islami.

Black money refuses

FROM PAGE 1
(NBR) found in its monitoring that in the three years to June 2004, about 11,500 individuals and companies took advantage of the five types of opportunities the government offers for whitening black money.

"Of them, 2,000 are companies and the rest individuals," says an NBR source, adding only Tk 1,800 crore has become white using the opportunities.

He says, "The opportunities will continue till June next. So, we expect some more people will take advantage of them."

The board will soon send a proposal to the government seeking its decision on whether to continue the opportunities in the next fiscal year or not.

But, bankers and economists say instead of offering the black money makers with scopes to whiten their wealth, all avenues to make black money should be closed, as it affects the poor the most.

Besides, black money making is aggravating the inflation as well as the poor revenue earning of the government and thus affecting the overall growth of the nation.

BLACK MONEY DYNAMICS
Former deputy governor of the central bank and Pubali Bank Managing Director Khandker Ibrahim Khaled notes, "Bribery, corruption, smuggling and manipulations in import are generating the black money. Some portions of it are transferred abroad and some kept as fixed deposits in the banks."

"A particular advantage of keeping money in fixed bank deposits is that they require no photograph of the depositor or any other process required in other types of banking," Khaled says drawing notice to the BB statistics on fixed deposits.

However, Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS) Research Director Zaid Bakht does not fully agree that fixed deposits show the real picture of black money. "The larger chunk of black money is transferred abroad and only a little goes into the fixed deposits, while the black money owners spend the rest on posh living," he says.

But, both Khaled and Bakht agree that there is no exact way to reckon how much black money exists in the economy. They put it conservatively at around Tk 50,000 crore to Tk 60,000 crore -- or one-fifth of the GDP.

On the other hand, the annual conference of Bangladesh Economic Association (BEA) last year put this figure at around Tk 175,000 crore or half of the GDP.

"Black money makes no positive contribution to the economy," notes Dr Bakht. "It plays no positive role in employment generation, production or any other sector. On the contrary, it has a severe impact on inflation that affects the poor. The unlimited expenditure of black money owners also leads to higher import and increase in commodity prices."

"No matter how many opportunities the government offers to them," Bakht says, "such ill-earned income will never come into the formal economy. On the other hand, when black-money owners are given such incentives, honest tax payers are undermined and discouraged."

In his opinion, "The government must take tough steps to stop tender manipulation, over- and under-invoicing in import, and bribery and corruption in the administration, besides improving the governance, so that the ways to make black money are closed."

MEASURES AGAINST BLACK MONEY
NBR and BB officials say their organisations have taken multiple steps in their lines to seal the sources of black money.

An NBR staff says, "We have opened a central intelligence cell at the NBR to detect major tax evasions and seal leakage in the tax administration. We are also auditing some selected major taxpayers and have some more plans in the pipeline."

A BB official adds, "We have formed an anti-money laundering department under the Money Laundering Prevention Act. This department is working hard to bring all sorts of money laundering to task."

But both the officials admit that the only real way to stop black money generation is a strong political will.

For instance, the government has been going slow over forming a high-powered financial intelligence unit and a strike force to check crimes in the financial sector since the recommendations were tabled back in 2002. Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman told the parliament in February that the issues were still under scrutiny.

Currently there are five ways to whiten black money.

One of them, outlined in the Income Tax Law, stipulates that no tax will be sought and no question asked about the source of money if an individual, firm, association or private company invests in the service or the manufacturing sector. This provision was put into effect in July 2002 and will expire in June next year.

The authorities concerned will also not impose any tax on or inquire about the source of money if an individual buys shares of a company listed with a stock exchange and does not sell them for two years. Similar facilities are offered in investment in housing and purchase of cars.

Earlier, from 1997 to 1999, a similar system encouraged black money holders to whiten their cash. That time about Tk 1,000 crore was whitened and the NBR collected Tk 100 crore in taxes on that.

Rajuk allocates Uttara plots

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rajdhani Unnayan Karttripakkha (Rajuk) yesterday allocated 1,136 housing plots in Uttara for private service holders, businessmen, industrialists and other professionals for the first time through a computerised lottery.

"We'll start handing over the plots by the end of this year," Housing and Public Works Minister Mirza Abbas told newsmen after the lottery for the third phase plot allocation in Uttara. Rajuk will sell around 6,000 plots in this phase.

The minister said 2,000 plots will be kept reserved for the permanent residents of Uttara whose lands were acquired by the Rajuk authorities for the project.

Another 2,000 plots will be distributed among the officials of government and semi-government organisations without lottery. They will get the plots through marking based on their seniority and salary range, Rajuk sources said.

The housing minister said Rajuk has kept the rest 800 plots reserved for 'special distribution' among journalists and others.

"We are following the guidelines strictly so that the distribution process is transparent. Only 800 plots will be kept for special distribution among the journalists and others," Mirza Abbas said. "But definitely they will have to be eligible for getting plots."

The minister said as a controversy has arisen following the recent plot allocation at Gulshan and Banani for ministers, ruling party lawmakers and leaders, they would this time ensure transparency in the plot allocation process.

Nearly 15,000 people applied for the 6,000 plots in Uttara third phase project of which 1,136 were allocated yesterday for 8,915 single and joint applicants in three categories. These include 405 five-katha and 731 three-katha plots.

The authorities rejected 565 'faulty' applications in these categories.

Computer experts from the Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET) developed and conducted the plot lottery method.

Iqbaluddin Chowdhury, secretary of the public works ministry, said they are trying to maintain transparency in the party's Khulna city committee, survived the bomb attacks in 1997 and 1998.

Shahabuddin Laskar was seen in the Khulna Press Club canteen several times a week before the bomb attack on Belal. He had also threatened Belal with death twice in last two years, said a source of Jamaat-e-Islami.

Detention of chief whip's son illegal

BDNEWS, Dhaka

The High Court yesterday declared illegal the detention order of Khandakar Akhter Hamid Paban, son of Chief Whip Khandakar Delwar Hossain.

The High Court Division Bench of Justice Joyrul Abedin and Justice Meftah Uddin Chowdhury passed the order after hearing the rule it had earlier issued.

Police arrested Paban on February 28 and he obtained bail from the trial court on March 7. The same day, the government issued a one-month detention order against Paban.

Advocate Khandakar Abdul Hamid Dablu, elder brother of Paban, filed a writ petition with the High Court challenging the validity of the detention order.

The High Court on March 12 issued a rule upon the government asking it to show cause why the order should not be declared illegal.

The secretary and deputy secretary (security) of the home ministry and the jail superintendent had been made respondents in the case.

Barrister Mahbubuddin Khokan moved for the petitioner and Kamrunnahar Ratna for the government.

Govt committed

FROM PAGE 16
perpetrators to justice. She immediately constituted a high-powered five-member probe committee to run the investigation, he added.

Because of their prompt and thorough action, the alleged perpetrators have now been taken into custody, duly charge-sheeted and a prosecution process has been initiated, he said.

The spokesman said the FBI's assistance was promptly sought. Full cooperation from all those concerned in the investigation process was assured including complete access to all evidence and to all witnesses.

The FBI has held a series of consultations with authorities and, as a result, is now conducting its own investigation. Recently, an FBI team, aided by the local police administration, visited the place of occurrence and conducted interviews with suspects who have been charge-sheeted.

The US ambassador in Bangladesh has acknowledged the cooperation extended to the FBI.

The Bangladesh ambassador in Washington has also addressed a letter to each of the three lawmakers apprising them of the position, the spokesman said.

The safety and security of life of each citizen is of paramount importance to the democratically elected government. The government has made sincere efforts to live up to this responsibility.

This is reflected in the recent drastic reduction of crime and overall improvement in the law and order. Comprehensive and continuing efforts are underway to trace and root out the perpetrators of bomb and grenade attacks and those involved in trafficking of arms, drugs and so on irrespective of party affiliation, the spokesman observed.

Insurgents attack

FROM PAGE 1
minutes. No one escaped.

"This was obviously a very well-organised attack and a very big attack," Rondeau said.

On Sunday, US military officials raised the casualty toll from 20 to 44 US service members, and said some of the injuries were serious.

Officials have said that overall attacks have been declining in Iraq, but they also have noted that insurgents seem to be focusing their efforts on bigger, better organised operations.

It wasn't immediately known if any of the insurgents carrying out the attack were arrested or suffered casualties. Plumes of smoke were seen rising from the area.

Abu Ghraib was at the centre of a prisoner abuse scandal that broke out in 2004 when pictures showing soldiers piling naked inmates in a pyramid and humiliating them sexually became public. The resulting scandal tarnished the military's image worldwide and sparked investigations of detainee abuses.

The United States is holding about 10,000 prisoners in Iraq.

Negotiators also said they hoped to name the country's new interim president, expected to be Kurdish leader Jalal Talabani and his two vice presidents during Sunday's session.

Alliance members have agreed to nominate former nuclear scientist Hussain al-Shahristani as one of two deputy speakers and interim Finance Minister Adel Abdul-Mahdi as one of the vice presidents. Kurdish judge Dara Nor al-Din is expected to be nominated for the second deputy to the parliament speaker post.

Interim President Ghazi al-Yawer, politicians Adnan Pachachi and Sharif Al Bin Al-Hussein al-Sunni Arabs were vying for the second vice president's post, officials say.

Once in his post, Talabani and the vice presidents will name the new interim prime minister, likely Shia politician Ibrahim al-Jaafari. After that, the legislative body has until mid-August to write a new constitution that will pave the way for new elections and a permanent government.

But US and Iraqi officials acknowledge they have a long way to go. Early Saturday, gunmen opened fire from a car in Baghdad, killing local official Hassib Zamil outside of the Education Ministry offices in the Sadr City neighbourhood.

In the central city of Khan Bani Saad, a car bomb killed five people, including four police officers on patrol. Two police officers and three civilians also were wounded, two days.

provincial police Col. Mudafar al-Jubori said.

A car bomb also injured six Iraqis and set a house on fire in the northern city of Mosul, the US military said. The attack happened Saturday as coalition soldiers, acting on a citizens' tip, were arriving to investigate, the US military said.

It also reported that a US Marine was killed by enemy fire while conducting security operations in Ramadi on Friday.

In a separate statement, the US military praised an edict issued by Sunni clerics that called for Iraqis to join police and army forces, saying it was a sign that people were fed up with the insurgency. But the statement added that enlistees "must be prepared to serve all the people."

In another development Saturday, Interim Deputy Prime Minister Barham Saleh issued a statement condemning the attack a day earlier against a ninth-century minaret in the central city of Samarra, calling it an "affront to the nation's history and humanity."

Dead chicken seller remanded

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday placed Jahanara Begum, operator of a mess who was arrested with 21 dead chickens on Saturday, on one-day remand.

Sutrapur police produced Jahanara before the Court of Chief Metropolitan Magistrate, Dhaka seeking remand for three days.

The investigation officer of the case told the court the woman was running illegal and unhygienic business as she used to feed her customers dead chickens. She should be interrogated to know from where she had collected the dead birds, he added.

Police on March 28 arrested a man in Mirpur with 53 dead chickens, which he was going to supply to local restaurants.

Teletalk

FROM PAGE 1
lack of coordination between BTTE and the authorised branches of the BASIC Bank.

Teletalk authorities were not prepared as they could not anticipate such a huge customer response, sources said.

Hundreds of customers, meanwhile, waited in long queues in the city's four booths of the BASIC Bank and collected SIM cards against their forms delivered during the last two days.

World grieves for Pope

FROM PAGE 1
John Paul's death triggered a rare outpouring of global grief, with people of all faiths and none praising his humanity, courage and moral integrity.

"We're grateful to God for sending such a man, a son of Poland, who became the bishop of Rome and a hero for the ages," President Bush said from the White House.

Around 130,000 people packed into St Peter's Square within two hours of his death, necks craned up toward the lighted windows of the Pope's apartments where he had just expired.

As day broke over the Polish Pope's adopted twin cities -- Rome and Vatican City -- the flow of pilgrims from afar began arriving in a fitting tribute to a Pontiff who travelled the equivalent of 30 times the circumference of the earth.

Tens of thousands were to attend a Requiem Mass for the Pope at 10.30 a.m. (0830 GMT) in the same cobblestoned square.

The city prepared extra trains, fresh water supplies and thousands of beds to accommodate one of the greatest influxes of pilgrims in its memory.

"We were at a party last night when we heard of the Pope's death," said Ermine Palmieri as she arrived in Rome's main train station from an outlying town.

"Every one immediately stopped dancing. We went home and then decided to go to Rome. It's important to be close to him spiritually but also physically because he was great."

"The Pope Who Changed the World," "Goodbye Wojtyla," "The Pope for All People" and "World Cries for the Pope" read headlines in the local press full of stories on Italy's adopted spiritual father.

The exact cause of death was not given but the Pope's health had deteriorated steadily over the past decade with the onset of Parkinson's Disease and arthritis.

He had an operation in February to ease serious breathing problems, but never regained his strength and last Thursday developed an infection and high fever that soon precipitated