

Pay channels

FROM PAGE 16 purchase rate from the distributors. We have to pay around Tk 280 to Tk 290 to distributors against each connection," he said.

On the other hand, as per the VAT rules, the end users pay VAT, but farcically the government directed the cable operators to collect Tk 300 including VAT from each client, he said.

"We have our network and office expenses. We have to survive on the business," he added.

Coab repeatedly asked NBR and the finance ministry to allow cable operators to submit VAT by themselves, but none has responded to the appeal, Anwar Parvez said.

"I believe allowing operators to directly submit VAT would increase the amount of government revenue."

Meanwhile, cable operator Syed Habib Ali said operators following the government rules are subject to loss, as they have to subscribe package system to purchase channels from distributors.

"As per the government rules, the cable operators should collect Tk 300 from each client in Dhaka and Chittagong for 30 pay channels, Tk 250 for 25 pay channels in Rajshahi, Khulna, Sylhet, Barisal, Jessore, Pabna, Kushtia, Rangpur, Bogra, Dinajpur, Ranganamati and Tangail," he said.

On the other hand, charge in other district towns for 15 pay channels has been fixed at Tk 200 and in upazilas the rate is Tk 150 for 10 pay channels, he noted.

"This means we do not have our choice to subscribe less number of pay channels than the number fixed by the government from distributors. This has resulted in an increase in our cost."

Another component for dodging the taxes is the use of illegal devices smuggled in from India to transmit satellite television signals instead of subscribing to the distributors.

There are at least 11 cable operators who use smuggled devices -- DTH boxes of Tata Sky and DISH TV -- to transmit television signals to households, though the government does not allow the use of such devices,

Prices of eggs

FROM PAGE 1 The poultry traders also showed the same reasons behind the price hike of chicken.

The price of battery chicken rose by Tk 10-15 per kg in the retail market. Battery chickens were sold for Tk 120-135 per kg yesterday while it was sold at Tk 110-120 a kg a few days back.

However, prices of free-range chickens remained stable. Fowls depending on their size were sold between Tk 100 and 250 yesterday.

Prices of rice varieties also remained stable. The price of rice varieties was between Tk 1100 and 1400 per maund in the wholesale market while it was sold for Tk 32-40 per kg in the retail market.

Prices of pulses and edible oil also remained stable in the city markets for the last two weeks.

Pulses of different varieties were sold between Tk 80 and 90 per kg yesterday.

Palm oil was sold at Tk 100-105 a kg while soya bean oil was sold for Tk 110-112 per kg yesterday.

However, the prices of vegetables and sugar came down slightly in the kitchen markets in the last one week.

KU students clash

FROM PAGE 1 their halls as of filing of this report at 4:30pm.

The trouble began at Sonadanga bus terminal at 11:30pm on Thursday as some staff of Hanif Paribahan refused to allow four students of the university to board the Chittagong-bound bus with luggage.

Campus sources said the students earlier bought tickets for Chittagong from a counter of Hanif Paribahan at the terminal.

Being refused, the students became angry and locked in an altercation with the bus staff. At one stage, some transport workers of the terminal came in aid of the bus staff and beat up the students.

When the news reached the campus, over 100 students from Khan Jahan Ali and Ahsanullah halls, carrying sticks in their hands, rushed to the bus terminal and clashed with transport workers, leaving 10 from both sides injured.

The angry students also damaged four buses and seven shops during the clash. The police charged truncheons on the clashing groups and brought the situation under control.

Around 6:30am yesterday, several hundred students of the university came out of their dormitories and put up barricades on the Khulna-Satkhira road to press home their three-point demands including arrest of three leaders of Motor Sramik Union, removal of the officer-in-charge (OC) of Sonadanga Police Station and apology by the leaders of Motor Sramik Union and employees of Hanif Paribahan.

When police tried to remove the

industry insiders say.

These cable operators who transmit 19 satellite television channels of STAR, Sony and Discovery groups, using Tata Sky and DISH TV, also pay fees to businesses in India through illegal channels, they add.

"Through this practice a huge amount of money is smuggled out of the country. The government is also deprived of revenue income that it would have got if the operators subscribed to us," observes a pay channel distributor.

Four satellite pay channel distributors do business in Bangladesh -- Total Sports, MGH, Nationwide and Translink -- that distribute 44 pay channels to cable operators.

The Coab president said some cable operators use DISH TV or Tata Sky, as some companies switched off channels in October last year due to payment related problem.

"That problem is now settled. But some operators may randomly use DISH TV or Tata Sky," he observed.

Whether Coab would ask its members to stop using Tata Sky or DISH TV, he said, "I would advise cable operators to discuss the matters with distributors to settle down problems, if there is any."

Admitting that the government does not have a mechanism to detect the number of subscribers of pay channels, Information Ministry Joint Secretary Abu Taher said they will soon buy a technology that determines the exact number of pay channel customers.

The government conducts drives if any complaints are made that operators are using DISH TV or Tata Sky, he added.

Oil price surges to record high above \$ 127

AFP, London

The price of oil rocketed to a record high point of 127.43 dollars per barrel yesterday, as US President George W. Bush prepared to urge Saudi Arabia to pump more crude, analysts said.

New York's main oil futures contract, light sweet crude for June delivery, beat the previous peak of 126.98 that was set on Tuesday owing to worries about tight supplies despite a downgrade to global oil demand growth for 2008.

No electoral

FROM PAGE 16 war criminals," AL acting general secretary.

Syed Ashraf said they would include the pledges in the party's election manifesto.

Khandker told reporters, "We wanted them to pledge that they will try the war criminals if they win the next election. We also requested them to include the pledges in their election manifesto."

He continued, "If any political party forges an alliance with the anti-Liberation War forces, we will work against them in the election."

Major Gen (ret'd) KM Safiullah, Major (ret'd) Rafiqul Islam, Lt Gen (ret'd) M Harun-Ar-Rashid, Major Gen (ret'd) Jamil D Ahsan, among other SCF leaders, were present at the meeting.

barricades, the students swooped on the law enforcers, pelted them with bricks/bats and damaged Gallaman police box.

The police fired tear gas shells and charged truncheons to disperse the students. At least 40 people, including six cops, were injured during the clash, police said.

Additional police and Rab personnel have been deployed in the area following the incident.

KU Registrar Prof Mohammad Nazrul Islam lodged an FIR with Sonadanga Police Station at 2:00pm yesterday, accusing Motor Sramik Union leader Zakir Hossain Biplob and the supervisor of Hanif Paribahan of launching attack on the students.

Vice-chancellor (VC) Prof Mohammad Saifuddin Shah yesterday formed a six-member committee and has been asked to submit the probe report within a week after the university opens on June 15 following summer vacation.

The VC asked the probe committee to submit report with recommendations for actions to be taken.

Neglect of duty

FROM PAGE 1 (DIG-IGs) of Dhaka Maj Shamsul Haider Siddique said, "After the incident, the authorities asked all the jails to be on the alert, intensify security measures and frisk the prisoners."

The authorities formed two committees to probe the incident, one headed by DIG (prisons) of Rajshahi jail and the other by additional district magistrate of Chuadanga.

IG (Prisons) Zakir said, "I rushed to Chuadanga Jail on information of the incident and found that poor construction of the jail building paved the way for the breakout."

"The proportion of cement in concrete mixture was much lower than required. It was very easy for them (convicts) to make a hole in the wall," he said.

"The building was constructed by the Public Works Department (PWD). We'd request the government to launch investigation into the matter and take punitive measures against the individuals involved in the construction."

Chuadanga Jail, built on a seven-acre land at the cost of Tk 14 crore, was inaugurated last year, with a capacity of 300 prisoners. However, 1070 inmates are crammed into the building.

The IG (prisons) said, "Initially we've decided to suspend six jail staffers of different ranks for their negligence of duty. The number may increase after investigation."

In reply to a question he said the authorities believe the hole in the prison-cell wall was made at night and no outsider was involved in it.

Chuadanga Deputy Commissioner (DC) Mohammad Mokhlesur Rahman told this newspaper, "The four convicts escaped at around 2:00am. They were in the same cell."

"We've found two nails on the spot which we suspect were used to make the hole", he said adding that the felons made a two-square-foot hole through which they crawled out of the prison cell and then climbed down the prison wall with the help of twisted blankets.

Citing shortage of manpower in Chuadanga Jail, the IG (prisons) said there are only 54 against a requirement of 307 guards.

He also blamed load shedding for the breakout, saying the jail does not have any generator. "We'd requested the government to provide generators. The administration, however, refused to supply any two months back."

Earlier on November 25 last year, five Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) cadres, including the son of the outfit's executed kingpin, tried to escape from Comilla jail.

The jail directorate on March 25 and August 22 last year issued letters to all jails, asking them to beef up security at their prisons.

In the August 22 letter, Additional Inspector General (Prisons) Colonel Md Ashrafur Islam Khan issued 11 specific orders, including strengthening search activities, keeping prisoners' movement under control so that they cannot sneak arms and explosives into jails, keeping all inmates under close observation and putting suspicious ones into cells.

DU students

FROM PAGE 1 Speaking as the chief guest at the ceremony, Prof Faiz said, "You [students] are much more enlightened and you have to be considerably responsive towards your families, your nation and yourself."

He said, "The nation has great expectations from the students and you have to set glorious examples before it... you have to be honest towards your work, nation and yourself, and you also have to raise yourself to international standard."

EBL Chairman Qamrul said the bank has initiated the programme as part of carrying out its social responsibilities and this type of supportive programmes will continue in future.

He said EBL considers it a long-term investment in building relationships.

Qamrul urged the students to move the country forward with their plans, responsibilities and sincerity.

DUAU President Syed Manzur Elahi said the private sector has become the main source of jobs and the corporate world should extend its helping hand to develop countries.

He said apart from industrialisation, the private sector also has some social responsibilities towards the nation.

Manzur also said, "It is not possible to move forward without the cooperation of the corporate world."

He urged the government to grant tax-free donations for corporate organisations to encourage them to come forward.

Raqiubuddin Ahmed, secretary general of DUAU, said a selection committee headed by the DU VC prepared the list.

CEO of EBL Ali Reza Iftekhar, DU faculty deans, department chairs, teachers, parents and students were present at the ceremony.

Nikli disaster

FROM PAGE 1 the master had no training.

Meanwhile, death toll in the launch capsized rose to 46 as locals recovered another body yesterday.

The deceased was identified as Salatur Rahman Ripon of Boregaon village of Tarail upazila in the district.

The engine and the steel-made body of the sunken vessel were too old to cope with any disaster and the launch was carrying over 100 passengers although its capacity was 50 passengers, according to the probe report.

When the launch was sinking all its window shutters were pulled down, which led to more casualties, the report said, adding that the passengers were trapped under water also because of the huge goods kept on the deck.

The probe body also opined that because of the outdated nature of BIWTA rescue operation the sunken launch could not be salvaged even after daylong effort.

The committee also made some recommendations to avoid such accidents.

The Bangladesh Inland Water

BNP reunification

FROM PAGE 1 last minute details of reunification. Hannan Shah, Nazrul Islam Khan, and Goyeswar Roy of pro-Khaleda faction had been part of scheduling the meeting, but finally the faction cancelled it just minutes before the schedule.

He also said, "We were ready to meet, but just a few minutes before the schedule they informed us that the reunification process had been suspended for the time being."

Hafiz also expressed his frustration over the remarks Delwar had made on Thursday night.

While addressing leaders of Manikganj Bar Association and of BNP in his Nam flat in the capital on Thursday night, Delwar said there is no need for meetings with their rival faction at this point for reunification, and added that Saifur loyalists may clarify their position to the nation if they want.

He also said, "I don't know exactly what they [pro-Saifur leaders] are saying about reunification, but our position is clear, which is, all except the expelled individuals may work for the reunited party remaining in their spots."

"I thought I think a certain quarter doesn't want to see a reunited BNP, this is nothing but a conspiracy," Hafiz said commenting on Delwar's remarks, adding that his faction wanted to reunite the party unconditionally.

Replying to a question he said Saifur loyalists will continue their efforts to reunite the party, because otherwise the consequences might be disastrous for the organisation.

When asked whether their faction will participate separately in the upcoming dialogues with the government, Hafiz said they will take a decision regarding the matter if they get an invitation, but hoped

Four top outlaws

FROM PAGE 1 Arrested between 1998 and 2002, the four were serving out jail terms ranging from 4 to 80 years, police said.

The breakout caused panic in the region. All police stations in the 10 south-western districts were kept on alert. Special security measures were taken in all jails in the region.

The four had been confined in a high-security prison cell of the jail for last several years.

Police said the felons, who were never allowed inside the jail compound, might have been drilling a hole in the prison-cell wall for many days, without jail guards suspecting anything.

On Thursday night, they climbed the boundary wall of the jail and jumped themselves free.

Stopping short of saying how the outlaws could climb the 18-foot-high steep wall without help from inside, Jail Superintendent Nasir Uddin said only said things would be clear after investigations.

Two probe committees, one headed by additional district magistrate (ADM) of Chuadanga and the other by deputy inspector general (prisons) of Rajshahi jail, were formed to find out the loophole in the security system leading to the daring breakout.

Both the committees were asked to report within 24 hours.

Superintendent of Police (SP) of Chuadanga, Mafiz Uddin, said they would make an all-out effort to smoke out the four escaped convicts. A joint drive by police and Rab was already underway.

The four men were accused in numerous cases filed with police stations in Chuadanga, Meherpur, Jhenidah and Kushtia.

Hamid, who was arrested in 2001, was accused in at least 15

Army recovers

FROM PAGE 1 bullets, uniforms, nylon belts, firearms-making equipment, a drill machine, dice and a toy pistol early yesterday.

Sources said the criminals fled the den sensing the presence of the army personnel.

In another drive at Ujirchhara under Dighinala upazila of Khagrachhari, the security personnel recovered one pistol, one rifle, 20 bullets, two mobile phones, medicine and surgical equipment from a hideout of criminals, according to BSS.

Transport Authority (BIWTA) should ensure that a vessel is operated by expert and trained masters and crew. Fitness certificate, registration and route permit of a vessel should be given after proper inspection of the vessel, the report said.

The district administration gave the families of each of 33 victims Tk 4,000 from the DC's relief fund.

UNO Saiful Islam said the owner of the sunken launch, Shafi Uddin, bought an old engine boat at a BIWTA auction in 1986 and built a wooden body engine boat. In 2006, he built the steel-body launch, violating the existing rules of BIWTA.

The UNO said, "It is a wonder how the vessel got its fitness certificate and other papers from BIWTA."

He said a case was filed with Nikli Police Station yesterday against master Humayun of the sunken boat for driving the launch without having training. Master Humayun has been absconding since the capsizing.

Locals and relatives of missing persons, meanwhile, resented the sudden decision to call off the rescue operation.

that the party will be reunited before that.

Hafiz yesterday discussed reunification with former lawmakers of the party, and later talked to pro-Khaleda leader Hannan Shah over the phone regarding the matter.

Party insiders said pro-Saifur leaders Lt Gen (ret'd) Mahbubur Rahman, Maj (ret'd) Hafiz and Abdul Alim, and pro-Khaleda leaders Brig Gen (ret'd) Hannan Shah, Nazrul Islam Khan and Goyeswar Chandra Roy held a series of meetings over the last few days to find out a way for reuniting the party.

They also prepared a draft charter for reunification which stipulated that pro-Saifur leaders will cancel their founding meeting of October 29, 2007 which appointed Saifur and Hafiz as acting chairman and acting secretary general respectively.

Hafiz even agreed to Delwar's demand that the detained chairperson will decide the fate of expelled leaders including former secretary general Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, whose expulsions preceded the formation of pro-Saifur faction.

On Wednesday, leaders of both factions held a series of meetings to review the draft charter for reunification, and they were satisfied with the result as major differences between the factions had been resolved and reconciliation seemed 'only a matter of time'.

Following Wednesday's elation, Khaleda loyalist booked a restaurant for Thursday's cancelled meeting, and also met Delwar for his directives for the upcoming talk with rival leaders.

Delwar however rejected outright the idea of another meeting, saying Saifur loyalists must nullify their October 29 founding meeting before sitting again with his faction.

cases, including eight for murders. He was given 44 years' rigorous imprisonment (RI) in just two cases -- one for murder and the other for possessing illegal weapons.

Jorap Ali aka Bachchu was indicted in at least 10 cases including five for murders. He was handed 70 years' RI in only two cases.

Sohag was accused in at least 16 cases including six for murders and was sentenced to a whopping 80-year RI in three cases while Tagar was accused in at least 20 cases and was given 50 years' RI in two cases.

Inspector General of Police (prisons) Brigadier General Zakir Hassan visited the spot yesterday.

Mobile jammer

FROM PAGE 1 "A single jammer cannot cover the entire jail, therefore, more jammers would be installed in Dhaka Central Jail within 30 days," the IGP-prisons said, adding, "Cellphone jammers would also be installed in all 12 central jails within the next two months and in other jails gradually."

He said a tender in this regard would be floated in June.

Brig Gen Zakir Hassan said, "The installation of the costly cellphone jammers would become pointless if the towers of various mobile phone operators were not moved from the rooftops of buildings very close to the jail."

He said inmates' talking over cellphones is a security risk to the jail.

An official of BTRC said separate cellphone towers of different operators are causing call congestion and call-drops, putting their subscribers in difficulty. The official said they are formulating a policy under which operators would have to share towers. The BTRC believes this would reduce the number of cellphone towers and improve service.

Sources said the price of a single imported cellphone jammer is over Tk 4 lakh. Cellphone jammers transmit low radio signals to cut off communication between cellphones and the cellphone towers.

According to sources, imprisoned suspects and convicts, not to mention VIP prisoners, often use cellphones inside the jail.

The jail authorities already took punitive actions against at least 10 high-profile prisoners for using cellphones in jail.

100 killed

FROM PAGE 16 vandalised by looters. Exactly one year earlier, more than 200 people died scooping fuel from a vandalised pipeline in another Lagos district.

More than 1,000 villagers burnt to death in 1998 in Ilesha, near the southern Delta state oil city of Warri, following the vandalisation of a fuel pipeline. Victims were suspected of scooping petrol to sell on the black market.

State-run oil giant Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) has campaigned against pipeline vandalisation. It says between 400 and 500 acts of vandalism occur every year on its pipelines.

Nigeria derives more than 95 percent of its foreign exchange earnings from oil.

Rescuers began leaving the scene of the latest disaster as darkness set in, said Abdulsalam Mohammed, a spokesman for Nigeria's national emergency agency.

"The fire has drastically reduced. We shall continue work tomorrow (Friday). We will also discuss (how) to improve on our level of preparedness against future occurrence," he said.

Firefighters from the Nigerian Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), the fire service, construction firm Julius Berger and the NNPC fought the blaze, he said.

Lagos police spokesman Frank Mba said the rescue work continued and it was too early to provide casualty figures.

Lagos MP, Adeola Olamilekan, who was at the scene of the disaster, thanked firefighters for their efforts to put out the fire.

Filmmakers

FROM PAGE 16 and literatures, but a lack of promotion by the government and the private sector. "I personally met producers who suggested making films based on their formula. I could not accept that," he said.

Shah Masud Imam of Standard Chartered Bank said there is a negative image of Bangladesh in the international arena, although there are many positive things to focus on.

"We need to showcase our art and culture besides economic aspects if we want more foreign direct investment," he said adding that Standard Chartered Bank is pleased to support the contest.

Freelance journalist also filmmaker Shameem Akhtar said there was a time when little magazines, weeklies and fortnightly used to publish reviews of cinemas and other write-ups on movies, but those are not seen in today's newspapers and magazines.

The media can and should contribute greatly to promotion of cinema, he said.

The Daily Star Editor and Publisher Mahfuz Anam said Bangladesh is a country with plenty of elements -- struggles and successes of people -- which are rarely being depicted in cinemas.

Filmmakers with social commitment may depict the complexities of a society, he said, citing the example of Charles Chaplin. Chaplin spoke hard truths in interesting ways, he added.

"Here, as a newspaper we have a supportive role to play. We expect to help you, even with fund raising for good films," Mahfuz Anam said.

Coordinator of the contest also Star Insight Editor Rafi Hossain said, "Let's work together to create a movement for cinema."

Hasina

FROM PAGE 1 Nazma Akter presided over the council, which was participated by its central leaders and presidents and general secretaries of 17 districts of Dhaka division.

Speaking at the programme, AL presidium member Amir Hossain Amu said Sheikh Hasina's unconditional release ahead of the dialogue is their only demand at the moment.

"Awami League can only participate in the dialogue along with its president Sheikh Hasina after her release. There is no alternative to it," he said, adding that their demand for the release of Hasina has now become "a national demand."

Amu, however, said they would decide whether to join the government-sponsored dialogue after consulting with its allies in the 14-party combine and after getting Hasina's nod.

He said conspiracy is on to hold election keeping Hasina behind the bars by filing "false and baseless cases" against her.

Presidium member Abdur Razzaq said they will launch a razzak movement to free Hasina. He urged the party men to get united and take preparation for joining the movement.

Tofail Ahmed, another presidium member, said they will not join the dialogue and also the election without Sheikh Hasina. "Dialogue won't be fruitful and the election won't be acceptable without Sheikh Hasina," he said.

He demanded withdrawal of the state of emergency and said election under the emergency would not be acceptable to the countrymen.

Presidium member Motia Chowdhury demanded unconditional release of Hasina before the dialogue and said only Hasina's presence can make the dialogue successful, otherwise not.

AL leaders Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury, Abdul Mannan, Mahmudur Rahman Manna, Advocate Sahara Khatun, Advocate Quamrul Islam and Dr Dipu Moni also spoke at the programme.

Dhaka-Kolkata train

FROM PAGE 1 Train service between Bangladesh and India, which was discontinued following the India-Pakistan war in 1965, resumed on April 14 after 43 years with two Maitree Express trains reaching Dhaka and Kolkata in the evening that day.

The train from Dhaka has 418 seats but the highest number of passengers it had so far was 137 on May 11 (excepting the inaugural run to Kolkata with 375 passengers), said Nripendra Chandra, a stationmaster at Kamalapur railway station.