

## 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 Gulistan 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-Buriganga, 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 Mohakhal Bus terminals were about the same. Passengers were seen waiting for their buses in Mohakhal for hours.

"I have been waiting here for the last four hours. The bus operators are saying that the bus will reach soon," Sohel 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.

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

## 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 bidding 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 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 Badruddoza'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 and Chowdhury Kamal Ibne Yusuf

are leaders of the party.

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 contract 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 floor vote.

Following the attack on the workers on hunger strike, a delegation led by Abdul Matin Chowdhury, acting secretary of expatriates' welfare ministry, went to Kuala Lumpur to probe the incident. During his visit, the secretary pledged the workers that after they return home, Tk 2.3 lakh would be given to each to cover the expenses they had made to the recruiting agent in Bangladesh.

Speaking with Malaysian newspaper The Star, Talat said, "I would like to see them happy. I hope their dreams will be fulfilled. Many had not been able to send any funds back to their families."

## 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 Nasakar.

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 triilateral 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.

## 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 Altafuddin 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.

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

**Khaleda**

FROM PAGE 16  
a sub-jail on the Sangsab Bhaban premises.

Khaleda's lawyer, Ahmed Azaam 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 Arifur Rahman, Koko and 11 others for alleged underhand dealings in awarding the container-handling contract.

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 Salifur 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.

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

"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 Sabir Sattar Tapu and Prof Dr Chowdhury Sarwar Jahan Sajal surrendered before the court after being sued for instituting 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 Kamran Rahman Khan, Monwara Sobhan, Sapna Banarji, Sanchita Roy, Susmita Chakrabarti, Udisa Islam, Tanzima Yesmin and Hasna Ara Begum.

**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.

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

Sherpa 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

## 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 (AAP) said in a statement, according to a Thai-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.

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

"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."

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

Meanwhile, a Pakistani 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