

Deuba faces graft charges

REUTERS, Kathmandu

A powerful Nepali anti-graft body has charged former prime minister Sher Bahadur Deuba with siphoning off public funds for his party supporters before he was sacked by King Gyanendra in February, an official said yesterday.

The Royal Commission for Corruption Control said money from the prime minister's relief fund was handed out to members of Deuba's Nepali Congress (Democratic) during the Hindu festival of Dasain in October, a commission official said.

But a Nepali Congress (Democratic) spokesman said the charges were baseless and aimed at maligning Deuba, who is under detention.

Gyanendra set up the commission to fight corruption in government after he sacked the Deuba government on Feb. 1, jailed political leaders and suspended civil liberties.

The commission, which has been given sweeping powers, arrested Deuba last week and on Wednesday extended his detention by a week after he defied its summons.

It was not immediately clear what punishment he would face if found guilty.

The panel has set bail at of \$54,000 which Deuba has refused to pay. Six other ministers in his sacked cabinet also face similar charges.

The official said the body also wanted to question Deuba over allegations of corruption while appointing contractors for a multi-million dollar drinking water project for Kathmandu.

The commission has powers to jail politicians and bureaucrats found guilty of tax evasion and bribery.

India, Nepal's influential neighbour and key trade partner, has expressed concern over the detention of Deuba and other politicians and student activists in the impoverished Himalayan kingdom.

High-rises: parking lots

FROM PAGE 16

at Gulshan-2 does not have any provision for parking at all. Next door, the 16-storey Land View, which houses scores of offices, has a basement parking lot for about 10 to 12 cars only. The under-construction 18-storey Taher Tower has a single basement floor reserved for parking, while the 15-storey PBL Tower can accommodate only 12 vehicles in its basement.

The 18-storey Silver Tower in Gulshan-1 has room for no more than 15 cars in its basement, said a security guard, adding at least 70 to 80 cars remain parked around the tower every office day.

Officials in-charge of the buildings said the vehicles of visitors are usually parked on the pavement or in the open spaces in the vicinity. "Parking facilities are scarce here in Gulshan. So visitors and others have to leave their cars on the streets," one of them said.

Not all the new high-rises violate the law, however. According to an official of the 23-storey Uday Tower, the newly built high-rise has comparatively adequate parking facility in Gulshan. Room for five cars has been allocated for each of the 11,200 sq ft floors.

Silver Tower Managing Director MA Selim said the two basement floors of the building can house 30 cars. He, however, admitted that the space is not enough for the number of cars that go there a day. He said, "The number is so high because the Aktel office is here."

"We have already purchased a 3.5-decimal plot nearby to use as a parking lot," the lawmaker from Bagerhat-2 told The Daily Star over telephone.

When contacted over telephone, the general manager of Shezad Plaza declined to comment on the absence of parking space. "You better ask our engineer," he said but refused to give the name of the engineer. After repeated requests,

A moderate tremor

FROM PAGE 1

director of the Dhaka Water and Sewerage Authority (Wasa), said, "The post-tremor scenario of most buildings of Dhaka would be like the rubble of the Spectrum Sweater Industries Ltd building at Palashbari in Savar."

Pointing out the indiscriminate construction of unplanned buildings in the capital, he said the existing construction code is not suitable and needs modification. He also emphasised the need for proper application of the existing construction-related laws.

Citing the example of the eight-day rescue operation by the army at the collapse site in Savar, engineer Nurul Huda said it proves that the government is not prepared for management of such disaster. He urged the government to take necessary steps for preparation in this regard.

Akhtar Hossain in a written statement demanded competitive examination through the Public Service Commission (PSC) for promotion of deputy secretary to secretary in different ministries providing equal opportunity to all professionals of the cadre services of the government, semi-

India and Britain have suspended crucial military aid to press for the restoration of democracy by Gyanendra, who said his seizure of power was aimed at tackling a nine-year-old Maoist revolt in which more than 11,000 people have died.

Fresh al-Qaeda

FROM PAGE 16

Military leader Musharraf, who has angered Islamic militants with his support for the US war on terror, publicly accused Libyan national al-Libbi of masterminding two previous failed attempts to assassinate him.

Officials said the plotters in the latest bid were headed by a Pakistani al-Qaeda militant named Mohammad Arshad, who is an associate of al-Libbi.

"The group was planning a new attack on President Musharraf in Rawalpindi or Islamabad. They had assembled the explosive devices and they were to use them adopting a new method," the intelligence official said.

He did not specify exactly how or when they planned to carry out the assassination attempt.

"Mushtaq Ahmed was an important part of the group and we understand that the group's leader was in contact with al-Libbi," the official added. "On their information explosives and all those things that they were to use in the attempt were recovered."

Officials said Thursday they had recaptured 26-year-old Ahmed, who was condemned to death in November for his role in the bombing of a bridge which collapsed moments after Musharraf's convoy passed through in December 2003.

Musharraf survived a second attack in the same area about two weeks later on Christmas Day, when two suicide bombers rammed explosives-laden vehicles into the presidential motorcade, killing 15 people.

he gave a phone number to contact the engineer.

When The Daily Star called that number on Thursday, a man said it was Shezad factory. But he was confused about who the engineer of Shezad Plaza could be. "There is no engineer here now. An engineer named Mosharraf has recently joined, but he will be here on Saturday," he said.

Oona King

FROM PAGE 1

Galloway, a former Labour deputy thrown out of the party for defying Blair over the war, specifically targeted King as her seat contains a high proportion of Muslim voters, mainly of Bangladeshi origin.

King, who is half-Jewish and half-black, won her seat in 1997 at only 30 years of age and proved a popular local MP, winning a 10,000-vote majority in the 2001 election.

However in Thursday's election, she lost out of Galloway by just over 800 votes.

Such a turnaround reflects the bitter feelings the Iraq war provoked in many British Muslims, as well as a fearsome campaign by Galloway.

The election battle between King and Galloway, a flamboyant political veteran known as "gorgeous George", was perhaps the most bitter individual fight in the entire election.

King accused Respect activists of spreading word among the 40-percent Muslim district that she was Jewish to hurt her chances, something Galloway's officials vehemently denied.

Unknown attackers threw eggs at King at a Holocaust memorial service, and she was later again pelted with eggs and had her car tires slashed by a gang of youths protesting her support for the Iraq war.

Galloway also placed himself under heightened security after being threatened with death by a group of Islamic extremists.

government and autonomous organisations.

The IEB engineers said discrimination is existing also in the pay-scale. They reiterated their demand for a six-tier pay-scale for engineers from assistant engineer to chief engineer.

They also demanded separation of the judiciary from the executive, and bringing executive officials engaged in magistracy under the judiciary.

On the occasion of the Engineers' Day, the IEB organises several programmes including a colourful procession and a roundtable on "safe building and national building code" at the IEB seminar room at 4:30pm and a cultural programme at 7pm today.

An article on safe construction will be presented at a reception programme for eminent engineers at the IEB auditorium tomorrow.

Housing and Public Works Minister Mirza Abbas is expected to attend the roundtable as the chief guest today while LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan will attend tomorrow's reception ceremony as the chief guest.

Khaleda, Hasina greet Blair

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday congratulated British Prime Minister Tony Blair on the historic victory of his Labour Party in the parliamentary elections held on Thursday.

In a message of felicitation to Tony Blair, Khaleda said she is confident that the people of the United Kingdom will continue to enjoy the benefits of his government's policies, especially in the social sector.

"I look forward to continue working closely with you to further strengthen the deep-rooted relations that exist between our two countries and peoples to uphold our shared commitment to the principles of peace, development and democracy," she said.

Khaleda wished him good health, happiness and long life and continued peace and progress of the friendly people of the United Kingdom.

In a separate message yesterday, Awami League President and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Sheikh Hasina congratulated British Prime Minister Tony Blair on the victory of his Labour Party in the general elections.

Hasina expressed the hope that Dhaka-London ties would be further strengthened during his third term of office.

BDR asks BSF to return 8 Bangladeshi criminals

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) yesterday officially sent a letter to the Indian Border Security Force (BSF) requesting to hand over eight Bangladeshi criminals arrested at a Bongaon hotel in the Indian State of West Bengal on Thursday.

The eight criminals took shelter in India after committing serious crimes including the killing of Awami League leader Ahsanullah Master, BBC radio said in its evening programme yesterday quoting BDR sources in Dhaka.

A high BDR official talked with a high BSF official over telephone and requested for handing over the criminals, it noted.

Outlaw Akkel

FROM PAGE 1

Mirpur upazila on Thursday. A police-ansar joint patrol team of Mirpur Police Station challenged a group of about 10 people on Malihad field at about 11:00pm.

Police said the gang opened fire on the law enforcers and they returned fire, leading to an hour-long clash.

The police found Latlu dead when his accomplices retreated. They recovered a rifle, six cocktails and seven bullets.

Sixty-six people have so far been killed in 'crossfire' or armed encounters with the law-enforcers in Kushtia.

Immunity

FROM PAGE 16

against our constitution and the basic human rights. That's why we're going to challenge it," said Md Aminur Rasul Babul, national coordinator of the alliance.

He was briefing a press conference at the Dhaka Reporters' Unity in the city yesterday.

Enforcement of the Act will bar the government or individuals from taking legal shelter, even if the activities of the WB or its subsidiaries are proved harmful, he said.

A certain quarter is deliberately spreading misleading information on the issue that individuals will be able to sue the WB, Babul noted.

"We want to challenge the propaganda. The immunity is going to be just like those the UN bodies enjoy in different countries."

The alliance also demanded that the government make public the draft law, Article of Agreement, according to which the WB is working in Bangladesh, and opinions that the law ministers and the attorneys general have given on the issue since 2001.

Its leaders consider the immunity to the WB a means to oppress the poor countries.

"We don't want Bangladesh to be an example for the World Bank so that it can exert pressure on other countries on the same issue," said alliance member Ahmed Swapan in his written statement.

"In the name of poverty alleviation, the Bank is in fact helping a few of the rich and its consultants here. Their aim is to increase their income from the poor countries through various projects and loan programmes," Swapan said.

He added that the countries on the other hand are falling in a trap of debt.

"We firmly believe (we) don't need loan from the World Bank, IMF (International Monetary Fund) or ADB (Asian Development Bank) for development of the poor," he said.

The WB speaks of transparency and accountability, which has now become a farce as it asks for blanket immunity, he added.

The alliance urged the government not to give immunity to the WB and uphold the constitution and civil rights. It also suggested reviewing the immunity given to the ADB.

As many as 59 non-government, civil society and workers' organisations have expressed solidarity with the alliance against the WB immunity.

Alliance members Sharif A Kafi, Zakir Hossain, Shahadat Hossain Mintoo, Md Zakaria, Abul Hossain, AHM Bazlur Rahman, Selina Mallick Lipi, Arup Rahi, among others, addressed the conference.



PHOTO: STAR

Rickshawpullers show V-sign from a campaign rally supporting CCC mayoral candidate ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury yesterday.

Last-minute campaign

FROM PAGE 1

personnel will patrol the city streets during the voting hours. Seventy magistrates will accompany them to take on-the-spot action against troublemakers.

Six hundred BDR personnel in 60 teams will guard important points in the city and patrol polling centre areas. Sixty magistrates will accompany them.

About 8,000 police and similar number of Ansars will guard the 577 polling centres.

A magistrate will look after each polling centre.

Moreover, 14 mobile courts will operate to check election offences during the voting hours, 8:00am to 4:00pm.

The EC already set up a control room at the city Gymnasium, adjoining to MA Aziz Stadium, to compile election results and disseminate information to the EC Secretariat in Dhaka and to the press. It has also completed orientation of 10,500 polling officials.

Asked if any special security measures were taken in the minority-concentrated areas, Quddus said, "There is no need for special security arrangements for any section of people as we have taken the tightest possible security measures for the polls."

LAST MOMENT CAMPAIGN:

The BNP-led ruling alliance stages a big showdown at Laldighi Maidan this afternoon in support of its mayoral candidate Mir Mohammad Nasir Uddin.

BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan and Senior Joint Secretary General Tarique Rahman will address the rally.

The alliance rally follows a similar one at the same venue on Thursday in support of Mir Nasir's main rival Awami League-backed Nagorik Committee mayoral candidate ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury.

Tarique joined polls campaign for Mir Nasir yesterday evening addressing a number of street rallies. He also met local alliance leaders and discussed election strategy.

Mir Nasir held a meeting exchanging views with the fishermen community on the NSL Bhaban premises and conducted mass contact at Mohora and the Police Line area in the morning.

After offering juma prayers at Anderkilla Mosque, Mir Nasir, sought blessing for victory in the election.

Mohiuddin Chowdhury also carried out election campaign in different areas of the city.

The incumbent mayor conducted door-to-door mass contact at Enayet Bazar and exchanged views

with the CCC voters hailing from Choudhagram of Comilla at the JM Sen Hall in the morning. He also addressed two rallies at Shantinagar and Balirhat under Panchlaish and Bakolia wards.

Mohiuddin offered his juma prayers at Sheikh Farid Mosque adjoining to his city residence at Chashma Hill and offered *fateha* at his father's grave there. He sought blessing of the almighty and support of the voters to win the CCC polls.

Sports organisers and sportsmen of both local and national levels brought out a huge procession on trucks campaigning for Mohiuddin in the afternoon.

Mohiuddin inaugurated the procession at the CJKS Gymnasium where AL Joint-Secretary and former sports minister Obayedul Quader, AL Organizing Secretary and former Bangladesh Cricket Board president Saber Hossain Chowdhury, Colonel (retd) Md Faruq Khan and former Bangladesh Football Federation general secretary Haurnur Rashid were also present.

The procession paraded different city streets before ending at the Nagorik Committee office at Anderkilla.

In the morning, a huge procession of around one thousand rickshaws paraded different city streets expressing support for Mohiuddin Chowdhury.

Meanwhile, campaigners for both the main candidates yesterday started distributing voter slips in different areas.

POLL OBSERVERS:

A number of local and foreign poll observer bodies will monitor the election.

The RO said 14 local observer bodies will watch voting. He could not however give the number of foreign bodies.

Recalling their past experiences, some observers said it is time for buying votes. "Vote buying usually takes place at the last hours," said chief of the Janipop Nazmul Ahsan Kalmullah.

ALL HOTELS BOOKED:

Most of the quality hotels, rest houses and guesthouses here have already been reserved for lawmakers of the ruling alliance and the opposition, and journalists who have already come here or will come before the polls.

The port city is going to witness the largest ever gathering of ministers, lawmakers, top political leaders and journalists this time, said an elderly citizen.

Move for unsolicited

FROM PAGE 1

accordance with the Private Power Policy (PPP).

"There is provision to undertake unsolicited project," Iqbal told The Daily Star. "The provision allows the government to do so if necessary."

But the PPP does not allow unsolicited bid, which can lead to corruption and unfair terms for the nation.

The Cadogan Manning proposal, being processed by the Power Cell, is flawed in several areas including power tariff and conditional bid bond.

Some powerful officials of the Prime Minister's Office (PMO), backing the unsolicited deal, have already hammered the firing of the Power Cell director general and transfer of its technical director.

Both had angered the PMO officials by giving fair opinion about this shady negotiation.

Due to lack of policy support for this project, the power ministry has now resorted to another policy, Bangladesh Private Sector Infrastructure Guidelines (BPSIG).

Earlier this week, the power ministry wrote a letter to the law ministry stating that on March 24, the Cadogan Manning Group submitted a proposal for a 500 mw (or 450 mw) combined cycle power plant. The developers will start generating 360 mw power through simple cycle operation from 'November 30', 2006 and go for full operation in January-March, 2007.

The letter says the Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) with Cadogan Manning will be signed on May 15.

The power ministry notes that in 1996, the government introduced the Private Sector Power Generation Policy and claims that the policy accommodates both solicited and unsolicited proposals.

But, it mentions, so far the government has permitted different power projects with 1,290 mw capacity through 'solicitation'.

When the ministry sought Prime Minister Khaleda Zia's decision, she okayed it saying it should be implemented as per the 'existing policy' immediately.

The letter says, "That guideline (BPSIG) includes the rule to process unsolicited proposal. Accordingly, if that unsolicited proposal is found satisfactory, the proposal has to be presented to the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs through the Private Infrastructure Committee."

The letter also notes that the infrastructure guideline and power policy have opposing methodology in processing unsolicited proposals. The letter claims that the guideline did not 'overrule' the power policy's method of processing unsolicited deals.

But the ministry, in its letter, admits it is not clear whether there will be any legal problems in processing the power project under the infrastructure guideline instead of the private power policy. Therefore, the ministry sought the law ministry's opinion on the matter.

The Cadogan-Manning bid, pushed by some businessmen close to an 'alternative centre of power', was offering a conditional bid bond which is conventionally considered unacceptable. The bid also lacked the standard format and its pricing formula is also full of loopholes.

"There is nothing wrong with the private power policy. We have done six to seven projects under it. What it does not allow is unfair deals, kickbacks and nepotism," said an official of the power ministry.

Fish trader shot, Tk 3 lakh snatched

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sathkira

Misceants shot a fish trader and snatched Tk 3 lakh from him at North Katia in the town yesterday morning.

Abdul Alim, 30, son of Nur Ali of North Katia, was admitted to Sathkira hospital and later shifted to Chest Diseases Hospital in Dhaka in a critical condition.

Police quoted local people as saying a gang of five waylaid Alim while he was going to his business establishment at Barabazar by a motorbike at about 6:00am. They shot him in the chest and leg, snatched a bag containing the money and fled the scene by two motorbikes.

Police arrested two persons -- Joyнал, 35, son of Jabbar Sardar of village Kalimakhali in Assassumi upazila and Selim, 28, son of Abul Khair of village Thanaghata in Sadar upazila -- for their alleged involvement in the incident.

Abducted driver's body recovered from river

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

Chudanga police recovered the body of a microbus driver from Mathabhanga river yesterday, over a month after his abduction.

Sajib, 27, son of Mahiuddin of Madrasapara under Alamdanga upazila in the district, was missing since April 3 when a gang rented a microbus owned by Sajib, police and the victim's family sources said.

A week ago Chapainawabganj police recovered the microbus and got a letter in which the gang wrote that Sajib was killed and his body dumped into the Mathabhanga river.

The gang also described Sajib as a police source.

600 JCD men

FROM PAGE 1

of replacement of a new CMP commissioner. Instead, an additional commissioner was appointed as the acting CMP commissioner, they said.

They also smelt rat at the transfer of Inspector General of Police (IGP) Mohammad Hadisuddin.

The former IGP came in Chittagong on Wednesday and asked CMP officials not to work in favour of any candidates, they said.

He was transferred for making this laudable instruction in 24 hours as part of a conspiracy to foil a fair election, they alleged.

The Nagorik Committee leaders alleged the ministers campaigning for State Minister for Civil Aviation Mir Mohammad Nasir Uddin are taking full government protocol facilities and staying at the Circuit House violating the electoral code of conduct.

They questioned the selection procedures of 600 magistrates in the CCC polls and alleged Mir Nasir arranged selection of four magistrates from the civil aviation ministry.

The four might manipulate voting in favour of State Minister for Civil Aviation Mir Nasir, they observed.

The state-owned BTV and CTV are giving excessive coverage of Nasir's campaign in violation of the electoral code of conduct, they said.

Besides, fictitious cases are being filed against opposition leaders and activists to harass them.

They expressed concern at the appointment of all but two of the 577 presiding officers from a single religion (Muslim). Two are from the Buddhist community.

Committee candidate ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury alleged Mir Nasir's men are intimidating minority voters and opposition supporters.

AL presidium members Suranjit Sengupta, MP, Amir Hossain Anu and Tofail Ahmed also addressed the conference.

Former finance minister AMA Muhi, Prof Abu Sayeed, Mostafa Jalal Mohiuddin, Obaidul Quader, Shahjahan Khan, MP, Rana Das Gupta, Moinuddin Khan Badal, former vice-chancellor of Chittagong University Prof MA Mannan and Maj Gen (retd) Subid Ali Bhuiyan, among others, were present.

29 killed in Iraq

FROM PAGE 16

rammed his car into a minibus carrying policemen near ousted dictator Saddam Hussein's hometown of Tikrit, killing eight policemen and four civilians, including a child, a medic told AFP.

More than 300 people have already died this month in at least 30 car bombings and other attacks by Sunni insurgents.

Iraqi police said they found 14 bodies, blindfolded and hands bound, executed with a bullet in the back of the head, in northeastern Baghdad.

Residents had told them that a bulldozer was being used to bury bodies in a vacant lot in the Kasra wa Atash district.

Scavengers sifting through garbage for scrap metal and other items to sell stumbled across the bodies at the dump in Kasra Waatash, on the northeastern edge of Baghdad, police and soldiers said.

There were conflicting accounts of how many bodies were found. Bassim al-Maslokhi, a soldier who was guarding the area during the recovery, counted 14; Kadhim al-Itabi, a local police chief, put the number at 14.

"When police arrived on the scene, the driver of the bulldozer ran away. We found two bodies on the spot and 12 more when we dug up the area," an interior ministry official said.

The official said that the neighbourhood lies on the edge of Sadr City, the impoverished two-million-strong base of radical Shia cleric Moqtada Sadr, controlled by his Mehdi Army militia.

The incidents in Suwayrah and near Sadr City fueled fears of sectarian violence between the ousted Sunni elite and Iraq's newly empowered Shia majority.

In the Shia heartland, five people were wounded when clashes broke out between police and worshippers leaving prayers in the central shrine town of Kufa after a fiery sermon by Sadr.

"If you leave us in peace, we will leave you in peace. You should be aware of the fact that the Mehdi Army is still alive and has its finger on the trigger," said the sermon read by another cleric, in reference to Sadr's militia.

The mercurial leader had officially pledged to disarm and join the political arena following months of intense fighting with US troops last year, but Sadr has kept his options open since then and his militia remains an organised force.

The Shia alliance that won the January 30 elections holds a majority in parliament and was to meet later Friday with representatives of the Sunni minority in a bid to fill the remaining posts in the government line-up.

Several cabinet posts, including the key oil and defence portfolios, were left vacant when the new government was initially introduced last week because of last-minute bickering between the factions, politicians said.

Shia MP Al Dabbagh said agreement had been reached among the

Iraq war costs Blair

FROM PAGE 1

reporting, Labour had 353 seats; the main opposition Conservatives 194; Liberal Democrats 59; and independents and smaller parties 12. Labour's majority of 161 in the last Parliament had been slashed by almost 100 seats.

The slip in Labour's lead could loosen Blair's grip on power and prompt calls for him to step down before he has served a full five-year term. His Cabinet colleague and rival, powerful Treasury chief Gordon Brown, is widely regarded as his likely successor.

Never before has the Labour Party won three straight elections. Margaret Thatcher accomplished the same feat for the Conservatives, the only other prime minister in modern British history to do so.

"I think we can be really proud of what we've achieved," Blair, who turned 52 Friday, told supporters on his return from Sedgfield to London. "We've got a mandate to govern this country again."

The BBC projected Labour would win 66 more seats than all the other parties combined. Sky news put the Labour majority at 64 seats. Results in 610 constituencies showed a turnout of more than