

Combing operation

FROM PAGE 1
OTHER OUTLAWED parties and burst their dens, reports our Khulna correspondent.

Sources said a ruling coalition lawmaker from Khulna division is also under watch for his suspected connection with one of the three Islamist militant groups.

The lawmaker is also among the 33 Islamist extremists suspected for participating in the Afghan war as mujahids.

The list also includes the imam of a Khulna city Jame mosque, who has also been absconding since August 17.

Unconfirmed sources said most of these 33 Islamist extremists are hiding in the Sundarbans near the Indian border.

The coastguards will join the combing operation and the forest guards will also be involved if necessary, said the sources.

COMILLA
Detectives yesterday arrested three JMB men, including a schoolteacher, in three separate drives in the district, reports our correspondent.

The arrestees are Moulana Atiqur Rahman, 34, son of Abdul Karim Sarker of Khirakandi village of Debidwar, Zakir Hossain, 26, son of Jasim Uddin of Uggapur of Burichong upazila, and Azim Uddin, 46, son of Abdul Mannan of Nalgaon of Kapasia upazila of Gazipur.

Azim is an assistant teacher at Batakandi High School in Titapuzila of Comilla.

The three were arrested in their houses following confessional statements of three other JMB men arrested earlier on Saturday.

Atiqur, Zakir and Azim confessed to the police that they had taken training in bomb-making and operating firearms, including AK47 rifle and 9mm pistol, under the supervision of Bangla Bhai.

JOYPURHAT
Five JMB members were arrested in Joypurhat early yesterday, BDNEWS reported.

Update voter list

FROM PAGE 16
She claimed most of the leaders and workers of her party could not reside in their own homes for the last four years due to atrocities by alliance-backed criminals and police.

"And the plan of the government is to leave these pro-Awami League people out of the fresh voter list," Hasina, also the Awami League (AL) president, feared.

"I have information that cadres of the BNP and Jamaat have already prepared a draft voter list, dropping names of the pro-Awami League people and drafting in many fake voters," she claimed.

An updated list with pictures of voters will help stop fake voting, identifying the deceased, she observed.

The opposition leader, however, avoided directly answering whether the AL would boycott the next polls but expressed her concern about the prospect of holding fair polls.

"We will not step into any trap laid out by the present government," she said. "The Awami League will take part in election after the proposed reforms are introduced. We will compel the government to introduce those reforms," she said curly.

"There will be no election without reforms in the caretaker government system and Election Commission as the BNP-Jamaat alliance has already started politicising the two institutions," she said.

Hasina also said, "The Awami League came to power every time with the people's verdict. We believe in people's power and their choice.... I am confident that the Awami League will come to power again with the vote of people, not through other means."

Hasina said her party along with other opposition parties would launch a vigorous movement, forcing the government to realise the opposition demand for the reforms.

Asked about a possibility of forming a 'national government', the AL president said she was not aware of such matter. But, she said,

Case against

FROM PAGE 16
foundation's head office is situated in Dhamondia area of the capital and its local office at Joyparabazar in Dohar. Since 2001, this foundation has been carrying out welfare activities in different areas of Dohar. The foundation provided arsenic free tube-wells, computers, cash money and employment support to the locals.

In the statement, it was alleged that Nazmul Huda and his activists stormed the foundation, ransacked furniture, looted computers, money and other valuables.

The counsellor of the complainant pleaded that lower court had earlier refused to take the case.

Rafiqul Islam, District and Sessions Judge, Dhaka, admitted the revision after hearing and fixed October 9 for final hearing of the revision.

BSF kills 2

FROM PAGE 16
boy while he was cutting grass at Nalgaria border village in the morning.

The victim, Yunus Mia, 17, died on the spot. The BSF men entered the village and took away the body, family sources said.

The BSF action took place at a time when chiefs of the border forces are holding meeting in the Indian capital in a bid to maintain peace on the 4,500-km border.

Admitting the incident, BDR sources said they protested the killing and asked the BSF for a flag meeting to return the body of Yunus. But there was no response from the Indian side as of 7:00pm yesterday.

Shadhana fined

FROM PAGE 1
MdRokan Ud Doulah.
The factory authorities also failed to show any equipment used to measure the standard of drugs.

Three cases were filed against Beni Madhab Mukherjee, general manager of the Shadhana Aushadhalaya Ltd under the acts of Bangladesh Standards and Testing Institution (BSTI), Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) and Drug Administration.

Around 400 rare species Rhysas monkeys are living in the factory area and sometimes they snatch the molasses, locals told the reporters when the court was conducting the trial.

"Varieties of virus especially pyrogen which is responsible for many diseases, spread out if animals like this type of monkeys stay within 300 metres," BSTI officer Nazir Ahmed told The Daily Star during the drive.

Alcohol will formulate where sugar and molasses are kept but Shadhana has no standard equipment to measure the percentage of alcohol, an officer of the mobile court said.

"Herbal medicine is good for health and play a vital role in curing diseases as it has few reactions but the producing process in the factory is not acceptable," Magistrate Rokan Ud Doulah told reporters after the drive.

Another mobile court led by magistrate Mizanur Rahman raided two restaurants in Tejgaon areas and fined a total of Tk 13,000 for keeping unhygienic environment and inedible food.

A mobile court led by Magistrate Majibul Huq raided eight hotels and sweetmeat restaurants at Paltan in the capital and fined Tk 45,000 for serving unsafe food and not maintaining hygienic environment.

Another mobile court led by Magistrate ABM Abdul Saifur raided different restaurants, and fast food shops in Badda area and filed four cases, fined Tk 90,000 and arrested a restaurant owner for keeping environment unhygienic and serving unsafe food.

Buet rejoinder

FROM PAGE 1
Anwar Hossain.
Our reply

The students demonstrating on the Buet campus on Tuesday alleged that the VC handed over two students to police, which agitated them further, leading to the altercation with the VC for 15 minutes.

The VC was not available for his comments on this issue on Tuesday. We regret mentioning the name of Monowar Hossain as Anwar Hossain.

Expedite process

FROM PAGE 16
The High Court should have a separate bench to deal only with securities-related cases, it suggested.

The seminar further recommended capacity building of the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) officials and investors' awareness programme so that they are better equipped to address all related issues.

The recommendations will be sent to the finance ministry, the parliamentary standing committee on the ministry and all offices concerned for further suggestions from all stakeholders.

Earlier at the plenary session of the seminar, speakers underscored making the capital market regulatory body more independent and self-equipped to work without interference from the government or other agencies.

They called for rapid expansion of the capital market to accelerate gross domestic growth more.

In his keynote speech at the session, SEC Chairman Mirza Azizul Islam stressed regulations for promotion of the financial sector generally and capital market in particular.

Those who spoke included SEBI India Chairman M Damodaran, SEC Pakistan Chairman Tariq Hassan, Singapore Exchange Ltd President Sweenee Tian ANG, Karachi Stock Exchange Chairman Mohammad Yasin Lakhani, Chaitanyong Stock Exchange President Habibullah Khan and Bangladesh Ebershree Institute President Farooq Sobhan.

Tata final

FROM PAGE 16
not," said a top-level source in the government.

He said both sides will make all-out efforts to settle all the critical issues about the proposed investment.

The sources said four critical issues will dominate the negotiation. These are financial incentive to Tata investment, gas security and gas price, tariff for purchase of electricity from Tata power plant and the methodology of coalmining in Barapukuria.

Among the issues, sources said Tata wants fiscal incentive for its investment similar to those in the export processing zones (EPZs). At the same time, they want to be allowed to sell their products in the local market, which is prohibited for the investors in the EPZs.

The government does not want to provide Tata with such incentives at the same time, as it will mean discrimination for other foreign investors.

Secondly, Tata wants a guarantee for uninterrupted supply of gas to its fertiliser factory for 20 years and to its steel plant for 25 years.

But the government prefers to introduce a liquidity damage (LD) provision instead of any specific guarantee on gas supply.

The tariff on electricity will be the most critical issue, as the government at present has no set criteria for fixing tariff of electricity of the coal-fired plant.

Earlier, the officials of the Bangladesh government and the Tata Group held negotiation meetings thrice in Dhaka (May to July) to discuss the nitty-gritty of the proposed investment.

At that time, both sides tried to understand each other's position. The sources said if both sides reach a successful conclusion this time, the agreement with Tata will be signed by the end of November this year.

Dhaka now 110 out

FROM PAGE 1
governance still remain major problems here," he mentioned. "There is no change in perception. We can change the perception by changing the reality."

The country is experiencing a deteriorating trend in investment and the business environment index, he said. The government is suffering from indecision, and policy instability is a cause for increasing concern about business environment.

Bangladesh ranked the lowest among 117 countries this year both in the corruption sub-index and the public institution index.

The Growth Competitiveness Index (GCI) of 2005 and 2004 shows change in the country credit rating in Bangladesh, which was negative five percent, had been the worst.

The CPD in collaboration with the World Economic Forum has been assessing the business competitiveness environment in Bangladesh since 2001. The GCI deals with two broad indicators: the GCI and Business Competitiveness Index (BCI).

This year's survey covered 93 companies in Bangladesh, which are contributing most to the national economy, Debapriya said.

According to the survey, the graft situation has further deteriorated. Most of the respondents cited corruption as the most important determining factor affecting the business environment. The overall composition of public spending is wasteful and the situation remains unchanged, they pointed out.

Public trust in the financial honesty of politicians is still very low but slightly improved in 2005. In terms of

illegal payments to influence government policies, laws, regulations, and diversion of public funds to companies, the situation deteriorated, it mentioned.

Apart from corruption, four other top determining factors mentioned in the study are inefficient bureaucracy, inadequate infrastructure, policy instability and crime and theft.

About freedom of press, the study said ability to publish or broadcast news without fear of censorship or retaliation has slid to good from better and the judicial system is heavily influenced by political interference.

Debapriya mentioned that these are not the CPD's views. Rather, what the entrepreneurs are thinking has been reflected in the survey.

"It does not mean that Bangladesh did not improve in any area. We are doing good but not enough," he added.

Low cost of labour and natural resources still continue to be major competing factors for Bangladesh, the CPD executive director said. Investment, production and export are good but it is not better than last year's. Strengthening corporate governance has become essential.

The survey was designed to cover relatively large companies with total assets of at least Tk 10 crore.

These include 46 manufacturing companies, 13 financial institutions, seven real estate and construction firms, eight ICT enterprises, seven transport and engineering firms and 12 others.

Prof Mustafizur Rahman, research director and other senior researchers of the CPD were present on the occasion.

Security plan

FROM PAGE 1
Beside 8,000 Rab men, Bangladesh Rifles, police and ansar members will also work in 64 districts to ensure law and order.

"The security arrangement has been heightened this year as the number of puja mandaps has increased by one to two thousand," State Minister for Home Affairs, Lutfuzzaman Babar, told reporters yesterday, emerging out of an inter-ministerial meeting on law and order during the puja.

Rab will reach each district before the programme begins and work in both uniform and plainclothes, he said.

"We've emphasised community involvement in the security arrangement to solve the problem at local levels," the state minister said, adding that government officials will hold meetings with local leaders at district and thana levels once in a week to workout solutions to their problems.

He informed journalists that leaders of Oikya Parishad and Oikya Front of the Hindu community have also setup a monitoring cell.

Babar asked Hindu leaders to cooperate with law enforcers, and also asked them to strengthen their own security system.

The ministry of religious affairs, meanwhile, asked the Islamic Foundation to involve imams to sit with Hindu community leaders to work out a plan for coordination to avoid any misunderstandings over the beating of drums during Ramadan.

The meeting did not ban beating of drums during iftar hours or prayers, but asked Hindu leaders to lower the sound during the period of time.

The Hindu community leaders, during the meeting, demanded a two-day vacation instead of the existing one-day to celebrate the puja.

"The state minister has assured them that he will take the matter to the authorities concerned," said a source present at the meeting.

The leaders also demanded unhampered electricity and water supply and security at puja mandaps and connecting roads during the celebration.

The leaders also demanded illuminating the government buildings and allocating more time for telecasting special programmes on the radio and

television during the puja. The meeting was told that at least 144 mandaps will be built in the capital.

The Hindu community leaders demanded to shift Ramna Kali Mandir to an adjacent place as they are facing problems at the existing place.

Leaders of the Hindu community expressed their satisfaction over the security steps. "We're happy with the government's steps," CR Dutt, president of Hindu Bouddha Oikya Parishad, said while talking to reporters after yesterday's meeting.

Leaders of Bangladesh Puja Utshab Parishad and Mahanagar Sarbojonin Puja Utshab Committee also took part in the meeting, participated, among others, by state minister for water resources advocate Goutam Chakrobarti, secretaries of home and religious affairs ministry, inspector general of police, commissioner of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, and Rab director general.

7 student bodies

FROM PAGE 16
led by his accomplice Shah Alam, gunned down Kamrul in front of his North Ibrahimpur house.

The OC, however, did not report to the Razabghar Police Lines until yesterday evening although the Dhaka Metropolitan Police Commissioner issued an order Tuesday afternoon. The OC is absconding since he was closed.

IG (Prisons)

FROM PAGE 16
Toufiqul received his removal letter in the afternoon, while his successor took charge in the evening.

Toufiqul was removed for his failure to discharge duties properly, said sources.

The fleeing of three prisoners from the jail in last two months, rampant drug peddling and prostitution inside the jail premises might have contributed to the removal decision. The same allegations were brought against the additional IG Prisons but no action was taken against him, added the sources.

In the face of allegations of corruption, irregularities and mismanagement in the prison administration, the then IG Prisons Toufiqul's predecessor Brigadier Zillur Rahman was transferred on September 5 last year.

Good aman

FROM PAGE 16
of urea, which sells at Tk 300 per 50 kg bag. Urea, widely used in rice fields, is a highly subsidised chemical fertiliser in Bangladesh.

Srimantapur village's farmers - namely Abdul Kader, Mahmudur Rahman Bhuiyan, and Ramuzuddin all had one common complaint: since 2001 the diesel price rose several times before stabilising now at Tk 30 a litre pushing up every time the output costs of potato and boro.

"After harvesting the standing aman crop in the field, we'll go for potato cultivation. But, repeated hikes in diesel price would straightaway double up the irrigation costs from Tk 1500 an acre to Tk 3000 now," claimed Abdul Kader, expressing fear that "if the current low rate of potatoes Tk 5-6 a kg persists, producing potatoes in the coming season would not be cost-effective."

Retired Senior Warrant Officer-turned full-time farmer, Ramuzuddin urged the government to subsidise diesel, used for irrigation purposes to save crop growers from bearing the brunt of enhanced input costs.

Despite a deep sense of worry at enhanced input costs, most of the Chandina farmers appeared to have put up a happy face thanks to favourable weather and no major pest attacks, promising them a good aman harvest a month and half from now.

Some growers complained about problem weed infestation, which they mostly conquered by using an effective weedicide called Rifi, while others used farm labourers to manually comb-out the weeds in aman fields.

Saifur returns today

UNB, Dhaka

Finance and Planning Minister M Saifur Rahman returns this morning after attending the World Bank and IMF annual meetings in Washington.

The minister maintains a stable health, one of his personal staff told the news agency yesterday evening.

Saifur fell sick due to over work and got admitted to a New York hospital during the UN World Summit in mid-September. He was released after medical check-up.

40 JU rooms vandalised

BDNEWS, JU

Five students belonging to a faction of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) Jahangirnagar University (JU) unit led by its president were injured yesterday as another faction led by the general secretary attacked them over the possession of a seat at the auditorium during a cultural function.

Following the incident the adherents of the faction led by the general secretary vandalised 40 rooms of Meer Mosharraf Hossain Hall and fired 20-25 round bullets.

The JU authorities formed a three-member committee headed by resident teacher M. Colam Moazzem to investigate the incident.

Concerned sources said the JCD general secretary had an altercation with a student named Akash over the possession of a seat while watching a cultural function at the University Open Stage at 11:00pm on Tuesday.

Woman bomber

FROM PAGE 16
This center was supposed to be open today for volunteers," Iraqi General Nejam Abdullah said.

Many people were waiting at the scene to sign up to join the army, police said.

The bombing came a day after the US military said it had killed the man it called the number two figure in al Qaeda in Iraq.

Abu Azzam was deputy to the organization's leader, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, Iraq's most wanted man, the US military said, although al Qaeda ridiculed this claim in an internet statement. Abu Azzam was killed on Sunday.

Fuel station

FROM PAGE 1
The meeting, the government announced that the petroleum dealers will be allowed to make payment within a 48-hour (after buying) timeframe till November 15. The association had decided not to invest money in buying fuel from the government deposits, "incurring huge loss" in their business.

Besides, an eight-member committee was formed during the meeting. Asked to submit its report by October 30, the committee will be headed by BPC Director (marketing) and comprise among others Energy Ministry officials and president of the association.

"It [committee] will consider our demand for upping the sales commission to 5 percent from the existing 2 percent," Nazmul Haque said.

On November 15, the energy secretary will sit down with the dealers to settle all the outstanding issues, he said, adding that till then "the government will supply us with fuel on condition that we will make the payment within the next 48 hours."

Meanwhile, car and transport owners had started stockpiling fuel since the day before yesterday, learning about the strike. The fuel pumps under the association yesterday kept their businesses shut, much to the inconvenience of the vehicle owners.

Two factions of the association, however, did businesses as usual, lessening the misery of the people.

Petrol pump owners' 12-point demand includes among others hike in sales commission and compensation for operational loss due to storage leakage and evaporation of petroleum fuel.

Setting up a monitoring committee, issuing licences for light firearm for the petrol pump owners, establishing testing labs in the government oil depots to prevent fuel adulteration and framing a guideline to establish petrol pumps and CNG stations were also some other major demands.

Our Khulna Correspondent adds: At least 25 people were injured, two of them severely, when police clubbed leaders and supporters of Khulna unit of petroleum dealers and tank lorry owners and workers co-ordination action committee.

Thirteen people were picked up from the scene for damaging tank lorries and creating chaos in front of petrol pumps. But later they were released as the leaders of the association kept refusing to begin negotiations with the energy ministry if the 13 are not freed.

"Police released them after the energy secretary had intervened," Nazmul Haque said in Dhaka.

Convener of the action committee and Jatiya Party leader Abdul Gaffar Biswas was among the injured in the Khulna incident. Mizan, 40, and Milon, 25, were admitted to Khulna Medical College and Hospital in critical condition.

The clash broke out when strikers were demonstrating in front of Jamuna Oil Depot at Khalishpur. Police launched the attack without any provocation, said witnesses.

Police said the supporters of strike programme vandalised four tank lorries, entering the oil depot at 8:30am yesterday.

Tight security measures were taken in all petrol pumps in the city.

Talking to The Daily Star, the energy ministry adviser said the strike had resulted from communication gap between the government and the petrol pump owners.

Referring to the formation of the committee during yesterday's meeting with the striking dealers, he said it was formed long before the strike was called. It has been tasked with monitoring fuel smuggling and leakage as well as looking into the petrol pump owners' demands.

"Their strike was not successful as 90 percent of the petrol pumps across the country went about their businesses," he headed.

Peeved Tuesday Group

FROM PAGE 1
Canadian High Commissioner to Dhaka David Sproule said, "The Tuesday Group wishes to express its disappointment with the government's decision not to welcome its international conference on the best electoral practices which was scheduled to take place in Dhaka on 22-23 January 2006."

It said the proposed conference sponsored by virtually all Bangladesh's development partners and largely technical in nature would have been an excellent opportunity to highlight and learn from positive electoral experiences in Bangladesh and elsewhere.

Under the circumstances, the Tuesday Group has decided to postpone its conference initiative until "a more opportune time and meanwhile to pursue additional initiatives," the release said.

The Tuesday Group comprises the ambassadors and high commissioners to Bangladesh from Australia, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Norway, South Korea, Sweden, Switzerland, UK and USA as well as the ambassador of the European Commission and the resident coordinator of the United Nations.

None was available from the government side to make official comment on the postponement of Tuesday Group's conference.

However, a high official of the government on condition of anonymity told The Daily Star that "It is definitely our victory as the so-called Tuesday Group backtracked from its desperate move."

The government took a hard line against holding of the Tuesday Group's proposed conference since the diplomats informed the government about it nearly a couple of years ago.

The final message of denial was conveyed to the group when David Sproule and Norwegian Ambassador Aud Lise Nordheim called on Foreign Affairs Advisor Reaz Rahman on September 25.

Although the Tuesday Group claimed that it will hold the conference to provide Bangladesh with necessary technical assistance to make sure that the next general election is held in a free and fair manner, the government continued its stand against the move.

After meeting with the two envoys on September 25, Reaz Rahman told journalists that the conference would be counterproductive and tantamount to interfering in the domestic politics. It may also give a false impression that Bangladesh does not want free polls to be held, he said.

He told the two Tuesday Group members that the very essence of democracy is peaceful hand-over of power through elections and it happened very successfully for the last three consecutive terms. Besides, he said, Bangladesh has a unique system like the caretaker government for conducting free and fair elections.

Earlier, a press conference of the group scheduled for September 14 had been cancelled following objection from the government as it was called without consulting the foreign ministry, apparently violating the diplomatic norms.

Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan, who is now in New York, earlier reacted sharply about the Tuesday Group's move, saying the foreign diplomats cannot play role like the "trade union". He blamed the said diplomats for trying to amend the constitution of Bangladesh by playing role of "bargaining agents".

Students call off strike

FROM PAGE 1
Dainik Bhorer Dak and Jibon of Focus Bangla and police constables Shahin and Jamil while all the four were on duty.

Buet unit SCF President Debashish Bishwas was among the injured who included Niloy, Kallani Shutra Dhar, Imran Habib Rumon, Subrata Sarker and Shampa Bashu.

Buet students at a press conference on Saturday called an indefinite strike demanding a seven-day vacation for Durga Puja, the largest religious festival of the Hindus. But the Buet authorities had declared a one-day holiday for October 12, causing resentment among the students.

A group of Buet students, many of them are JCD activists, at a press conference at Buet cafeteria yesterday morning said though announced yesterday, the decision to withdraw the strike was taken on Tuesday night. They said the authorities have assured them of declaring a six-day vacation for Durga Puja.

All the classes and academic activities resumed yesterday after the strike was observed for a day the previous day.

SCF Buet unit President Debashish at a press conference at the Dhaka University's Madhu's Canteen in the afternoon alleged that JCD activists Jasim, Hasan, Shohag, Rasel, Taieeb led by JCD BUET unit President Masum and General Secretary Munna launched the attack on their procession at about 2:00pm without any provocation.

He demanded immediate arrest and punishment of the JCD men responsible for the attack on the rally. The SCF President Khalequzzaman Lipon and General Secretary

Mosharraf Hossain also demanded immediate removal of the Buet VC, describing him as a 'religious fundamentalist'.

The SCF will demonstrate on the BUET campus today and tomorrow, protesting the attack. They will submit a memorandum to the director of student welfare today. A solidarity rally to be participated by teachers, students