

Govt appeals

FROM PAGE 16
unconfirmed HC judges for vacating the SC order that had stayed the HC verdict, Additional Attorney General (AAG) M Enayetur Rahim yesterday told the apex court that the government had instructed the AAG's office not to proceed with the appeals.

The four-member full bench of the Appellate Division headed by Chief Justice MM Ruhul Amin fixed February 18 for hearing the appeals and the petition. Enayetur Rahim, also acting Attorney General (AG), told The Daily Star that the 10 HC judges were deprived, as the BNP-Jamaat alliance government did not confirm their services.

He said a total of four appeals filed by the caretaker government and some HC judges against the HC verdict have been pending with the SC.

If the High Court verdict remains valid after the legal battle at the SC, there will not be any legal bar in the way of reinstating the deprived judges, he said.

On July 29, last year, the SC upon separate petitions filed by the government and 19 HC judges stayed the HC judgment and asked the petitioners to file regular appeals with the SC against the HC judgment.

Priyanka Gandhi

FROM PAGE 16
visiting at the invitation of the Brac, the largest NGO in the world.

He said that the government would provide adequate security to her and the home ministry has given necessary instructions to this respect.

According to a highly-placed source, Priyanka will arrive at the Zia International Airport tomorrow afternoon and from there she will go to visit a Brac-run school and the Training and Resource Centre of the NGO at Savar.

The source said it is Priyanka's private visit and she is coming to see the Brac projects, which she could replicate for the Rajiv Gandhi Foundation in India.

Earlier, her elder brother Rahul Gandhi paid a five-day visit to Bangladesh from August 1, 2008 and visited a number of projects run by Grameen Bank and BRAC.

Sources said, during the brief visit, Priyanka is likely to meet Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, Foreign Minister Dipu Moni and State Minister for Foreign Affairs Hasan Mahmud. She will leave for New Delhi on Wednesday morning.

Danish minister

FROM PAGE 16
on February 3 at Westin Hotel in the capital.

During her stay, Hedegaard will meet with government leaders and visit climate change vulnerable areas in the country's southern coastal belt.

She is Denmark's first minister for climate and energy.

Ever since August 2004, when she was appointed as Danish Minister for the Environment, Hedegaard has been striving to raise national and international focus on climate issues.

These endeavours are now culminating in the UN Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen in 2009; the goal of which is to agree on an ambitious global climate agreement.

Nadal lifts

FROM PAGE 16
semifinal with Fernando Verdasco to take the gripping five-setter 7-5, 3-6, 7-6 (7/3), 3-6, 6-2 in four hours and 23 minutes.

Federer remains on 13 Grand Slams, one behind Pete Sampras, and with an enduring mental block against the Spaniard who has now beaten him in their last three Grand Slam finals.

Nadal, the first Spanish male winner of the tournament, moves to six Grand Slams, increasing his lead at the top of the rankings and earning a shot at sweeping the season's majors.

The two were meeting for the first time since last year's epic Wimbledon final, when Nadal ended Federer's five-year hold on the trophy before depositing him as world number one.

They have now contested seven Grand Slam finals with Nadal holding a 5-2 edge in the meetings and 13-6 overall. But he had his last hard-court win over Federer in 2006 and had never reached a Grand Slam final on the surface.

2 die, 200 injured

FROM PAGE 1
number of passengers swim ashore.

None of the missing passengers were found as of filing of this report at 1.30am today.

In another incident, over 200 people sustained injuries after panicked devotees jumped off a slow-moving train at Tongi in the afternoon following a false fire alarm.

Most of the passengers were travelling on the roof of the heavily crowded train.

Railway and police sources said fire sparks caused by the breaking down of pressure plates of a coach caused panic among passengers. The plates broke as the train was carrying passengers far beyond its capacity.

Almost all passengers were returning from the Biswa Jtama congregation. Sources said the Mohanagar Godhuli Express was on its way to Kamalapur Railway Station from Tongi station around 5:00pm.

Mahbubur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Kamalapur Railway Police Station, told The Daily Star, "As the train nears Kosaibari between Tongi and Airport stations, sparks broke out and several hundred scared passengers jumped off the running train."

"Luckily, the train was running slowly and most of the passengers only sustained injuries," he said. The injured were taken to different hospitals and clinics.

Pilgrims seek

FROM PAGE 1
The highest numbers of overseas devotees were from India, Pakistan, the Maldives, China, Japan, Turkey, Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, Bhutan, Nepal, USA, UK and Nigeria.

The gargantuan gathering of devotees irrespective of old and young spilled over the Jtama ground into the adjacent roads stretching from Biswa Road Bus Stand to Chera Ali Market in Tongi turned the whole area into a human sea.

The Akheri Munajat started at about 1:15pm and ended at 1:35pm and during the period Moulana Jubayerul Hassan delivered his spiritual sermon in Urdu urging all the people to come to the path of Allah.

President Iajuddin Ahmed arrived at the sprawling venue of Jtama ground at 10:40am and sat on a stage beside the main stage while Sheikh Hasina arrived at 10:30am and had a full view of the congregation from a podium built at the Bata Sports Club premises, adjacent to the Jtama venue.

Leader of the opposition Khaleda Zia arrived at the Jtama at about 11:00am and sat on the top of the Atlas Bangladesh Ltd building.

Their family members and party leaders accompanied both the Prime Minister and leader of the opposition.

As many as 44 special trains and a number of BRTC shuttle bus services have been arranged to ease the transportation of pilgrims to the venue. But the arrangement appeared to be inadequate compared to the huge gathering.

On information, Officer-in-Charge Abdus Sobhan rushed to the spot and apologized for the misdeed of his force. In presence of Mogalhat UP chairman Habibur Rahman, the police officer settled the dispute with a promise to bear the medical expenses of Nazma Begum.

5 banks

FROM PAGE 1
Bangladesh Bank.

In 2006-07 and 2007-08 fiscal years two oil-importing firms exported edible oil to India at a price lower than the local market rate. The intelligence agencies, in this regard, submitted reports to the ministries of home and commerce during the tenure of the last caretaker government.

Later chief adviser's office tasked Bangladesh Bank with investigating the matter and take necessary action.

Ex-MD of RPGCL

FROM PAGE 16
charge sheet as the allegation brought against them could not be proved during the investigation.

They are MD of RPGCL Abdul Wadud, director (finance) M Golam Mostafa, its former MD Raihanul Abedin, former acting MD and general manager Ekramul Haq Rezaul Karim, MD of Trident Agency Mohammad Ali and proprietor of Rahman Service Station Mahbubur Rahman.

It said Fazle Elahi had misappropriated Tk 7,33,56,000 from the government fund and so he was made accused in the charge sheet.

ACC Assistant Director Abdul Majed filed the case with Khilkhet Police Station on March 11 last year accusing eight former and present officials of RPGCL-run CNG conversion workshop for misappropriating over Tk 1.53 crore from the exchequer during 1993-2006.

No thanks

FROM PAGE 1
inaugural speech.

BNP-led opposition lawmakers had boycotted the president's address accusing him of violating the constitution. A BNP lawmaker even submitted a notice demanding a discussion on the president's alleged violation of the constitution.

The speaker, however, rejected the notice along with 20 other notices.

The ruling party lawmakers followed their arch-rival's suit and criticised the outgoing president. They even raised question on whether the new parliament should thank the president as lawmakers have started opposing the motion.

"I am raising allegations against the president in parliament. He has betrayed the nation by breaching the constitution and for which he has to be held accountable," AL leader Alamgir told the House as ruling party lawmakers kept on thumping their desks.

He also accused the immediate past caretaker government chief Fakhruddin Ahmed of breaching the constitution. He said the highest ever amount of money was laundered when Fakhruddin Ahmed was

28th BCS exam

FROM PAGE 1
Khulna, Barisal and Sylhet divisions.

The circular for the 28th BCS examinations sought applications for 1,720 posts in 14 general and 13 technical professional cadres.

PSC Member Ehsan Shamim said a total of 1,20,946 applicants applied for the exams but of them 1,15,163 could submit their applications correctly.

"Hope the written examination will begin in two months. A detailed schedule will be published in national dailies within a few days," Ehsan Shamim told The Daily Star.

Kenya oil tanker

FROM PAGE 16
tossing where he was reporting a missing friend Sunday.

Burnt-out cars and charred clothing littered the road where the shell of the tanker stood in Molo, about 170km outside the capital, Nairobi.

Kenyan Prime Minister Raila Odinga said at a news conference that it appeared that someone's cigarette caused the explosion.

The Kenya Red Cross said the death toll was 111 but was expected to rise.

"Most of the families will have a hard time because these bodies are charred beyond recognition," said Patrick Nyongesa, the regional manager for the Kenya Red Cross.

Similar blasts are common in Nigeria, where people tap gas pipelines to pilfer fuel for cooking or resale on the black market. In 2006, a gasoline blast killed 200 people in Nigeria.

The Kenyan government has been criticised for poor safety regulations recently.

On Wednesday, a massive fire swept through a supermarket in downtown Nairobi, killing at least 25 people.

After the supermarket blaze, the Daily Nation said Nairobi's 3 million people are served by just one fire station situated close to a traffic-choked business district.

Delhi airport

FROM PAGE 16
spokeswoman told AFP that the incident was "not a security drill" and that contact had been made with the pilot.

A separate airport official said the cause of the emergency was reported to be a passenger "causing trouble," but no further details were available.

One man on board told the NDTV television network that the plane had been surrounded by security personnel.

"They are about to disembark the passengers," he said. "Outside we can see a lot of commandos with guns all crouched around. Inside the passengers are all calm, everything inside is normal but passengers are getting restless."

Airports across India have been on maximum alert since the deadly attacks in Mumbai in late November.

Govt to ensure

FROM PAGE 1
can know about Bangladesh's culture, literature, 21 February etc.

She also ordered them to take steps to preserve digitally the historical documents and books of Bengali literature and culture, including language movement and war of liberation aware off.

The Prime Minister urged publishers to publish good quality books at low price so that people could make a habit of buying and reading books.

Hasina formally announced the adoption of sign language at state level. "This mode of communication will begin in BTV and gradually, in other electronic media," she said hoping that private TV channels would come forward for support.

The Prime Minister requested visiting Indian writer Mahasweta Devi to come on the dais and take seat beside her.

Chaired by president of Bangla Academy Prof Harun-or-Rashid, the function was also addressed by information and cultural affairs minister Abul Kalam Azad, national professor Kabir Chowdhury, proprietor of University Press Limited Mohiuddin Ahmed and Director General of the Bangla Academy Syed Mohammad Shahed.

Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in its report in 2007 said climate change is irreversible and all sectors including agriculture and health are going to be affected because of it. Besides, natural calamities will be frequent.

Among the least-developed countries (LDCs), Bangladesh is playing a key role in combating climate change and it is the first LDC to create a climate change fund from its own resources, it said.

Ministry sources said non-government organisations can submit project proposals, each involving a budget of not more than Tk 10 crore, through the ministry concerned.

The ministry itself can also submit project proposals and implement it through its institutions.

"But the focal point of all the projects has to be climate change," said a top official of environment and forest ministry.

The technical committee with experts on climate change will evaluate the project proposals and forward it to the Climate Change Steering Committee headed by the environment and forest secretary.

The secretariat on climate change will initially seek proposals for small-scale pilot projects.

Following the recommendations and approval of the steering committee, the Climate Change Fund Trust Board headed by the finance secretary will disburse the fund.

"This special fund is not part of the annual development programme, rather it is like a trust fund. If we do not spend the money, it will be there to be spent later for combating climate change," said ministry high-ups.

The experts on climate change and ministry officials have drawn up the guidelines on spending from climate change fund. It will be placed at the cabinet meeting today, ministry sources added.

Israel vows

FROM PAGE 16
not to retaliate in order to make sure that our position...is understood by those involved in the fire.

"The response will come at the time, the place and the manner that we choose."

Defence Minister Ehud Barak said that "Hamas was given a very serious blow and if necessary it will be given another blow."

And Benjamin Ben-Eliezer, infrastructure minister and a member of Israel's powerful security cabinet, said the Islamists had to pay for each rocket fired.

"We have set a price for each rocket fired and now Hamas has to pay," he told army radio.

The officials spoke after four rockets were fired from Gaza into Israel within a space of a few hours on Sunday.

But Hamas slammed the threats as a "campaign stunt" before the February 10 election.

"This is an attempt... to destroy the Egyptian efforts to improve the calm," Taher Al-Nunu said in a statement in Gaza.

Next week's election is expected to bring the Israeli right-wing back into power, according to opinion polls.

The political supremo of Palestinian Islamist movement Hamas, Khaled Meshaal, on Sunday ruled out any "permanent ceasefire" until Israel ends its crippling blockade of the Gaza.

Health minister

FROM PAGE 1
district have declared their election expenses, reports our Rajshahi correspondent.

Mizanur Rahman Minu, BNP candidate for Rajshahi-2, said he spent Tk 11 lakh, while his opponent Fazle Hossain Badsha of Workers Party claimed to have spent not over Tk 7.25 lakh.

Our Barisal correspondent reports that 22 of 38 candidates have submitted election statements before the end of time limit.

Manirul Islam Moni, AL lawmaker from Barisal-2, spent the highest Tk 11 lakh.

Only six of 21 candidates in Nilphamari district have submitted polls expenditure by January 31, while the rest submitted theirs yesterday, reports our Nilphamari correspondent.

Election office sources said none of the candidates has tagged income tax returns and VAT receipts with the statement.

According to reports, 16 out of 27 polls runners in seven constituencies of Bogra and 15 of 18 in five constituencies of Netrakona submitted their returns on the last day.

In Khulna, six of 32 candidates in six constituencies have yet to submit their expense reports.

Huda freed

FROM PAGE 16
Commission (ACC) and another court sentenced him to four years' imprisonment in another case.

Towhidul Islam, superintendent of Dhaka Central Jail, told The Daily Star, "He walked out of the prisons cabin of BSMMU at 9:00pm."

Nazmul Huda was arrested by the members of joint forces on February 4 in 2007. He secured last bail on January 28.

Jail officials said they released Huda after verifying the bail bonds.

Birds galore

FROM PAGE 16
Two globally endangered species -- spoon-billed sandpiper and Nordmann's greenshank -- were also spotted in Sonadia.

The current population of spoon-billed sandpiper in the world is less than 800, of which eight were spotted there, said Zahurul.

Students of Zoology Department of Jahangirnagar and Jagannath universities and Bird Club members Samiul Mohsanin and Mohammad Faisal, among others, conducted the census.

They said birds are losing their habitats because of indiscriminate use of water bodies and setting up of huge structures in an unplanned way. The shrimp enclosures at Sonadia and Maheshkhali are also causing severe damage to their natural habitats.

Moreover, shrimp enclosures have been built along the forest near the Naf River in Teknaf, posing a serious threat to their habitats.

The habitats include marshlands at Alokardia and adjacent sandy beaches, Belekardia in Sonadia, Taziaktarchar and Paikia in Maheshkhali.

Besides, Badar Mokam in Shah Parir Dwp is also considered as a very important bird habitat. Spoon-billed sandpipers had earlier been spotted in the area, according to surveys conducted in 2006 and 2007.

Zahurul Islam said the area of census falls under the East Asian Australian Flyway of migratory birds. The migratory birds come to these natural habitats travelling thousands of miles.

If the proposed deep-sea port is built at Sonadia island, the bird habitats might be lost forever, he added.

Israel vows

FROM PAGE 16
The resistance is against a permanent ceasefire," he said at a news conference in Tehran, Iran's state news agency IRNA reported.

"While the occupation continues, a permanent ceasefire has no meaning," Meshaal said at the conference, jointly held with Iranian Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki.

Israel has enforced a blockade of the enclave ever since the Islamist movement violently seized control in a week of deadly street fighting with its Fatah rivals in mid-2007.

Meshaal, who arrived in Iran earlier on Sunday for his first visit since the war, said the Gaza blockade was a key "priority."

"Until the blockade continues, we believe the aggression (by Israel) continues," he added.

Olmert, forced to step down in September amid corruption probes, is not standing and his centrist Kadima party -- now led by Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni -- is trailing behind the right-wing Likud of former premier Benjamin Netanyahu.

BNP starts

FROM PAGE 1
late president Ziaur Rahman in his speech in parliament's inaugural session.

Meeting sources said they also discussed revamping the party through election. The BNP leaders said the party council might be held in June or July but everything will depend on the opinions of the grassroots leaders.

Asked about the party council, BNP Secretary General Khandaker Delwar Hossain said, "We want to start the process from the grassroots level." The NSC will sit again on Wednesday to discuss all issues including the party's organisational activities.

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Aid groups

FROM PAGE 16
German and Swiss ambassadors, and some news agencies were behaving irresponsibly," the newspaper said.

German ambassador Jurgen Weerth was recently summoned by the foreign ministry over remarks he made at the funeral of newspaper editor and outspoken government critic who was killed by unidentified gunmen.

Rajapakse accused CNN, Al Jazeera and the BBC of trying to sensationalise civilian hardships by broadcasting video clips from LITE websites, the papers said.

The government maintains that it has a policy of "zero civilian casualties" and accuses the Tamil Tigers of using tens of thousands of men, women and children as a human shield.

The government does not allow independent media free access to the island's conflict zone.

The UN and the International Committee of the Red Cross have been joined by overseas governments as well as local and foreign rights groups in demanding safe passage for the civilians trapped by the fighting.

The UN has asked the Tigers to allow civilians to leave the small strip of jungle area where they have been boxed in by the military offensive. The ICRC has said "hundreds" of civilians were killed in heavy fighting last month.

Meanwhile, Sri Lanka's military captured two camps used by the Tamil Tigers' suicide squad, killing 12 rebels and seizing a large number of weapons, officials said Sunday amid mounting concern for civilians trapped in the war zone.

According to the Red Cross, some 250,000 noncombatants are trapped in the 300-square kilometre area near Mullaitivu where advancing government troops have boxed in the separatist Tamil rebels. The government puts the number at about 120,000.

"The humanitarian situation is precarious if not critical," Red Cross spokeswoman Sarasi Wijeratne told The Associated Press. "We have appealed to both parties to allow safe passage for the sick and wounded so that they can

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