

Morshed refutes US claim

FROM PAGE 1
On the contrary, he said, the State Department in its observations rather hailed Bangladesh government for the effective measures it has taken against terrorism.

"As a responsible government, we are very much alert like other countries about it," he said, adding that the government has already banned two organisations --JMJB [Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh] and JMB [Jamiyaatul Mujahideen Bangladesh] ---and also taken action against Al-Haramine.

"We have done it not because we have proof, but because we want to crush at the beginning any potential threat. We won't allow any terrorism in the name of Islam," he told the reporters.

Pointing his finger to Indian journalist Bibhuti Bhusan's editorials "Terrorist Menace" in the Statesman on July 15 and 16 last year about Bangladesh, Khan said since then, different quarters and journalists have started to assert the presence of terrorists in the country.

Asked about US Admiral William Fallon's apprehension about movements of international terrorists in Bangladesh, he said what the US admiral advised is advancement in preparation and capacity building in Bangladesh to deal with any future eventuality like tsunami.

Khan said after the 9/11 attacks on America and subsequent terrorist-ist acts in Spain and Europe every-body is concerned about terrorism. "I don't doubt their intention as they are sensitised after those attacks. We've to pull our resources together to fight against it."

On the issue of minority, the foreign minister said all religious groups are living in Bangladesh in communal harmony. He said: "I am proud to say that unfortunate incident (Hindu-Muslim riot) in Indian State of Gujarat had not touched Bangladesh."

He categorically said: "We don't treat any community as minority."**SAARC SUMMIT**
On Saarc summit, the foreign minister said we have decided to propose

two sets of dates from the end of August to early September or early November for holding the stalled summit in Dhaka.

He said they will communicate the dates today to the current Saarc Chair Pakistan which had earlier wanted to know from Bangladesh about a convenient date for the meet. "We want to host the summit as early as possible on a date convenient to all member-states," the foreign minister told the reporters.

He said the government will remain busy with the national budget in June-July while August is a bad month due to rains and floods.

In September, the UN General Assembly meeting will be held in New York where the Saarc countries will remain engrossed in dealing with world affairs and October is the month of Ramadan.

"So we have worked out a convenient time for us between the end of August and early September or early November," the foreign minister told the journalists.

Pakistan will now consult with other Saarc countries to see whether the dates are also convenient to them before making a final announcement of the summit date.

The 13th Summit of the seven-nation South Asian forum was postponed twice because of tsunami and India's pullout on grounds of developments in Nepal and "security concerns in Dhaka".

KUWAIT COMPENSATION
Khan said the government has sought compensation in Kuwaiti dinar 10,000 to 15,000 from the Kuwaiti authorities for damages caused to the Bangladesh mission in Kuwait in an attack on April 24 by angry Bangladeshi workers.

"As per rule, the host country is liable to pay the compensation for such damage," the foreign minister told reporters.

He said the Kuwaiti authorities have taken strong action against the attackers and also asked the companies concerned not to take advance guest workers or deceive them by non-payment.

Earlier, the government had

decided to send a three-member inquiry team to Kuwait for on-the-spot investigation and find the clue to such attack.

The government has also instructed Bangladesh embassies in all Gulf countries to remain alert against such incidents in future.

Sharon ally quits over Gaza pullout

REUTERS, Jerusalem

Right-wing Israeli cabinet member Natan Sharansky resigned yesterday in protest at Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's planned withdrawal from Gaza, a sign of widening internal rifts ahead of the pullout.

Underlining growing tensions on the Palestinian side too, Islamic militants dismissed an order by President Mahmoud Abbas's government to stop carrying weapons on Gaza streets.

Sharanansky, whose writings on democracy have impressed U.S. President George W. Bush, quit as diaspora affairs minister, complaining that Sharon's formula for "disengaging" unilaterally from conflict with the Palestinians could invite more violence.

"In my view, the disengagement plan is a tragic mistake that will exacerbate the conflict with the Palestinians, increase terrorism, and dim the prospects of forging a genuine peace," he said in an open resignation letter.

He later told Reuters: "I am against one-sided steps. I believe that the peace process can be successful only if there is reciprocity."

Infighting leaves 3 BSF men dead

UNB, Dhaka

Three Indian BSF (Border Security Force) men were killed in an infighting following a quarrel among themselves within Indian territory opposite Bangladesh's Hakimpur border point in Chapainawabganj district yesterday.

Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) sources said the BSF personnel of 136 Battalion stationed at Ramnagar border observation post "appeared drunk" when they locked horns in a brawl.

The incident took place at about 2:00pm.

The locals informed the BDR about the gunshots and the BDR men saw through their binoculars three BSF men lying dead across the border.

NIKUNJA HIGH-RISES HC orders govt to explain why Rajuk notice not unlawful

UNB, Dhaka

The High Court (HC) yesterday in a rule ordered the government to explain within four weeks why the notice of Rajdhani Unnayan Karttripakha (Rajuk) asking for dismantling of 111 high-rises in Nikunja residential area should not be declared unlawful.

The court, however, directed the respondents to maintain status quo until disposal of the rule.

Rajuk on August 28, 2003 had served the notices on the owners to dismantle their buildings located near Zia International Airport as those are causing impediments to the air traffic.

Barrister Badruddoza appeared for petitioner Mosaddeq Ali.

5 journalists

FROM PAGE 16
killed, 111 injured, nine arrested, two abducted, 32 assaulted, 292 threatened and 120 sued, while in 2003, 65 journalists were injured, 19 arrested, two abducted, 41 assaulted, 90 threatened and 62 sued.

Attack on journalists only for publishing of reports has been increasing day by day and cadres backed by political parties are responsible for the incidents, the report said.

Expressing deep concern over the situation, Odhikar said assaults on journalists might be reduced if punitive actions were taken against the culprits.

Announcement

FROM PAGE 16
He will also sit with six other finance ministers of South Asia under the auspices of the ADB. "We will discuss bilateral and regional cooperation issues at the meeting."

"The ADB will provide 700 million dollars this fiscal, including 180 million dollars loan for flood rehabilitation," Saifur noted. "So far ADB has given Bangladesh seven billion dollars in loan and it is the biggest institutional donor now."

In Washington, Saifur will meet the new World Bank (WB) president and seek his clarification whether the WB will continue its present policy of "programme-based loans" or revert to "project-based loans."

11 die, 60 hurt in

FROM PAGE 16

Jhuma, 11. Injured people and witnesses said the reserved bus of Insaf Paribahan carrying about 80 'Zakerans' (devotees) slipped off Barisal-Faridpur highway when a truck from the opposite direction hit it at about 3:30pm.

Local people and highway patrol police immediately started rescue operation.

Three people died on the spot and 35 seriously injured were taken to Barisal Sher-e- Bangla Medical College Hospital (SBMCH), where four of them succumbed to injuries.

Fifteen others with minor injuries were given first aid.

Police detained the truck driver but the bus driver and helpers of the truck and bus fled.

A correspondent from Tangail

reports: Four people were killed and 10 injured in an accident on Tangail-Mymensingh highway Sunday evening.

Of the four, Tonny, 3, died on the spot while fatally injured Arif Hossain, 20, Arshed Ali, 40, and Farid Miah, 32, died at Kalihati Upazila Health Complex.

Ten of the injured were admitted to the health complex and Tangail General Hospital.

The accident occurred when a Tangail bound passenger bus from Sagar Dighee skidded off the road and fell into a ditch at Betdoba under Kalihati upazila at about 6:15 pm, police and witnesses said.

A case was filed with Kalihati Police Station.

AL fires Hazari

FROM PAGE 1
removed from the post of general secretary of Feni district Awami League. Hazari has been absconding since 2001.

Jalil said more actions are on the cards against the persons responsible for a "bad image" of the main opposition party.

Sources said the disciplinary action against Hazari has been taken following a probe report, which was submitted to AL chief Sheikh Hasina a year ago.

Hazari has been fired as the policymakers of the main opposition party are trying to enhance its image before the next general election by erasing the "black spots," party insiders said.

"We have to get rid of godfathers within our party if we want to campaign against criminals of BNP-Jamaat alliance," said an AL leader.

Hazari, accused in 40 cases since 1968, is currently awaiting trial in 16 criminal cases. He was awarded life imprisonment in an arms case on August 10, 2003.

The joint forces of army and police raided Hazari's house in Feni in his absence on August 17, 2001 during the caretaker government and seized huge arms and ammunition. Since then, police could not trace him.

CMP chief removed

FROM PAGE 1
for a second term in office.

The CMP commissioner, after declaration of the polls schedule, made a number of arrest which apparently amounted to harassment and intimidation, said the EC, a quasi-judicial body, in its judgement.

On the performance of the CMP commissioner in the CCC polls, the EC said, "CMP Commissioner M Amzad Hossain has failed to perform his duties impartially and his action is not [conducive to] creating an environment which is necessary for free and fair election."

The EC also observed that the CMP commissioner violated the electoral code of conduct by escorting and providing the state minister for civil aviation and tourism, who is also a mayoral candidate, with police protection after the election schedule was announced.

The Nagorik Committee filed a complaint with the EC on April 17 and mayoral candidate Mohiuddin himself lodged another against the CMP top officials.

They alleged that the CMP commissioner instructed some plainclothesmen to pick up Nagorik Committee Secretary Mahbubul Haque from Majhirghat office on April 21 although there was no case or warrant against him. As the local people opposed the action, the police opened fire resulting in the death of two people."

They also alleged that six leading workers of the Nagorik Committee were arrested without any charges after the declaration of the polls schedule. Besides, the CMP commissioner "was seen participating in the election campaign" with ruling alliance candidate Mir Mohammad Nasir Uddin.

The Nagorik Committee leaders maintain that free and fair election is not possible until the CMP stops harassing their workers.

The EC summoned the CMP

PVT MEMBERS' BILLS JS body to seek speaker's nod to place bills

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A parliamentary body yesterday decided to ask the speaker to allow the private members to place their bills, already scrutinised, in the House on the first private members' day in the upcoming budget session of the Jatiya Sangsad.

The parliamentary standing committee on private members' bills and resolution also decided that it would send the resolutions of yesterday's meeting and the summary of its activities to the speaker requesting him to take necessary steps.

"I will meet with the speaker and submit our resolutions to him after his return to Dhaka," Committee Chairman Justice Mozammel Haque told The Daily Star yesterday.

Speaker Jamiruddin Sircar is now on a visit to northern districts.

Yesterday's decision came against the backdrop of alleged interference by the executive in the activities of the parliamentary body. The committee had earlier criticised the role of the speaker and law minister that hindered the submission of private members' bills.

The speaker on October 27, 2003 sent a letter to the law minister seeking his recommendations on 15 private members' bills instead of giving his (speaker) go-ahead to place the bills in parliament.

On February 3 this year, Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Moudud Ahmed in a letter to the speaker suggested taking prior approval from the leader of the House before tabling any private members' bill.

As the speaker is yet to take a decision on the matter, the committee members said, the fate of the 20 private members' bills is now in a state of uncertainty.

Bigots hit back

FROM PAGE 1
Hossain Nurani and Montazi when they were marching towards Ahmadiyya mosque on April 17, the case read.

After hearing, the court ordered Shyamnagar Police Station officer-in-charge to investigate the matter and submit report.

Man killed

FROM PAGE 1
grocer Mohammad Ripon's selling adulterated oil to him the previous day and pressed Ripon for taking back the oil, their altercation turned into a scuffle, said duty officer of Gulshan Police Station.

"At one stage, Ripon struck Majid on the head with a wooden stick, leaving him seriously wounded," he added.

Majid was rushed to DMCH where he succumbed to his injuries after an hour.

Police arrested Ripon.

3 killed

FROM PAGE 1
The accident occurred as the boiler owner Nazrul Islam, son of union parishad member Nurul Islam Mollah, launched it without checking the steam pipelines, police said quoting experts.

Set up ten years ago, local upazila parishad renewed licence of the boiler after Nazrul Islam's name a couple of days back, sources said.

A case accusing Nazrul Islam has been filed with the Bagmara Police Station.

Two singers

FROM PAGE 16
protest by all sections of people.

Rallies were held and processions brought out demanding immediate arrest of the rapists.

Two workers unions had jointly taken up May Day programmes in Gayabari union of Dimla and brought the two artists to take part in a function at Sutibari Haat. They were staying at Gayabari Union Parishad (UP) building on the night of April 30.

A gang of about 10 broke into their room late at night and raped them, local sources said.

Labour leader Mofazzal Hossain, Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal leaders Liaquat Ali and Jahangir Alam and others addressed rallies protesting the incident.

Locals of Sutibari told newsmen Alam, son of the Goyabari UP chairman, Shamsul Haque, UP secretary, Nural Haque, UP member, Amzad Hossain, former UP member and Salman Ali, Mahbub Dilip and Monjur Hossain Monju were among the rapists.

The chairman threatened the two victims not to disclose the incident, and forcibly sent them back to Dinajpur, they alleged.

Tension prevailed in the area. The officer in charge of Dimla Police Station with a contingent of police visited the spot on Sunday.

US team

FROM PAGE 16
Later, the team left for Dinajpur to visit Barapukuria Coal Mine as the US firm wants to set up a coal-fired power plant.

Nepal communist

FROM PAGE 16
of Nepal-UML, was released on Sunday three months after Gyanendra sacked the government, suspended civil rights and detained top politicians, blaming them for failing to tackle a deadly Maoist insurgency.

Another communist leader, Amrit Kumar Bohara, was also freed, Kathmandu district administrator Baman Prasad Neupane said.

But UML officials said hundreds of other activists were still under detention and new arrests were being made, despite the lifting of the emergency.

Authorities have not given any numbers of those detained during emergency, but say so far about 600 people have been released.

The king, faced with mounting international pressure to restore democracy and free politicians, bowed at the weekend and lifted the emergency but has retained all extraordinary powers he assumed on February 1.

The royal government had cut off all phones and blocked Internet access when it imposed the emergency to prevent politicians from organising protests, but restored landline services after a week.

"Mobile phones have just started," a Reuters correspondent said on Monday, using his mobile phone for the first time since Feb. 1. Other users also reported their mobile phones were working.

The latest moves by the government came as fissures emerged within the powerful Maoist group fighting to overthrow the constitutional monarchy in one of the world's 10 poorest nations.

Maoist rebel chief Prachanda, who uses only one name, accused his deputy Baburam Bhattarai of defying party decisions.

"The party hopes that he will overcome his weakness and follow the process of changing himself," the elusive chief of the guerrilla group said in a statement made available to Reuters on Monday. He did not elaborate.

Nepal's army, which has been deployed to crush the Maoists, had claimed earlier that there was a split between Prachanda, thought to be a hard-liner, and Bhattarai, who led the rebel group in failed peace talks with the government in 2003.

Meanwhile, thousands of people marched through Nepal's capital on Sunday in May Day protests calling for democracy and an end to direct rule by King Gyanendra following his power grab three months ago,

witnesses said.

It was the largest demonstration in Kathmandu since Gyanendra sacked the government as demonstrators marched in two separate protests organised by unions to commemorate the May Day labour holiday and used the occasion to call for an end to the king's direct rule, witnesses said.

Officials estimated the two rallies at more than 5,000 people, who stayed away from heavily-patrolled restricted areas around the king's palace and government offices.

Police did not stop the protests against the monarch despite a ban on criticism of the takeover reaffirmed Saturday after the king lifted the state of emergency imposed after his power grab.

Protesters displayed signs such as "Long Live Democracy, Down With Autocracy" in the peaceful march. (Reuters, AFP)

3 more

FROM PAGE 1

Sarwar then flew to Sudan with the three young men, and began putting pressure over the telephone to their families once he arrived to pay the remaining nine lakh fifty thousand. The families, fearing for their children, eventually paid the second amount to Sarwar's brother-in-law.

After six months in Sudan, the youths began protesting the cheating, but the broker and his associates rebuked their protests.

They finally returned home empty-handed on April 12, reporting that many youths cheated by brokers are languishing in Sudan.

The father of Shipu filed a case last Saturday against Sarwar with the district sadar thana. Sarwar, meanwhile, is absconding.

2 bank

FROM PAGE 1

light until noon on Sunday, as the day was a public holiday on the occasion of the May Day.

As Mannan did not go home until noon on Sunday and his family members failed to contact him over phone, they went to the bank and found the bodies.

High officials of the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) and the Detective Branch (DB) of police visited the spot.

The bodies were handed over to their family members after autopsy. A case was filed with Savar Police Station.

Car bombs, attacks

FROM PAGE 16
appointed a partial Cabinet after three months of political infighting, at least 123 people, including 11 Americans, have been killed in a slew of bombings, ambushes and other attacks.

A videotape obtained by Associated Press Television News on Sunday showed a man identifying himself as Douglas Wood, 63, seated between two masked militants pointing automatic weapons at him.

Wood, appearing dishevelled and shaken, said he was an Australian national living in the San Francisco area with his American wife. He said he came to Iraq almost a year ago to work on reconstruction projects with the American military. Wood's American wife, Pearl, said she had seen the tape and the man was indeed her husband.

The captive appealed to President Bush, Australian Prime Minister John Howard and Californian Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger to order coalition forces out of Iraq and let Iraqis look after themselves, saying he did not want to die.

"My captors are fiercely patriotic. They believe in a strong united Iraq looking after its own destiny," Wood said on the tape.

A militant group calling itself the Shura Council of the Mujahadeen of Iraq claimed responsibility for the kidnapping. The group previously said it abducted a Turkish national who was freed in September.

More than 200 foreigners have been kidnapped in Iraq since Saddam Hussein's regime collapsed in April 2003. More than 30 hostages have been killed by the captors.

Despite the unrelenting violence, Iraq's national security adviser said the fledgling government was making progress against the insurgents.

"There is no shadow of doubt in my mind that by the end of the year, we would have achieved a lot," Mowafak al-Rubaie said in an interview with CNN. "Probably the back of the insurgency has already been broken."

The British Foreign Office, meanwhile, announced on Sunday three arrests in the abduction of a British aid worker believed slain last year, saying they were made after an early morning sweep of an insurgent area 20 miles south of Baghdad.

An intelligence official with the Iraqi Interior Ministry said five Iraqi suspects had been apprehended and confessed to a role in killing Margaret Hassan, the director of Care International in Iraq. Martin Cronin, first secretary at the British Embassy in Baghdad, said he was not aware of any confessions.

US and Iraqi forces also recovered articles apparently related to Hassan, the British Embassy said in Baghdad. The Iraqi official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said they included a purse, a woman's clothing and Care documents signed by Hassan.

Hassan, 59, who also held Irish and Iraqi citizenship, was abducted in Baghdad on Oct. 19 on her way to work.