

No rule of law

FROM PAGE 1

taking time from the Supreme Court over and over to delay the process of separation of the judiciary from the executive.

He urged the lawyers to be united with the objective to establish the rule of law in the country.

Addressing the rally, Vice-chairman of Bangladesh Bar Council Barrister Rokanuddin Mahmud said the Appellate Division is now in the grip of politics as a result of the 13th Amendment to the constitution [about caretaker government system].

He said lawyers have been united with the objective to save the country's judiciary and uphold its image.

"We want to uphold the image of the judiciary. We have to resist those who are out to destroy our judicial system," he added.

"Why the Supreme Court is not issuing a judicial notice against the extra-judicial killings?" Rokan questioned on crossfire killings by police and Rapid Action Battalion (Rab).

He demanded an end to "arbitrary use" of article 107 of the constitution [deals with formation of High Court benches] and said the chief justice should not have "arbitrary power" to form or dissolve benches.

Barrister Amir-UI Islam, convener of the lawyers' body, said politics has overpowered the judiciary and is hindering its smooth functioning.

"The image of the judiciary is now questioned after the government appointed 34 judges to the High Court in two phases considering

their political affiliation," the convener said, adding appointment of 16 judges has not been confirmed.

He alleged the judiciary has become a rehabilitation centre for ruling party cadre-turned lawyers.

Blasting the presidential clemency to a ruling party man, he asked, "Where is the rule of law when the government gave immunity to a person convicted of two murders?"

SCBA President Advocate Mahbubey Alam, Secretary Enayetur Rahim, Advocate Abdul Baset Majumder, Advocate Abdul Matin Khasru, Advocate Subrata Chowdhury, Advocate Sahara Khatun and lawyers from different district Bar associations also addressed the rally.

After the rally, the Ainjibi Samannay Parishad placed an 18-point demand formulated on the basis of suggestions placed by lawyers to make the judiciary free from "politicisation and corruption". It also demanded formation of an independent commission through consulting the opposition parties to ensure appointment of honest and competent lawyers as High Court judges.

Referring to the verdict of Majdar Hossain case [Supreme Court's 12-point directives regarding separation of the judiciary from the executive], the lawyers demanded that appointment, promotion and transfer of judges to the lower court should be made through the Judicial Service Commission.

Bapex rejoinder

FROM PAGE 1

well drilling requires drilling of a number of wells.

After all, the nation would not like to see a third blow-out in Tengrafla.

To ensure a successful relief well, whatever necessary would be done with the help of specialised consultants engaged for relief well drilling.

This is for your kind information that neither Bapex nor the major drilling contractors of the world have the expertise or technology to drill relief well.

There are only a few specialised companies who can handle relief well drilling.

Statements relating to the three dimensional study, drilling of well for commercial purpose before relief well, drilling of horizontal well etc are all imaginary stories and far from reality.

Ourreply:
The Daily Star is not clear why Bapex went at length describing the importance of drilling a relief well and how it contradicts this story.

Niko's new proposal deals with drilling of a well that does not aim at sealing the blown out well and therefore it is not a relief well.

Since it is not a relief well, it will serve as a development well.

Our story did not say the joint committee "objected in writing".

It said that the joint committee that approves the plan in writing has objected to this plan.

The reference of "in writing" approval has been mentioned to remind that the joint committee is the ultimate approving authority.

But in reality the energy adviser has given Niko "verbal approval" on the plan which is likely to affect the decision making process.

It is not clear as to what Bapex means by saying that statements relating to three-dimensional study etc were imaginary.

After tabling its first remedial plan one month ago, Niko proposed other options like three-dimensional study and there was debate on how the drilling would take place.

Waterlogging

FROM PAGE 1

would be difficult to save these natural canals from extinction," a source in the district administration said.

Since the independence, successive governments and land grabbers have contributed to filling up of at least 15 natural canals to construct roads, box-culverts and other structures.

The Meradia, Nandipara, Ramchandrapur, Hazaribagh, Gabtoli, Ibrahimpur, Katashur, Banasri, Jatrabari and Kadamtali canals are partially active and need immediate attention 'for the sake of their survival'.

According to experts, natural canals greatly help drain the storm water and prevent flooding and waterlogging. With the ever-descending groundwater level at 46.24 metres, the city desperately needs such water bodies, an expert at the Department of Environment said.

In September 2004, an inter-ministerial meeting chaired by Local Government and Rural Development (LGRD) Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan formed a committee comprising experts from about a dozen organisations to study the feasibility of a project to save the canals. The responsibility to protect these canals now lies with Dhaka Wasa, which has been responsible for virtually 'killing' several of them.

Babar in US

FROM PAGE 1

Senator Kennedy lauded Bangladesh for taking necessary steps to fight domestic violence, according to a message received in Dhaka yesterday.

He assured the state minister of his support for the Trade Bill, which, if passed in the US Congress, will allow quota-free access of Bangladesh's garment products to the US market.

Later, Babar held talks with US Under-Secretary of State for Political Affairs Nicholas Burns who recalled his recent visit to Bangladesh.

Babar informed Burns about the steps taken by the government to curb crimes. He also mentioned the government steps for protecting the interests of the Ahmadiyyas.

Burns termed the US-Bangladesh bilateral relation excellent and gave assurance of continued US support to Bangladesh in its fight against terrorism.

The state minister also held talks with Assistant Secretary of Narcotics Control Department Nancy J Powell and Chief of Counter Terrorism Department Karen Aguilar.

During the meetings, the Bangladesh minister told the US officials that there is no place for terrorism in Bangladesh and no Bangladesh is involved in such activities at home and abroad.

Aguilar informed Babar that the Personal Identification Secure Information System agreement signed between the United States and Bangladesh would come into force in September this year.

Bangladesh Ambassador Shamsheer Mobin Chowdhury and other high officials attended the meetings.

ARF to accept

FROM PAGE 1

become effective when ARF foreign ministers meet again next year in Malaysia, the statement said.

The Vientiane meeting formally accepted East Timor as the ARF's 25th member.

ARF was established in 1994 to foster dialogue and consultation on political and security issues.

In addition to Asean members Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam, it groups the European Union and 14 other nations, including the United States, China and Japan.



Dr Kamal Hossain presides over the Sammilita Ainjibi Samannay Parisad grand conference on the Supreme Court premises yesterday.

Phew, that was a good Thursday

FROM PAGE 16

At White Chapel, a Bangladeshi populated area, I change the train for King's Cross. Again the carriage is empty, as it is not a peak hour. As the train crosses Monument, a lady's voice announces that Euston station is closed and the train will not stop there. It is a nervous statement by its own merit today, and the black woman sitting opposite me straightens up with a jerk. She looks around nervously and only finds me to give her some comfort. She gives an edgy smile and I show my teeth as if to reassure her.

I remember what Mrinal Sen of Brick Lane told me the previous night about the 777 incidents, his first-hand account. He works at King's Cross Underground. The British were very cautious in announcing that trains had been bombed, mainly to avoid panic and racial backlash.

"We knew right after the explosion that a terrorist attack had taken place," Mrinal said. "We were talking with the train's driver over wireless. Yet, the media kept on saying that the train faced a power surge."

We sit upright and pray that nothing of that sort happen today. Not again.

Finally it is King's Cross. As I ride the long escalator, I have a funny feeling and turn around. Right behind me is a white man, looking intently at my backpack. He feels embarrassed to be caught like this. From the other row of escalator, a black man, a construction worker judging by his dress, gives me the stare too. This time I ignore.

Once out of the exit, I get more surprises -- the station is teeming with policemen. One of them has a huge shepherd dog, a bomb

sniffer. But none of the cops are alert, they are just gossiping among themselves and do not bother to give me as much as a glance even though I cross them twice to catch the train to Victoria. Finally I approach one of them to ask which line to take for my destination. I look at the man's white shirt and remember Mrinal again.

"The policemen came immediately and disappeared inside the tunnel," he had said. "They went inside with neat white shirts and came out in soot and blood. They looked horrible and yet they kept on working in the most orderly fashion without panicking."

Security at Victoria seems to be more intense. Here I find four security dogs -- a Labrador, a spaniel, a pointer and a shepherd. The spaniel looks at me with her droopy eyes; she looks too pathetic to be a bomb detector. Mrinal said the dogs did a wonderful job that day in detecting victims' bodies and explosives.

I finally change line once more and come to Westminster to see Detective Superintendent David Tucker. He tells me security measures of an extraordinary level has been taken today after Met Chief Sir Ian Blair warned that the three 21/7 bombers still on the run could strike again.

Hundreds of reinforcements have been drafted in from forces around the South-East. More than 3,000 Met officers are armed in the force's biggest operation since the Second World War. Police marks-men have been equipped with AW50 heavy sniper rifles with a range of over a mile and 7.62 Lee Enfield Enforcers capable of stopping vehicles. Undercover officers have easy-to-conceal, folding-stock Heckler and Koch MP5K PDW submachine guns.

On my way back, the number of passengers increases. They start pouring out of offices to go home and I cram myself among them with my rucksack. Some of them look terrified, some of them constantly keep an eye on me, but many just ignore because they would hate to stereotype a bomber.

I remember what Mrinal said: "After the blast, the passengers started walking through the tunnels to come out of the mess, but they still did not know that the front carriages have been ripped up by explosions."

I look out the window and try to see how much space there is to walk -- it is too dark to guess anything.

At Bromley-Bow, those six cops are still there. But two hours later as I come out, their number has increased to 10. And this time they are more watchful as the number of passengers is still high. At King's Cross again, I find a different picture -- openly armed policemen are there this time, their submachine guns held ready. I walk past two huge and towering policemen, their fingers curled around the triggers of the Heckler and Koch.

I buy a ticket for Cambridge and board the train. Five minutes before the departure, two policemen step in and walk the whole length of the train, looking at every suspicious luggage that includes mine too, and then gets out. The train leaves.

Soon, we are in the countryside and the meadows appear -- cows, horses and lambs grazing the fields. Beyond the pastures on the borderline of green trees, twin rainbows appear on the horizon.

I finally relax. Phew, after all, it was a good Thursday.



Rab men check the bag of a rickshaw passenger at Joykali Mandir Road yesterday as part of anticrime drive.

Ordeals of deprived war hero

FROM PAGE 1

privileges of a government job.

He, however, received the freedom fighter's allowance. He also started farming to maintain his family.

Unfortunately, the family life did not last long as Arafat's wife died about 12 years ago. His two children--a son and a daughter--had died earlier when he lived in Chittagong.

Life's misery and old age had left Arafat too weak for physical labour and he started begging in different districts. He has been a beggar for the last four years.

"Why did I take part in the Liberation War? Was it to live by begging now?" asks Arafat with a blank look, his pride of being a "muktijoddha" (freedom fighter) shattered over the last three decades of extreme poverty and unbearable hunger.

Following someone's suggestion, on June 22 he boarded a Dhaka-bound train from Sylhet with the hope to meet the prime minister (PM).

But fate had different plans--an accident befell him somewhere in the capital he cannot remember, and found himself lying on a bed at the DMCH.

"He has high level of diabetes, and his left leg had to be amputated from the thigh due to the accident," said Arafat's physician Dr M Amjad Hossain. "He has bed-sore also on his back," he added.

Initially, he was shifted from ward to ward receiving little care until on July 7 he was finally admitted in the orthopaedic ward. He was not even given the minimum medication the doctor had prescribed due to the lack of medicine supplies at the DMCH.

When he arrived in Dhaka, Arafat had Tk 1500 with him. When he woke up in the hospital, however, he found it lost.

Arafat's identity as a freedom fighter yielded some benefit.

Dr Amjad Hossain, head of orthopaedic and trauma surgery at the DMCH and health advisor to Bangladesh Freedom Fighters' Welfare Trust, has been trying to help this ill-fated war hero.

Dr Hossain told The Daily Star that Arafat's condition is steadily deteriorating, and good treatment and care is needed for his recovery.

Pak madrasas

FROM PAGE 16

crackdown on militants would last, Musharraf said this was an ongoing process.

He said police had been ordered to catch leaders of banned organisations.

Bomb blast

FROM PAGE 16

Prasad Yadav said Friday the toll had risen to 12.

Sinha said 41 people had been admitted to hospital with "serious burn injuries."

"Quite a few of them... are critical," he added.

A coach on an Indian train normally has 70 seats but general compartments are often overcrowded.

\$1b export rise proves

FROM PAGE 1

ambitious as there had been fears that export would plummet in the changed global situation after the quota phase-out. But the sectors [textiles and apparel] have been performing beyond our expectation in the recent months," said an EPB official.

"We were prepared to see some setbacks in the second half but it didn't happen," he observed.

The MFA reached in 1974 as part of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (Gatt) and its successor the Agreement on Textiles and Clothing had governed international trade in textiles and clothing through a system of import quotas set on a country-by-country basis till December 31, 2004.

As a huge 78 percent of the country's export earnings came from textiles and apparels and as Bangladesh's quota to export those to the US was about to go, trade experts and international agencies ahead of the open trade regime predicted a drastic export plummet.

Among the prominent doomsayers, International Monetary Fund (IMF) had forewarned of Bangladesh losing a quarter of its exports and a huge number of jobs in 2005 due to quota elimination. While World Trade Organisation (WTO) had forecast that Bangladesh might see up to 50 percent of its US market share go out of its pocket.

These warnings, especially as they came from the IMF and the WTO, were not taken lightly by any quarter at home or abroad.

The country's exports did feel the initial shock of the quota phase-out, with earnings from woven garments falling by 21 percent in January 2005 from those of January 2004.

But after that, the exports swung back to previous status and contin-

ued climbing up beyond.

One reason for the recovery is the fact that Bangladesh has become well known in the global apparel market as a reliable source of cheap garments. Unit cost of apparel in Bangladesh is the cheapest in the South Asian region. For Bangladesh the unit cost of shirts comes to 11 cents, which is 26 cents for India, 43 cents for Pakistan and 79 cents for Sri Lanka.

Its labour force is also 'skilled' for the low-end products, which comprise the bulk of its exports.

But the really important reason is that China was unable to immediately cash in on the open market system because of the special safeguard clause the US imposed on its exports.

"Our garment sales in the US market are now increasing because of the safeguard measures against Chinese exports," Annisul Haq, president of Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA), told The Daily Star.

In October 2004, producers from 51 developing countries backed a petition filed by the US textiles industry to limit US imports of Chinese textiles and apparels in nine categories, including socks, cotton and synthetic trousers, woollen trousers, cotton and synthetic knit shirts, and underwear.

Looking at the situation from another angle, Centre for Policy Dialogue Research Director Professor Mustafizur Rahman observed, "The recent depreciation of taka against US dollar will improve the market competitiveness of Bangladeshi products, which will help increase exports in the coming days."

Banker commits suicide

FROM PAGE 1

him to commit suicide. Soheli and his bride had had an affair for more than two years, but none of their relatives agreed their getting married, said one of Soheli's relatives.

Soheli's relatives gathered at his 41/11 Chand Miah Housing residence on his marriage ceremony, and to avoid the crowd Soheli, the youngest of eight siblings, went to his sister's house nearby for a rest, said his relatives.

Everything was alright in the morning. "He was quite jolly when he had his breakfast with me," Soheli's nephew Apu told The Daily Star. "I asked him what his would-be wife looks like since I never met her. 'Never mind, you would see her this evening,' was his reply."

He along with another nephew Toukir even went to a rent-a-car centre at Shyamoli to arrange a vehicle for the marriage ceremony.

Soheli then went to receive the relatives of the bride and another banker of Uttara Bank, who were supposed to come to Soheli's house at around 11:00am for discussion.

Things suddenly turned wrong when the bride's father, also a banker of the Bangladesh Bank, did not come with the group. Soheli might have had a talk with his in-laws or with the bride and then went to take rest at a room on the first floor at around 11:30pm.

Seeing no sign of him for more than an hour, a nephew knocked at the door. "There was no response," said Apu. "Then my elder brother broke into the room and we found him hanging from the ceiling with foams in the mouth."

Soheli was rushed to Bangladesh Medical College and

Hospital and later Dhaka Medical College and Hospital (DMCH) where the doctors declared him dead at 12:45pm.

In a separate incident, a garment employee Zaim Khan committed suicide after quarrelling with a neighbouring woman yesterday noon. She hanged herself from the ceiling of her tin-roofed house at Station Road in Tongi.

Meanwhile, police recovered the body of a 10-year-old girl named Poppy Aktar, who drowned in a pool at Bhashantek in Kafurli yesterday afternoon while collecting vegetables beside the water-body.

Three unnatural death cases were filed with the respective police stations.

North Korea

FROM PAGE 16

from the network built by Abdul Qadeer Khan is significant because it is an effort to break an impasse over the scope of North Korea's nuclear programme, two officials told The New York Times.

American officials, the Times said, were reluctant to describe the North Korean response, but one official said that when presented with the evidence -- chiefly the testimony of Khan -- "they argue with us about it."

US officials have never made public the details of Khan's statements to Pakistani officials, who have declined to make him available for interrogation. But they have shared the information widely with Asian allies, and elements of it have leaked out, including Khan's assertion -- that the North Koreans once showed him what they said were three fully assembled nuclear weapons, it said.

Forbes ranks

FROM PAGE 16

deemed the third most powerful woman in 2004 was not included in the list of top 100 a year later.

Newcomer Yulia Tymoshenko, the Ukrainian Prime Minister has been placed at the third position, followed by beleaguered Philippines President Gloria Arroyo, who jumped five places to get the fourth position this year.

Low over Bay

FROM PAGE 1

to medium or heavy rainfall in most areas of Barisal and Khulna divisions in next 24 hours and medium to light rainfall in places of other districts.

All fishing boats and trawlers over the North Bay have been advised to remain close to coast and proceed with caution.

Natwar to discuss

FROM PAGE 1

"As of today, we have no information about his [Natwar Singh] carrying any letter," Foreign Secretary Hemayetuddin told The Daily Star last night. He said, "We're now finalising the itineraries."

Indian daily The Telegraph reported yesterday, "Natwar Singh may carry a letter--though it has not been confirmed yet -- from the Prime Minister for Begum Khaleida Zia, inviting the Bangladesh Prime Minister to visit India at the earliest."

Our New Delhi correspondent sent a despatch yesterday saying the visit of Natwar Singh is aimed at clearing the misunderstandings that have crept into Indo-Bangladesh relations on a number of issues including those of security.

Issues of the Saarc region as well as bilateral subjects would come up for deliberations during Singh's meetings with his Bangladesh counterpart M Moshed Khan. Singh is also likely to call on Khaleida Zia.

This is the first ministerial level visit from India to Bangladesh since a Congress-led government coalition backed by left parties from outside came to power in May last year.

In yesterday's report The

Telegraph said, "Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has decided to send foreign minister K Natwar Singh to Dhaka next month to assure the Bangladesh Nationalist Party government that Delhi is sincere about improving bilateral ties."

"Natwar Singh, whose trip is being described as a 'bilateral, goodwill' visit, is not going to Dhaka to hold the joint commission meeting that is co-chaired by the foreign ministers of the two countries. The panel has not met since July 2003," it reports.

According to the report, Singh is likely to discuss bilateral trade, alleged 'presence' of Northeast insurgents in Bangladesh and 'illegal immigration' to India with key Bangladesh leaders, including Khaleida Zia, Moshed Khan and Leader of Opposition Sheikh Hasina.

"However, the focus will be on the two key messages that Natwar Singh will carry. One, India is serious about having strong relations with whichever party comes to power in Bangladesh. Two, Delhi is keen to participate in the Saarc summit to be held in Dhaka from November 12," The Telgraph said.