

BNP bigwigs

FROM PAGE 1

day following Mamun's arrest, gave rise to questions among the leaders and workers, sources said.

A source close to him said he was down with a viral fever and that is why he could not go there. He is however in contact with leaders and activists across the country.

Meanwhile, the Anti-Corruption Commission's decision to be tough on the corrupt ones has only added to the worries among the BNP rank and file as they fear many of the influential leaders who held different portfolios in the last five years might have to face the music as corruption allegations against them are rife.

"Not only the then opposition parties but quite a few number of the BNP lawmakers had specifically accused several former ministers of corruption at standing committee meetings and in parliament. But the then government took no heed," said an ex-lawmaker, adding that caretaker government could now act on the basis of those allegations.

Sources said who to be blamed for the party ending up in troubled waters has been the question crowding the minds of the workers most. They think the BNP is paying the price for a few senior leaders' role in the last five years.

They alleged those are the ones responsible for messing things up. Besides coaxing the Election Commission into having a flawed voter list, they had created complexity surrounding the caretaker government chief by increasing the age limit of the Supreme Court judges.

And all these necessitated the state of the emergency, meaning for the BNP losing its control over the interim government, they added.

Party insiders said the senior and mid-level leaders are blaming each other for the situation. When the liberals think that the hard-liners had misled the party leadership, the hard-liners believe the 'so-called liberals' had all together failed to control the situation.

Referring to the party chairperson's absence in the oath-taking ceremony of the present chief adviser, a former lawmaker said, "It was a wrong decision as it gave the field-level administration the idea that the BNP has distanced itself from the interim government."

After handover of power to Iajuddin-led caretaker government, the BNP had tasked three of its senior leaders including Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan with keeping in touch with the president. But later some other leaders began interfering in the matters without the party consent.

Some senior leaders think that a group of junior leaders led by its senior joint secretary general is responsible for the situation. Allegations of corruption and backing the militants against them point in that direction.

But the young leaders consider the allegations as a conspiracy to damage Tarique's image so that he cannot rise to the top position within the BNP.

Tk 1100cr in 5 years

FROM PAGE 1

the strength of a concrete pole, according to different reports of the REB.

The REB has 70 palli baidyt samities (PBS), most of which run on losses. Only a small number of them make enough profit to keep the REB system look functional. The REB's annual earning stands at Tk 2,240 crore.

Beneficiaries of poles business The major chunk of the Tk 1,100 crore poles sale money went to an ex-defence official and tycoon, who owns five out of these 13 pole manufacturers and who imposed the idea of concrete poles on the REB in the mid-nineties. Before that, the REB used only wooden poles. According to REB sources, this tycoon alone claims 30 to 35 percent share of the pole business through his firms.

He is followed by another company owned by Hawa Bhaban leaders along with a former state minister and their associates. This company claimed 20 to 25 percent share of this business.

The other seven companies take the remaining market share.

Before this syndicate was born in 2002, the ex-defence official was enjoying a monopoly in the REB by staging bids with his five companies from 1996. The REB knew that the owner of these five companies was a single person but it did not oppose such corruption saying that these companies have separate boards and tax identification number.

But soon after the BNP-led four-party alliance government came to power, the other competitors arrived, and the ex-defence official had to strike a compromise with them since Hawa Bhaban was backing them.

Poles purchase under foreign finances

While the REB stopped poles purchase with local funds, it is continuing some tenders to procure wooden and concrete poles under international tenders sponsored by the World Bank and the DFID.

During the five years of the alliance rule, the government on an average allocated in the ADP around Tk 700 crore for the REB. Of this, the local currency component hovered around Tk 500 crore and the rest was in foreign currency given by donors.

But the syndicate was not interested in foreign currency. Donor funded poles purchase is conducted only through international tenders, and allows wooden poles purchases. As this kind of tender does not help the syndicate to bag the deals, they made the REB stop poles purchase with foreign funds from 2003.

Only in this fiscal year, the REB has decided to utilise the WB and DFID funds to purchase poles. Both the WB and DFID gave condition in December 2005 that from now on, at least 20 percent of the poles to be purchased by the REB should be wooden poles. Yet, under the influence of the syndicate, ex-power secretary ANH Akhtar Hossain asked for restricting this condition to the WB and DFID tenders only.

This contradictory stance delayed the tender process and only recently the REB has finalised the tender.

Mamun yet to be

FROM PAGE 1

She also said Mamun had gone to the flat only three days before he was arrested, the flat owner told The Daily Star.

RISE OF MAMUN

Mamun became involved in business by establishing Rahman Shippers with two ships in 1991 during the tenure of the BNP government.

BNP Senior Joint Secretary General Tarique Rahman was the managing director of the company while his younger brother Arafat Rahman and Mamun were the directors.

Mamun came to limelight for his involvement in all election related activities—controlled from Hawa Bhaban—prior to and during the 2001 general elections.

He set up One Group soon after the BNP-led four-party coalition government came to power. He also set up a yarn dying factory, One Textile, in Gazipur. The factory has been in production for the last two and a half years. Later, Mamun set up the electric pole manufacturing factory Khamba Ltd in Panchagarh.

Mamun's quick rise as a business tycoon through establishing businesses one after another during the five years of the immediate past BNP-led government's rule surprised many businessmen and politicians.

In that short span of time he set up businesses of textiles, launches, electric pole manufacturing, and a private satellite television channel. Besides owning One Textile, Khamba Ltd, One Composite, Precrust Concrete Industries Ltd, One Spinning, One Denim, One Consumer Product Ltd, and Channel One, Mamun is also the director of Silver Line Composite Mill and Rahman Navigation.

A few former BNP ministers and lawmakers with close link to Hawa

Bhaban are reportedly Mamun's business partners.

Of his businesses, electric pole manufacturing Khamba Ltd became the most talked about one in recent times. The organisation was built on around 99 acres of land at Goalpara of Garinabari union of Panchagarh Sadar upazila and started production in 2003.

Mamun also owns another electric pole making factory—Precrust Concrete Industries at Bhaluka in Mymensingh.

Mamun's syndicate reportedly earned thousands of crores of taka by selling concrete electric poles to the Rural Electrification Board. His close aide and business partner Babul Kazi alias Bappi looked after the Khamba Ltd, but he went in hiding soon after the declaration of the state of emergency.

MAMUN'S RITZY HOUSE Mamun's palatial house—"Khwab" meaning "dream" in Urdu—at South Chhayabithi, about 2km southeast of Gazipur town, is estimated to have taken about Tk 8 crore to build.

Its walls are decorated with specially made terracotta tiles and a large part of the first and second floors rest on two large steel-plated beams. The duplex house is centrally air-conditioned and equipped with foreign fittings.

Mamun used to visit the house once or twice a month and throw parties.

Locals vandalised and set fire to the house following the killing of Awami League lawmaker Ahsanullah Master on May 7, 2004.

The house, built on eight katha land, still stands out in the posh area, outshining other modern buildings in the neighbourhood.

Grand alliance

FROM PAGE 1

possible, especially before the budget session in June.

AL high-ups have endorsed some of its top leaders to discuss holding of the elections within April-May with different foreign diplomats and donor agencies.

Sources said the leaders have been asked to follow a "go slow" policy in this regard and observe closely the initiatives and activities of the caretaker government before commenting on them.

"We want election as soon as possible and we are ready for the election. As the present government took oath as per clause 58(C) of the constitution, we hope they will hold the election within the stipulated 90 days," AL Presidium member Kazi Zafarullah said recently.

He was talking to reporters after a meeting with 14 foreign diplomats at a dinner at his residence in honour of new Indian High Commissioner in Bangladesh Pinak Ranjan Chakravarty on January 31 night.

The Indian high commissioner yesterday met AL President Sheikh Hasina at her Sudha Sadan residence and discussed the prevailing situation of the country, especially holding of the next polls.

Talking to reporters, Chakravarty said he hopes an election will be held soon.

Many top AL leaders believe that the AL has the possibility to come to power if the election is held early.

However, all the top leaders of the AL and 14-party alliance want the election be held after preparing of an accurate voter roll, bringing drastic changes through the top to bottom levels in both police and civil administration and other constitutional bodies.

"The election should be held soon to avoid confusion among people," Workers' Party President Rashed Khan Menon told The Daily Star. Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal President Hasanul Haque Unchoudhary said.

"Let the caretaker government disclose its policy and plan for holding the elections," Jatiya Party (Ershad) Secretary General Ruhul Amin Hawladertold The Daily Star.

Bus stands open

FROM PAGE 16

around 100 illegal structures on Monday and started developing the bus stand the next day, sources said.

The stand with space for 100 buses will be opened for inter-district buses of Dhaka-Chittagong route on Saturday, CDA Chairman Shah Mohammed Akhteruddin said.

"We are also trying to extend the stand on the adjoining land of Roads and Highways Department," he said, adding that after the extension the bus stand would have parking space for over 300 buses.

The R&H land stretching from Fajudhat to Bhatiyar along Dhaka-Chittagong highway remained under illegal occupants since long.

The chairman regretted that after the construction of bus terminal for South Chittagong and Cox's Bazar route back in 1991, not a single terminal could be developed in the last one and a half decades for the buses of other routes.

After removal of the illegal stands from the city centres the buses of these routes are now parking haphazardly in different areas causing immense sufferings to the passengers, he observed.

For development of this bus stand on a land measuring over two acres just beside the Oxygen intersection, CDA demolished over fifty illegal structures on Thursday afternoon.

The bus stand would be all set for operating the buses of north Chittagong, Khagrachhari and Rangamati routes from Saturday, CDA sources said, adding that the bus stand would have a parking space for at least 50 buses.

Dense fog

FROM PAGE 1

The Met office sources said it will take a couple of days to improve the situation.

Our Manikganj correspondent reported that ferry and launch services on Daulatdia-Paturia-Nagarbari routes were suspended for nine hours from 1:00am yesterday due to dense fog.

Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Corporation (BIWTC) officials at Paturia said more than 1,000 vehicles with about 40,000 passengers aboard were stranded for hours on both sides of the Padma and Jamuna at Daulatdia, Paturia and Nagarbari points.

About 400 vehicles from Dhaka lined up at paturia in Manikganj, 550 vehicles, including Ijtema bound bus, lined up at Daulatdia in Rajbari and 50 vehicles at Nagarbari terminal in Pabna district, the officials said.

UNB adds: Thick fog disrupted ferry movement on Mawa-Kaorakandi route from 10:00pm on Thursday to 9:00am yesterday, causing severe traffic congestion on both sides of the river and immense sufferings to passengers.

BIWTC sources said four ferries with passengers got stranded in the middle of the Padma. Ferry movement became normal after 9:00am yesterday, but the traffic congestion continued until 12:00noon.

lill-prepared

FROM PAGE 16

dying along our shores. But we don't know why."

Bangladesh, with more than 140 million people, is one of the world's most densely populated nations. It is also one of the most ill-prepared to face global warming and also likely to be among the nations worst affected, officials and experts said on Friday.

Millions of people live along the largely flat delta bound by the Bay of Bengal to the south. As sea levels rise and storms increase in number and severity, vast areas of land will be swallowed by the sea, experts say.

MILLIONS AFFECTED "Millions of Bangladeshis will lose their land and homes, adding to the South Asian country's plight of poverty and overcrowding," said Anun Nishat, Bangladesh country representative of the World Conservation Union.

More than 11 percent of Bangladesh's land area would be lost if sea levels rose by 1 metre over the next 50 or 100 years, he said.

"The impacts on Bangladesh would include increased levels of drought, flooding and storms, especially in coastal belts, salinity and loss of land," he added.

At the Paris climate meet yesterday experts said, in the densely populated flood plains

of Bangladesh, rising seas will not only ruin fertile regions but stoke the storm surges that periodically ravage the low-lying nation.

In Barisal, on Bangladesh's southwest coast, fishermen said the sea had become more erratic in recent years.

"We had at least 10 storms in the Bay in the past year (2006), with more ferocity and loss of lives," said Moslem Miah, 62.

"I have been fishing since my boyhood. Our main catch has been the Hilsha fish. But no longer they fill our nets like before. Where have they gone?" Qamrul Islam Chowdhury, chairman of the Forum of Environmental Journalists of Bangladesh, said salt water would also leach into large areas along mainland Bangladesh, damaging agriculture.

"The Sundarbans, the world's largest mangrove forest, will also be affected in case of sea level rise, sending in more saline water," he told Reuters.

"The Bangladesh government has prepared a national plan of action to face the impact of climate change but it has yet to receive any global financial support," Chowdhury added.

Nishat said the country was almost certainly being affected by climate change. "But Bangladesh is ill prepared to face the threats," he said.

RU teacher stabbed

FROM PAGE 1

were recently appointed in different departments of the university following lobbying of Jamaat-Shibir leaders, but they later refused to work for the parties.

Alim and two other teachers—law department Chairman Prof Rabiul Islam and Prof Zulfiqar Ahmed—were threatened with death 10 days ago for not attending Shibir meetings and giving tolls, sources said.

Shibir also threatened the department teachers in a letter saying the teachers will face dire consequences if "brilliant" students loyal to Shibir are not awarded first class marks in the MA courses.

Prof Zulfiqar lodged complaints with the university authorities twice about the Shibir threats and sought security.

Prof Rabiul said they will hold an emergency meeting today to decide their next steps following the attack on Alim.

Meanwhile, Alim was yet to file any complaint with the police but he informed the university authority of the incident.

"I will get myself released from hospital soon because I am feeling insecure here," he told newsmen.

University Proctor Enamul Haque told The Daily Star, "Police-men have been deployed at Alim's residence. We are also thinking about the security of other teachers of the university. Alim will have to file a case first in this regard."

Motihar Police Station Officer-in-Charge Mizanur Rahman acknowl-

edged the incident and said the police visited and raided Binodpur area to catch the criminals last night.

None was, however, arrested as of filing of this report at 7:00pm.

On February 1, 2006, armed Shibir activists killed geology and mining department senior teacher Prof S Taher Ahmed at his campus residence.

In 2004, a group of fanatics stabbed economics professor Muhammad Yunus to death.

Leak in reactor

FROM PAGE 1

and December 22 kept the factory idle for several days. A team of foreign experts with the help of local engineers repaired the faults.

The country's biggest urea factory at Tarakandi under Sarishabari upazila of Jamalpur district has production capacity of 1,700 tonnes a day. Factory workers yesterday alleged irregularities and corruption are the main reasons behind malfunction at the plant.

Urea supply from the factory was disrupted seven times in last one year due to 14-party blockade, technical glitches and porters' strike.

Jamuna Fertiliser Factory (JFF) supplies urea to 1,823 government-approved dealers of 16 northern districts and four in greater Mymensingh.

ACC may

FROM PAGE 1

"Under the existing system it takes a long time to take action against the corrupt people after completing ACC investigation and legal process," the member observed adding that as a result, the corrupt individuals find room to lengthen the legal proceedings on various pretexts.

It is the ardent need to incorporate a provision authorising the authorities to temporarily seize property of accused on filing cases, the member said. The property can always be returned if the court finds him innocent.

"It will help to ensure speedy disposal of corruption cases while the accused will have no opportunity to drag out their cases," he added.

The ACC chairman said the two provisions if introduced will make a huge difference in the fight against graft.

Presently, the government can send a public servant into forced retirement or the person can willingly retire on completing 25 years in job. But the ACC plans to propose cutting the time limit by 15 years so that corrupt officials in the administration can be sent into forced retirement earlier.

The anti-graft body will also ask for authority to probe cases under Anti-Money Laundering Act 2002, Foreign Exchange Regulation Act 1947, Passport Ordinance and Offence Under section 156 of the Customs Act 1969 and some others those who were in schedule of now defunct Bureau of Anti-Corruption Act.

The advisory council committee might seek extension of the time limit for submitting the recommendations as it is meeting for the first time only tomorrow. The two-week time limit will expire on February 07.

Case against

FROM PAGE 16

nearby crop field. They, however, failed to arrest anyone and were reluctant to disclose the names of the accused.

The victim passed Higher Secondary Certificate exam last year and was waiting for freshmen admission tests. The autopsy was performed in Rajshahi Medical College morgue and her body was laid to rest on Thursday.

Rajshahi Medical College Hospital forensic department physician Ashraf Ali told newsmen that the girl was killed after being raped.

Locals said a number of local hoodlums used to tease her and a village arbitration was also held in this regard. The killing might be the result of vengeance, they added.

UN Climate

FROM PAGE 16

said that President George W Bush's policies, braking the rise of emissions rather than cutting them, were working.

"The President has put in place a comprehensive set of policies to address what he has called the 'serious challenge' of climate change," Sharon Hays, Associate Director of the White House Office of Science & Technology Policy, told Reuters.

Bush pulled out of Kyoto in 2001, saying caps would harm the economy and that Kyoto unfairly omitted developing nations from a first period to 2012. He focuses instead on big investments in technologies such as hydrogen and biofuels.

The President of Kiribati, a group of 33 Pacific coral atolls threatened by rising seas, said time was running out.

"The question is, what can we do now? There's very little we can do about arresting the process," President Anote Tong said.

The report projects a rise in sea levels of between 18 and 59 centimetres (7 and 23 inches) in the 21st century — and said that bigger gains could not be ruled out if ice sheets in Antarctica and Greenland thaw.

Some leading scientists had criticised an earlier draft for cutting the range after the 2001 forecast a rise between 9 and 88 cms by 2100. Rising seas threaten countries such as Kiribati and cities from Shanghai to Buenos Aires.

Commodities

FROM PAGE 1

go-down at deserted Tuls Ram Road at Naya Bazar of the town and turned it into a 'secret' adulterated fertiliser production centre, police said.

Sekender sold the adulterated fertiliser in the rural haats and bazars at high prices through his own network.

Strangers would come to the so-called go-down where the main gate remained closed most of the time, locals said.

Sekendar Ali and his employees managed to escape while the joint forces arrested Sekendar's brother Ruhul Amin who was being interrogated at the office of Rab-5.

A large amount of adulterated fertiliser is allegedly supplied to the eight other districts of greater Rangpur and Dinajpur. Last year also, two adulterated fertiliser factories were unearthed.

BSS adds: Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) seized 32 litres of diesel about to be smuggled through Roghunathpur border under Panka union of Shibganj upazila in Chapainawabganj district on Thursday.

As the BDR jawans fired shots to stop the smugglers at 3:00pm, the criminals fled leaving the diesel, BDR sources said.

Lakhs join Ijtema

FROM PAGE 1

Not getting space to pray on the Ijtema ground, many were seen offering the Jum'a prayers on Dhaka-Mymensingh Highway. The vehicular movement on the Dhaka-Mymensingh and Dhaka-Gazipur highways were halted for one hour during the prayer.

Adviser Anwarul Iqbal of LGRD ministry, Jatiya Party chief HM Ershad, Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) President Prof AQM Baqiruddin Chowdhury, former LQM Minister Abdul Minhas, Gazipur Municipality Chairman AKM Mozammel Haque, Tongi Municipality Chairman Ajmat Ullah Khan, Gazipur Deputy Syed Mizanur Rahman, Gazipur Police Superintendent Rezaul Karim and other high-ranking officials also offered their Jum'a prayers in the Ijtema ground.

More than 4,000 foreign devotees from 63 countries are also taking part in the event. They are staying in a camp designated for them at the northern end of the Ijtema ground. Sources said more foreign devotees are on the way.

Many women are also attending the Holsim annual function from the houses of their relatives in Tongi and Uttara.

Adviser Anwarul Iqbal said he was pleased with the entire management of the Ijtema.

"I haven't seen so many people in the last couple of years and people are coming here without hesitation that proves good law and order situation," he said.

Shamsul Arefin, a devotee from Kishoreganj, told The Daily Star, "I have attended the last seven Biswa Ijtemas but never saw this many people on the first day."

The Ijtema authorities said the number of devotees this year on day one is much higher than the previous years.

A volunteer of the Ijtema said the improved law and order situation has made it safer for the devotees to join the Ijtema thus their number is so high.

Several devotees said they were pleased with the management specially water and sanitation.

The main programme of this year's Ijtema started with the "Aam Boyan" (main sermon) after the Fajr prayers. Scholars of Islam from home and abroad gave sermons throughout the day.

President Prof Iajuddin Ahmed and Chief Adviser to the Caretaker Government Fakhruddin Ahmed will participate in the Akheri Munajat on the Munajat Mancha, the organisers said.

Besides, Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina, BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia and wives of the presi-

dent, chief adviser and other advisers will take part in the Munajat at Atlas Honda Factory, Bata Factory and Telephone Shilpa Sangastha (TSS).

FACILITIES The authorities have ensured utilities and facilities like water and power supply, sanitation, medical and other essentials for the devotees.

More than 3,000 toilets have been built which the devotees termed unprecedented.

Five water pumps, 72 water reservoirs have been installed to ensure regular supply of around 18 lakh gallons of water, a volunteer told The Daily Star yesterday.

A pandal for the listening impaired people was also built beside the international camp where about 100 people from home and abroad are staying.

Around 25 free medical care services have been installed on the northern side of Ijtema ground.

SECURITY Security measures have been taken to ensure security of the devotees during the Ijtema with the deployment of large number policemen at the venue.

A five-layer checking system has been put in place in and around the venue. Nearly 7,500 law enforcers including police, Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) and Bangladesh Rifles personnel, are on duty there.

Close Circuit Television (CCTV) cameras have been installed at each entry point of the Ijtema ground while Rab set up five surveillance towers in the area.

Law enforcers were seen patrolling the venue, nearby roads and waterways.

Every individual was being checked with metal detectors and also manually at the checkpoints where they were allowed to enter the Khittas (a block of the Ijtema ground).

MEDIA CELL Following the Jum'a prayers, Adviser Anwarul Iqbal inaugurated a media cell, organised by Tongi Press Club, on the Ijtema ground which would help newsmen provide Ijtema news to the world.