

## Mad rush for home

**FROM PAGE 1** Members of law enforcement agencies yesterday tightened their monitoring at bus terminals, Kamalapur Railway Station and Sadarghat Launch Terminal to maintain law and order. They also took initiatives to prevent scalpers selling tickets in the black market.

Many passengers, however, expressed satisfaction over law enforcement agencies' monitoring saying this year the situation has improved. They also said most of them have not been harassed by scalpers at all.

City shopping arcades are expected to witness brisk business at the end of Ramadan, as people always go for a last-minute shopping spree.

**SADARGHAT** Launch passengers had to negotiate heavy traffic between Gullistan and Sadarghat Launch Terminal yesterday.

However, deployment of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab), police and the presence of a mobile court improved order and discipline in the terminal area.

To avoid the rush to get on a launch, many passengers boarded the vessels mid-Buriga, where the launches were anchored. They crammed onto boats to reach the vessels ignoring the risk of an accident. Most of the launches were overloaded with passengers even before they reached the terminal.

Many passengers alleged the launch operators were charging extra.

"A Dhaka to Aamtoli, Barguna trip usually costs Tk 150 but they [launch operators] are asking for Tk 200 now," said Mojibul Haque, a passenger.

The operators have denied charging extra and said they used to take less than the official fare but now they are charging according to the official fare chart.

Siddiqur Rahman Bhuiyan, president of Launch Owners' Association Dhaka zone, said they increased the number of launch

trips due to Eid. More than 100 launches are doing 200 trips a day to cope with the mad rush of home-bound people.

**KAMALAPUR** A total of 22 express trains are leaving Kamalapur every day since Tuesday ahead of Eid. The railway authorities sometimes add two to four extra compartments with the trains to reduce pressure of passengers.

According to the station manager, usually 6,000 to 7,000 passengers leave Kamalapur every day by express trains, but it increases to 21,000 to 22,000 during the Eid.

He said there were no scalpers in the station.

**GABTOLI** Law enforcement agencies set up a monitoring cell in front of Gabtoli Bus Terminal to prevent harassment of passengers.

Passengers alleged that bus operators were charging extra. However, they expressed satisfaction over the law and order situation there.

Shafiqul Islam Shaheen, an employee of a private firm, said he purchased a ticket for a Barisal-bound bus paying an additional Tk 60.

"I bought the ticket at Tk 310 while the usual rate is Tk 250," he said.

However, bus operators claimed that they are charging fares according to the Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA) rate.

Most of the bus operators in Gabtoli placed fare charts in front of their counters.

**SAYEDABAD AND MOHAKHALI** The situations in Sayedabad and Mohakhali Bus terminals were about the same. Passengers were seen waiting for their buses in Mohakhali for hours.

"I have been waiting here for the last four hours. The bus operators are saying that the bus will reach soon," Soliel Khan, a student, said.

Abdul Maleque, manager of SR Travels, said at least four of his buses failed to reach Dhaka on time due to traffic jams.

## Verdict in graft case against ex-BNP MP Shafi today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

A Sylhet court will pass its judgment in a graft case today against detained former BNP lawmaker Shafi Ahmed Chowdhury, court sources said.

Earlier on October 6, Speedy Trial Magistrate Devjit Sinha set the date for the verdict after wrapping up lawyers' arguments and cross-examinations of 28 prosecution witnesses.

Dakshin Surma police filed the case against the former MP and his neighbour after the joint forces recovered huge relief materials from his village home on the night of February 17.

Shafi, who was sent to jail custody after his surrender to the court on September 18, pleaded not guilty of the charges, saying he was implicated in the case conspiratorially.

## Debate on US troop withdrawal from Iraq on hold

AP, Washington

Congressional Democrats have put on the back burner legislation ordering troops home from Iraq and turned their attention to war-related proposals that Republicans are finding hard to reject.

The legislative agenda marks a dramatic shift for party leaders who vowed repeated votes to end combat and predicted Republicans would eventually join them. But with Democrats still lacking enough votes to bring troops home, the party runs the risk of concluding its first year in control of Congress with little to show for its tough anti-war rhetoric.

"We can no longer approach the discussion on Iraq as a partisan issue," said Rep. John Tanner, a conservative Democrat from Tennessee. "Our soldiers, sailors, Marines, airmen and Guardsmen aren't fighting as Democrats or Republicans but as Americans."

In the past week, the House passed two bills intended to curb misconduct by contractors in Iraq and one proposal by Tanner and Rep. Neil Abercrombie, D-Hawaii, that requires updates on the Bush administration's plans for the eventual withdrawal of U.S. combat forces.

Following last week's rejection of a proposal by Sen. Russ Feingold, D-Wis., to cut off money for combat, the Senate is expected to follow suit with similar bipartisan measures.

Delayed until early next year is debate on the \$190 billion the military says it needs to fund the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan through September 2008.

There is little doubt that Democrats are biding their time and deliberating their next step. Democrats are divided on whether to continue paying for a war they oppose, or cut off the money and be attacked politically for refusing to support the troops.

They also hope that Republicans will grow increasingly nervous about the war's effect on the 2008 elections. Rep. John Murtha, D-Pa., who chairs the panel that oversees military funding, predicted last month that GOP lawmakers will jump ship after the primaries end.

"I see what happens to a Republican when they say we ought to start to get out," Murtha said. "They bash them. I mean they attack them viscerally and of course they're the ones that nominate them. Until that plays out we're going to have a problem."

Democrats calculate that the Pentagon has enough money for the war, through February or March, by borrowing against its annual budget. Military officials warn that doing so can disrupt vital programs, such as base support and training exercises, and cost more money in the long run.

Democrats say they are still challenging President Bush on the war. The House on Tuesday passed legislation by Abercrombie intended to make it easier to convict private contractors of fraud.

The bill, approved by a 375-3 vote, would create a federal criminal statute banning contracting abuse associated with military operations and reconstruction efforts. It also would ensure federal courts have jurisdiction in all cases, closing what Abercrombie says is a loophole in existing law that has let many contractors off the hook.

A similar measure by Sen. Patrick Leahy, D-Vt., was approved in April by the Senate Judiciary Committee. A spokesman for Leahy said Republican objections have prevented it from getting a quick floor vote.

## Dhaka-Yangon

FROM PAGE 16

has also been marked by a series of high-level visits and announcement of energy, trade and transport deals.

The three deals were expected to get the go ahead during the visit of Myanmar's second highest ranking military leader Deputy Senior-general Maung Aye in September 10, which was cancelled because of internal unrest in Myanmar, foreign ministry officials told The Daily Star.

The latest efforts include creating new bilateral mechanisms such as initiating joint-border management agreement and annual talks between the two countries' border forces--Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) and Nasaka.

The government is especially keen on setting up the joint-border management and annual discussion mechanisms in order to regularise the border-trade between the two countries, as massive revenue on both sides are lost to illicit transactions across the border, foreign ministry sources say.

Currently border-trade dominates the \$60 million annual trade volume between the two neighbours but foreign ministry officials say that huge amount of trade revenue is lost to illicit trade along the porous border between the two countries.

Experts, like Imtiaz Ahmed of

Department of International Relations, Dhaka University, say such a deal would "regularise" the huge illicit trade and boost the official trade volume of Bangladesh and Myanmar.

Foreign ministry officials said this would also bolster the government's efforts to stop black money being smuggled into the countries. The annual talks would work to complement the border-management deal.

The joint-commission would largely focus on synchronising trade regimes, exploring new areas for trade and working through sticking points in bilateral trade.

The recent unrest in Myanmar has also interrupted Bangladesh's diplomatic push to enlist Myanmar for a trilateral road-link with China that would stretch from Dhaka to the Chinese city of Kunming. This would allow Dhaka to join the Asian Highway Network through Kunming.

Recently, Dhaka announced plans to jointly build a hydroelectric plant in Myanmar, lease land for farming in Myanmar, and sign an agreement with Yangon to avoid double taxation.

## Constitution

FROM PAGE 1

October 8 called upon political parties to form a government of "national consensus" for 10 years.

The 14-party alliance including the Awami League, Jatiya Party, Gono Forum, Krishak Sramik Janata League and other political parties conditionally endorsed the proposal.

Expelled BNP secretary general Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan also supported the idea.

Praising Badrudoza for his contributions to BNP, Delwar said he [Badrudoza] has the right to announce any proposal for country's welfare. But Badrudoza did not speak about the basic principles and programmes of such a government, he added.

"He didn't explain the proposed consensus, when, how and with who it should be formed."

"People select a government for five years through an election but the proposal suggests 10 years that has no provision in the constitution," he added.

Only parliament can form a coalition government after elections, he pointed out, mentioning the BNP-led four-party alliance government in 2001 and Awami League-led unity government in 1996.

"As a politician I will put emphasis on the people and the constitution," he said adding that there is no scope for forming such a government through a process being "influenced by others".

Echoing the same, BNP Joint Secretary General Nazrul Islam Khan sitting beside Delwar said those who will be elected should form the government.

It was Khan's first public appearance in media after BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia's arrest on September 3 and the expulsion of Bhuiyan.

Khan, also BNP's official spokesman, however said they cannot make any reaction to Badrudoza's proposal without discussing it in the party forum.

Meanwhile, Delwar rejected the possibility of taking initiatives to bring back the dissident leaders, saying only the chairperson can take a decision about it.

"The chairperson holds the total authority in the party. This has been the rule in the last three decades," he said.

In the past, leaders like Salauddin Quader Chowdhury, Chowdhury Kamal Ibne Yusuf

and others were expelled and brought back again, he added.

"Those who have been expelled recently have to follow a similar process for their comeback. The chairperson is in jail now, but the doors of the party are open to all."

**JAMAAT TOO DISMISSES IT** UNB adds: Jamaat-e-Islami has dismissed Prof B Chowdhury's proposal for national consensus government, saying that the constitution does not contain such provision.

"Those who had formed grand alliance ahead of the January 22 stalled general election proposed it... It would not be a national consensus government but a government of grand alliance," Jamaat Assistant Secretary General Mohammad Qamaruzzaman told the news agency yesterday.

He questioned with whom and on what criteria such government will be constituted. "What is the guarantee that they will return to parliament through next elections?"

"Before election, there is no scope in the constitution for forming such government," he said.

## 8 RU teachers

FROM PAGE 16

while Dulal Chandra Biswas, Sayed Selim Reza Newton, Abdullah Al Mamun, Prof Dr Golam Sabbir Sattar Tapu and Prof Dr Chowdhury Sarwar Jahan Sajal surrendered before the court after being sued for instigating violence on the university campus.

The wives of the arrestees said the family members and relatives of the detained teachers are passing their days in anxiety.

"Our children will not celebrate Eid and Durga Puja without their fathers. They pass their days in mental distress," they said.

"We know them very well and believe that all the detained teachers were working for the truth from their respective positions," they mentioned.

They urged the chief adviser to take necessary steps to release the detained teachers on humanitarian grounds withdrawing all the cases against them.

The statement was signed by Kamrun Rahman Khan, Monwar Sobhan, Sapna Banarji, Sanchita Roy, Susmita Chakrabarti, Udisa Islam, Tanzima Yesmin and Hasna Ara Begum.

## EC wants restriction

FROM PAGE 1

from the post after being elected for another post.

The EC plans to incorporate these into the proposals for amending the election rules on local government elections. Once the draft is finalised, it will be sent to the Ministry of LGRD and Cooperatives for amendment.

The local government election is totally non-political and candidates contest in the polls independently and without their political identity and the party electoral symbols although the candidates are leaders of the parties.

It is widely noticed that once a political leader is elected to a local government body, they use the post for the interests of the party they are affiliated with.

**CURRENT CITY MAYORS** The current mayors to the six city corporations are actively holding important posts to the political parties they are affiliated with.

Dhaka City Corporation Mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka holds the post of president of Dhaka metropolitan unit of BNP. He also held a portfolio in the BNP-led four-party alliance's cabinet for a while after being elected a mayor.

## Workers assault jute mill officials for Eid bonus

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Security was beefed up in Khalishpur industrial area yesterday after workers of Platinum Jubilee Jute Mills (PJJM) demanding Eid bonus and payment of dues assaulted its two officials.

Members of Army and Rab were deployed in the area after angry workers of PJJM beat up its Administrative Officer Aftabuddin and Assistant Manager Nasiruddin Nazu at about 12:00 noon.

Agitating workers of PJJM and Crescent Jute Mills (CJM) yesterday demonstrated in the Khalishpur industrial area for Eid bonus and payment of dues.

Meanwhile, a tense situation prevails at Eastern Jute Mills and Alam Jute Mills in city's Atrre industrial area where retrenched workers demonstrated demanding payment of dues.

Security was tightened in the area to ward off any untoward incident.

## Khaleda

FROM PAGE 16

a sub-jail on the Sangsad Bhaban premises.

Khaleda's lawyer, Ahmed Aazam Khan, will be present during the questioning.

On September 2, ACC Deputy Director Golam Shahriar Chowdhury filed the case against Khaleda Zia, her younger son Arafat Rahman Koko and 11 others for alleged underhand dealings in awarding the container-handling contract to Gato.

The ACC has already questioned seven former ministers, six retired secretaries and one serving additional secretary of the communications ministry about the charges.

The ministers questioned by the investigation team are former finance minister Saifur Rahman, former LGRD minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, former industries minister Motiur Rahman Nizami, ex-agriculture minister MK Anwar and ex-information minister Shamsul Islam were questioned by a three-member investigation team. They were on the purchase committee that approved the contract.

The investigation has also questioned a number of former and serving officials of Chittagong Port Authority.

## Finance adviser

FROM PAGE 1

impact on the budget.

The government will have to provide additional Tk 6,286 crore budgetary allocations to meet the ministries' demands. This will add up to already granted Tk 4,186 crore subsidy.

"Government borrowing from the banking system will rise alarmingly, pushing up interest rate and already rising inflation rate. Credit flow to the private sector and currency exchange rate will be badly affected," reads a finance division report submitted to finance adviser last month.

Meantime, the ADB has hinted at giving a \$120-130 million loan for flood rehabilitation.

"Roughly, half of this is new money (fresh allocation) and the rest will be reallocation from other projects," Azizul said.

## JMB threatens

FROM PAGE 16

Sources said someone dropped a letter issued by JMB office in Dhaka to the office of Petrobangla Chairman Jalal Ahmed at Petrocentre on Monday.

According to the letter, representatives of the banned Islamist outfit have already inspected different floors of the Petrobangla office and they will go on action soon.

Assistant Manager (Security) of Petrobangla Ruhul Amin lodged a general diary with Tejgaon Police Station following the threat.

Sub-Inspector MA Mabud, who is investigating the matter, said they are examining whether the JMB sent the letter or someone else sent it out of enmity with the Petrobangla chief.

The threat came within hours after three militants belonging to the JMB were charged with carrying out serial bombings in four cinemas in Mymensingh.

## Hope for Brac

FROM PAGE 16

yesterday told BSS that the Afghan government has warned the abductors of severe consequences if they do not release the Brac development worker.

He said Afghan officials have told them that the abductors are not members of any political groups like the Taliban.

The NGO's director for media and public affairs, M Anwarul Haq, said Brac is taking all measures for the release of Noor Islam.

He said Fazle Hossain Abed, founder chairperson of Brac, called on Chief Adviser (CA) Fakhruddin Ahmed recently to discuss the release of Noor Islam and thanked the CA for his government's efforts to that end.

Brac is running various projects, including micro finance to the tune of US\$48 million, since 2002 in 25 out of Afghanistan's 34 provinces, Anwar said, adding that 3707 Afghan and Bangladesh officials are working on those projects.

## US warns Myanmar

FROM PAGE 16

League for Democracy, was arrested on September 26 near Myanmar's second city of Mandalay, the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP) said in a statement, according to a Thailand-based watchdog.

He was arrested along with four other people for joining anti-government protests led by Buddhist monks in Mandalay, the group said.

"He died as a result of torture during interrogation. However, his body was not sent to his family and the interrogators indicated that they had cremated it instead," the group said.

AAPP is an organisation run by former political prisoners who now live in exile in neighbouring Thailand.

The group monitors conditions in Myanmar's notorious prisons, which were believed to holding some 1,100 political prisoners before the protests broke out in mid-August.

More than 2,100 people were arrested over the biggest anti-government protests seen here in nearly two decades. Nearly 1,000 of them are still being held, according to official figures.

Report from Yangon adds: Myanmar's opposition party on Tuesday welcomed moves by the junta towards dialogue with its leader Aung San Suu Kyi, as the regime sought to deflect criticism over its bloody crackdown on mass protests.

With the United Nations weighing up a statement criticising the government, junta chief Senior General Than Shwe named deputy labour minister Aung Kyi to build "smooth relations" with the detained opposition leader.

The appointment of Aung Kyi, a general with a reputation as a moderate and who has a track record of dealing with the United

Nations, is the latest in a series of small gestures apparently aimed at appeasing UN member states.

The junta last week said that Than Shwe was willing to meet Aung San Suu Kyi, who has been under house arrest for most of the last 18 years, albeit with strict conditions attached, including that she drop support for sanctions.

"Finding a solution through dialogue is the natural way to help the people and the country," the National League for Democracy (NLD) said in a statement.

"A willingness to hold dialogue is the main way to solve the problems now facing the country," it added.

The NLD, which won elections in 1990 but was never allowed to govern, also denied that Aung San Suu Kyi had called for economic sanctions -- although she has publicly discouraged foreign investment.

Some analysts questioned whether the junta's gestures would be enough, saying the situation in Myanmar -- ruled by the military since 1962 -- remained largely unchanged.

"I think they recognise they have to do something without really giving up any power, they have to make a public gesture," said David Steinberg, a Myanmar expert from Georgetown University in the United States.

"But it does not amount to anything right now given the leadership... I would say right now it is the status quo, with a few frills attached."

The official New Light of Myanmar paper said the appointment of a liaison for Aung San Suu Kyi was suggested by UN envoy Ibrahim Gambari during his mission here last week.

## Benazir to be given

FROM PAGE 16

threat by a pro-Taliban militant leader from Pakistan's troubled tribal belt to kill the Western-friendly, Oxford-educated Bhutto in a suicide attack.

"We will provide her security and we expect her representative to discuss the arrangements with the interior ministry authorities," Interior Minister Aftab Sherpao told AFP.

Sherpao said the government had already given Bhutto permission to bring a bullet-proof car into the country for her use.

President Pervez Musharraf agreed last week to give Bhutto an amnesty on the corruption charges that drove her into exile, in a prelude to a likely power-sharing deal between the two.

But newspapers reported last week that Baitullah Mehsud -- a pro-Taliban chief from the South Waziristan tribal region blamed for several recent suicide attacks -- had issued a threat to kill her.

"We have written a letter to the government asking for them to provide police protection for Benazir Bhutto because of the precarious law and order situation in the country," her lawyer Farooq Naik told AFP.

"We have also asked for a bullet-proof car for her, but have not yet decided whether to hire a private security firm as well for her protection," Naik added.

"All former prime ministers get state protection and it is her constitutional and legal right."

Bhutto served as premier from

1988-1990 and again from 1993-1996. Her father Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was overthrown as prime minister in 1977 and executed by military dictator Zia-ul-Haq two years later.

"Meanwhile, a Pakistan court dismissed on Tuesday a request from former premier Benazir Bhutto for pre-arrest bail ahead of her return from self-imposed exile next week, her lawyer said."

The High Court in Karachi rejected the petition after government lawyers ruled out the possibility that she would be arrested on arrival in the southern port city next week.

Bhutto had sought protective bail in case she was seized over corruption charges that she says are politically motivated and forced her to flee Pakistan into exile in 1999.

The two-time premier signed a landmark agreement last week with President Pervez Musharraf that gives her an amnesty on the graft charges and paves the way for a power-sharing deal between the two US-friendly political leaders.

"Chief justice of the Sindh High Court, Sabihuddin Ahmed, and judge Faisal Arab who presided in the court disposed of the petition after the government prosecutor said they would not pursue the cases," Bhutto's lawyer Farooq Naik told AFP.

"Thus the question of her arrest does not arise," he said.

## Gerhard Ertl

FROM PAGE 16

different kinds of specific cells, sparking hope that scientists will one day be able to grow transplant tissue in a lab.

The 2007 laureate receives a gold medal, a diploma and 10 million Swedish kronor (1.53 million dollars, 1.08 million euros).

The formal prize ceremony will be held as tradition dictates on December 10, the anniversary of the death in 1896 of the prize's creator, Swedish industrialist and inventor of dynamite Alfred Nobel.

The prizes were first awarded in 1901.

On Monday, the Nobel Medicine Prize went to Mario Capecchi and Oliver Smithies of the United States and Martin Evans of Britain for their work in creating "knockout mice," or genetically manipulated mice that replicate human diseases.

The Physics prize was on Tuesday awarded to Albert Fert of France and Peter Grunberg of Germany for pioneering work that led to the miniaturised hard disk, one of the breakthroughs of modern information technology.

The literature prize will be awarded on Thursday and the prestigious peace prize on Friday.

The economics prize will wrap up this year's Nobel season on Monday.