

BNP returns to JS

FROM PAGE 1
protest at the seat plans rear-
ranged by Speaker Hamid.

In the new layout, they including Oli Ahmed, lone MP from the Liberal Democratic Party, were allotted five seats in the front row and four in the second row.

Hamid's predecessor Jamiruddin Sircar, who was elected speaker in the previous parliament from BNP, gave the opposition members 10 seats in the first row and 12 in the next.

His decision annoyed the AL-led ruling alliance as some of their senior lawmakers and even ministers did not get seats in the first two rows on the left of the speaker's podium.

The new speaker tried to resolve the matter through talks between chief whips of the treasury and opposition. But as none agreed to budge on their stance, he reorganised the seating arrangements on the basis of proportional representation.

But his seat plans had the BNP-led MPs riled up. They announced they would keep staying off the House unless the speaker reverts to the previous seat chart.

Hamid turned down the demand, and said he would try to give the opposition one or two more front-row seats if possible in the current session or in the next.

Finally, an end to the stalemate appeared to be in sight at the chief whip-level talks mediated by the speaker on February 19.

Though both sides stayed mum about the status of the negotiations, the same day BNP chairperson asked the

party lawmakers to convene yesterday to decide whether to join parliament.

At yesterday's meeting, the opposition MPs condemned the government for "denying the status she deserves as per the protocol" during wreath-laying at the Central Shaheed Minar on February 21.

They also expressed concern over "price hike of essentials, electricity crisis, repression on their leaders and activists and violence unleashed by Chhatra League".

Japan to provide

FROM PAGE 16
Grid Company of Bangladesh in Haripur.

The objective of the Central Zone Power Distribution Project is to improve the quality of power distribution by developing and revamping the existing power distribution facilities and strengthening their institutional capacity.

The PDB will implement the project in greater Mymensingh and Sylhet districts.

The bridge improvement project aims at promoting reliable and efficient transportation by replacing, rehabilitating and constructing small and medium sized bridges in eastern Bangladesh.

Secretary of Economic Relations Division M Musharraf Hossain Bhuiyan and Japan Ambassador Masayuki Inoue on behalf of respective governments signed the exchange of notes.

State Minister for Power advocate Shamsul Hoque Tuku and Japan's State Secretary for Foreign Affairs Seiko Hashimoto attended the signing ceremony.

Iran to begin operation of 1st N-power plant

AP, AFP, Tehran

Iran's official news agency says the country's first nuclear power plant will begin preliminary phase operation on Wednesday after a series of delays.

The Sunday report by the IRNA agency says "pilot stage operation" of the power plant will start on Wednesday during a visit by the head of Russia's state Rosatom Atomic Corporation, Sergey Kiriyenko.

The long-awaited 1,000-MW power plant, which was built in the city of Bushehr with the help from Russia under a \$1 billion contract, was expected to become operational in fall of 2008.

Some 700 Iranian engineers were trained in Russia to operate the plant.

Tehran also plans to build a 360-megawatt nuclear power plant in Darkhovin, in the southwestern Khuzestan province.

Meanwhile, Iran's parliamentary speaker Ali Larijani on Saturday told former German chancellor Gerhard Schroeder that it is impossible to deprive Tehran of nuclear technology for peaceful uses.

"Iran has observed international regulations and depriving Iran of nuclear technology and energy for peaceful purposes is impossible," Larijani told Schroeder during a meeting in Tehran, according to state broadcaster.

The latest remarks by Larijani, a former nuclear negotiator for Iran, came after the International Atomic Energy Agency on Thursday said Iran is continuing to enrich uranium, potentially a stage in making an atomic bomb, but has slowed down the expansion of its enrichment activities.

Tehran and Western powers are at loggerheads over Iran's controversial nuclear programme. The West suspects the programme is aimed at acquiring atomic weapons, a charge Tehran denies.

Schroeder, who is on an unofficial visit to Iran, met top officials of the Islamic republic, including hardline President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

During his meeting with Larijani, the former chancellor praised Iran's "positive and constructive role in Afghanistan".

Wildlife

FROM PAGE 16
and found no significant impact on the wildlife by the seismic survey.

The US-based Chevron conducted a 2D seismic survey from January to June last year at Lawachhora as part of its gas exploration in Moulvibazar gas field. During the survey, it had to cause thousands of low-range explosions in the forest raising criticism that sounds have scared off birds and animals.

Local environmental groups -- Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association (Bela) and Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon (Bapa) -- opposed the survey arguing that this would bring serious impact on the flora and fauna of the country's reserve forest.

The Lawachhora Forest is popular globally, as it is the home to 167 species of plants, large number of species of animal and bird and the Khasia tribal.

Official sources said IUCN was officially involved in the survey to monitor the impact during and after the survey. The IUCN submitted its report to the authorities.

IUCN Programme Coordinator Dr. Raqibul Alam, who led the study, said their main emphasis was to determine the possible impact of the seismic survey on the biodiversity of the Lawachhora Forest and the main focus was on the Hooleck Gibbon.

Before the survey, there were 12 families of Hooleck Gibbon. "But after survey we found 13 families, which proved the rare species of animals living only in Lawachhora Forest have not fled or displaced. Other animals have also not fled by the seismic survey," he added.

Meanwhile, the officials of the Bela and Bapa who had expressed concern over the possible damage of the nature have not conducted any post-survey study at the Lawachhora Forest.

Bela officials told UNB they did not conduct any survey as the government has decided not to carry out any seismic activities within the forest in future.

Information secy

FROM PAGE 16

Fazlul Karim alias Abu Karim with the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court of Dhaka for committing the offence.

After the hearing, Metropolitan Magistrate Kanika Bishwas recorded statement of the complainant and fixed March 2 for order on the issue subject to submission of a copy of the book.

In his complaint, Helali mentioned that the accused had written a verse titled 'Baganey Phutey Achhey Anek Golap' in February 2006 and the Suchipatra Prokashana published the book in Ekushey Book Fair in 2008.

The Daily Amader Samoy published an excerpt from the book on February 20 this year and the complainant learnt it from the daily. The daily quoted different important points from the verse that defamed, undermined and criticised Bangabandhu and his family members.

In the book, the writer called Bangabandhu Latifur Rahman and also called him Alubokhra, Sheikh Kamal Kamalaki, Sheikh Jamal Jamtoli and Sheikh Russel Roskali, the complainant said.

Such defamatory writings have damaged and undermined the image of

Bangabandhu's living family members -- Sheikh Hasina, Sheikh Rehana -- and his party Bangladesh Awami League and its front organisations.

It also damaged the image of all leaders and activists of Bangladesh Awami Olama League.

The accused defamed the independence achieved through molestation of two lakh mothers and sisters and the sacrifices of 30 lakh martyrs. Such heinous offences and activities are subversive to the state as well as to the disciplines, the complainant added.

Meantime, in a statement, leaders of Dhaka City Awami League (AL) yesterday expressed their resentment over the defamation of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and his family members.

City AL acting president MA Aziz and acting general secretary advocate Kamrul Islam urged the authorities concerned to dismiss the anti-independence and dissident secretary from the service and take him to book.

The leaders also urged to take stringent actions against the publisher of the book under the Press and Publications Act.

Some expats

FROM PAGE 1

Police and Rab sources said the arrested JMB men disclosed that they have a number of hideouts in Gazipur and elsewhere in the country.

During interrogations, recently detained JMB chief coordinator and its Sura committee member Mohtasim and its military wing leader Mamunur Rashid confessed that they set up most of their dens in and around the capital and in the northern part of the country, sources said.

Gazipur Police Super Abdul Baten admitted that the JMB had set up a number of dens in the area.

He, however, said, "The discovery of the JMB dens in the houses of the expatriates do not prove that all the hideouts of the militant outfit are set up in expatriates' houses," adding, "We are investigating whether the arrested JMB operatives have any link with the owners of the houses."

Sub-inspector of Joydevpur Police Station Nazmul Islam Khan who led the drive and arrested the JMB men at East Kalomeshwar village, told The Daily Star, "The caretaker of the house had gone into hiding before the drive was conducted. If he is arrested, we can get more information."

Lt Col Md Abdul Majid, director of Rab intelligence wing, told The Daily Star, "JMB has set up dens at various places in and around the capital and also in the northern part of the country."

No more bills

FROM PAGE 16

bills in the House for passing and two ordinances for scrapping, the speaker, the law minister and the chief of a parliamentary body agreed that the ordinances do not require further scrutiny. They were of the opinion that a parliamentary special committee has already completed this job.

Following their opinions, two bills for making the Electoral Rolls Ordinance, 2007, and Election Commission (EC) Secretariat Ordinance, 2008, into laws were not sent to the parliamentary standing committee on law ministry for scrutiny.

But the bill titled Citizenship Amendment Act, 2009, which was placed in parliament Thursday was sent to the parliamentary standing committee on home ministry for scrutiny even though the special committee had picked the ordinance for ratification.

The special committee could not properly scrutinise the 122 ordinances promulgated just before and during the tenure of the immediate past caretaker government due to insufficient time.

Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Shafigue Ahmed yesterday placed two bills titled Electoral Rolls Act, 2009, and Election Commission Secretariat Act, 2009, in parliament.

When the speaker urged the law minister to propose for sending the bill on electoral roll to the standing committee for scrutiny, the law minister said the bill did not require further scrutiny as the special committee of the Jatiya Sangsad earlier scrutinised

the ordinance.

In defence for not sending the bills to the standing committee for scrutiny, the special committee placed its report in the House recommending ratification of the ordinances.

"So, there is no need for sending the bills to the committee for scrutiny," the law minister said.

Speaker Abdul Hamid, who was presiding over the assembly, echoed the same view.

He, however, invited opinion from Suranjit Sengupta, chief of the parliamentary standing committee on the law ministry. Suranjit said he had no objection to it.

The law minister then proposed the House to consider the bill for passing.

The immediate past caretaker government led by Fakhruddin Ahmed promulgated the Electoral Rolls Ordinance, 2007, to prepare fresh voter list with photographs and the EC Secretariat Ordinance to make it free from the control of any government ministries or divisions.

The law minister, however, did not place another bill titled Money Laundering (amendment) Act, 2009, although it was included in the order of the day.

The special committee of the Jatiya Sangsad scrutinised 122 ordinances and placed report in the House recommending ratification of 54 of them.

Following the committee's recommendations, the respective ministers started placing bills for making the ordinances into laws. Till yesterday, only three out of the recommended 54 ordinances were placed in parliament as bills.

Popular writers'

FROM PAGE 16

by Humayun Ahmed," said Mazharul Islam, chief executive of Anya Prokash.

"His new title 'Ballpoint' -- a compilation of anecdotes of an author's journey to becoming a writer -- is my bestseller so far," Islamsaid.

"We have already sold 30,000 copies of the book till today," he said adding that the book has attracted readers of all ages.

'Jibanpur' and 'First Boy Second Boy' by Imdadul Haque Milon top the sales list at Anonya Publication. Publisher Monirul Haque said around 40 per cent of the total sales at Anonya were from Milon's books.

"Sale of Jafar Iqbal's sci-fi 'Octopus er Chokh' alone has fetched at Tk 18 lakh so far this year," said Apollo Islam, a representative of Anupam Prokashoni.

Publisher of Pearl Publications Hasan Tarique said "We have already sold 17,000 copies of 'Meytir Nam Narina' by Jafar Iqbal, 8000 copies of 'Mayer' by Anisul Hoque and

4,000 copies of 'Baundele' by Sumanta Aslam."

Officials of Shomoy Publication said demand for books by Jafar Iqbal, Humayun Ahmed, Anisul Hoque and Sumanta Aslam remains highest at the fair.

Meanwhile, a total of 70 new titles arrived at the fair yesterday. These include five story collections, 12 novels, 19 books on poetry and 10 autobiographies.

A total of 18 books were ceremoniously unveiled at the fair yesterday.

Media personality Sara Zaker along with Tuktuki and Halum -- the two main characters of popular children's TV series 'Sisimur' -- unveiled the cover of two books titled 'Halum Jabe Anekdur' by Shah Alam and 'Tuktuki Jakhan Boro Hobe' by M Aslam Liton brought out by Brac Publication.

Class IV student

FROM PAGE 16

she competed at a national poetry recitation competition in Dhaka organised by the Directorate of Primary Education.

She won the first prize in poetry recitation at the competition held in May 2008. Soon after she thought of building the Minar with her prize money of Tk 5,000 and shared her thoughts with her parents Apu Prantice and Shyamoli Prantice.

Her parents talked to the school authority and they appreciated the young girl's thoughtfulness. Paramita's elder sister contributed to the fund with money she won in a government scholarship and her parents also made a contribution.

Nawab Ali Abbas Khan a JP lawmaker of Moulvibazar-2 who is also the grandson of the founder of the school Nawab Ali Amzad Khan inaugurated the Shaheed Minar.

Ali Abbas Khan announced at the ceremony that he was so touched by the young girl's gesture that he has decided to put forward a proposal to the parliament that Shaheed Minars be built at every single school across the country.

7 JMB men

FROM PAGE 16

Branch of Police (DB) produced Nasrin Akhter, Zahid, Masud and Atique before the Chief Judicial Magistrate's Court praying for a 10-day remand each and Chief Judicial Magistrate Mohammad Anwar Pasha granted their prayer.

Gazipur police arrested them with three grenades, bomb-making materials and books on jihad at a house in East Kalomeshwar village.

In Jamalpur, Police produced Abdullahel Kafi, Mehedi Iqbal Ripon and Shamsul Haq before a Jamalpur court seeking a seven-day remand each. The court granted the police prayer.

Police arrested JMB operatives Kafi, Ripon and Shamsul at Shekherbhat in Jamalpur town Saturday.

Meanwhile, Home Minister Sahara Khatun informed the parliament of forming a three-member probe committee headed by deputy inspector general (DIG) of Criminal Investigation Department (CID). She said the committee was asked to submit its report within three working days.

The home minister said her government is determined to identify those who are involved in militancy, their financier and arms and explosives suppliers. She assured the House of their exemplary punishment.

Govt plans

FROM PAGE 1

lawmaker Zafar Iqbal Siddiqui, the planning minister said preparations are complete for signing a deal to buy anti-ship missiles for the navy at an estimated cost of Tk 120 crore this year.

The matter is now awaiting the government's approval. Besides, work is on to set up anti-aircraft missile systems on the most modern frigate at the navy's disposal.

The leading-edge ship was purchased during the AL rule in 1996-2001. On coming to power in 2001, the BNP-led four-party government decommissioned the ship equipped for both peacetime and war on grounds of corruption in the purchase. It also sued Sheikh Hasina and some others for the alleged graft.

The planning minister also said a process is underway to replace three frigates aged over 50 years with new ones.

Different countries are already being approached to that end, he said adding that these are long-term plans to prepare the navy to meet the challenges of 21st century.

"An international tender has already been floated to purchase choppers and aircraft to strengthen maritime patrol and also to turn the navy into a three-dimensional force," said Khandker, also former air force chief.

For the army, he continued, the government will purchase helicopters, tanks, armoured personnel carriers, anti-tank and -aircraft missiles, sniper rifles, explosives, night vision equipment, modern radio devices, vehicles and other necessary hardware in the current fiscal year.

The government also plans to upgrade training for the army personnel by setting up simulators at 27 training establishments. "Our standard of training has been lauded all over the world," the planning ministers said.

For the air force, he said, the government has plans to purchase modern aircraft and cutting-edge equipment. The plans will be implemented gradually.

Stressing the need for raising air strength, Khandker said the air force gives necessary assistance to the army and navy in rescue and relief operations during emergencies at home and abroad and defend the air space.

The previous AL government purchased eight MiG-29 fighters for the air force. The last BNP government brought charges against Hasina and others for corruption in that purchase as well.

Lankan forces kill 65

FROM PAGE 16

estimated the LTTE to have three aircraft of which one was destroyed a few months ago and the other two on Friday.

The defence authorities had claimed that the Sri Lanka Air Force (SLAF) destroyed the first aircraft on September 9 when the LTTE carried out an air and ground attack on the air force base in Vavuniya.

In the Friday's attack, two light aircraft of the beleaguered LTTE had bombed Colombo, hitting the main Revenue Department building near Air Force Headquarters and killing at least two persons and injuring 55 others before being shot down.

Nanayakkara said that each plane carried 215 kilograms of C4 explosives.

Meanwhile, the number of people killed in a Tamil Tiger attack against a village in eastern Sri Lanka has risen to 21, the defence ministry said on Sunday.

Gunmen from the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) stormed the predominantly Sinhalese village of Krimetiyala late Saturday and opened fire on residents, the ministry said.

It had initially said 10 people were killed and five wounded, but the authorities found more bodies and raised the toll to 21 killed and 20 wounded.

The bodies of 14 people were brought to the main hospital in the district capital of Ampara on Sunday, a hospital official told AFP.

The UN's top humanitarian relief official, John Holmes, appealed to the government and the rebels to spare non-combatants as the warring factions appeared set for a final showdown.

Holmes said civilians were dying every day inside the war zone, where government troops are fighting to crush the Tigers' decades-long armed campaign for an independent Tamil homeland.

"I urge both sides to do everything they can for a peaceful and orderly end to avoid a final bloody battle," he said on Saturday at the end of his three-day visit to Sri Lanka.

The Tamil Tigers dominated about 18,000 square kilometres

In reply to a query from AL lawmaker Akram Hossain Chowdhury, State Minister for Liberation War Affairs Captain (retd) AB Tajul Islam told the House that 3,713 members of the armed forces laid down their lives during the Liberation War in 1971 according to the list of defence ministry.

Citing government statistics, he said 2,10,581 freedom fighters joined the war, and of them, 25,505 were from the defence force.

Unstarred questions on defence purchase were not discussed in parliament yesterday.

DU denies

FROM PAGE 16

beyond their control.

"We set Khaleda Zia's arrival time in between 12:10am and 12:15am for her wreath-placing and accordingly informed her press secretary but she arrived at 12:23am," DU Proctor Saiful Islam Khan, also the member-secretary of Amar Ekushey Uddjayan Committee, told The Daily Star yesterday.

"We talked about her arrival time and made it clear at several meetings of the Ekushey Uddjayan Committee. A number of pro-BNP-Jamaat teachers were also present at those meetings," said proctor Saiful.

"Traditionally Khaleda had the privilege to place floral wreath at the Shaheed Minar as the leader of the opposition after the president, prime minister (PM) and speakers," he added.

Saiful said after the president and PM had left the spot security personnel allowed several organisations to enter through the university gymnasium gate and the university administration got to do nothing with the advancing crowd.

Proctor further said, sensing something might go wrong, DU vice chancellor, pro-vice chancellor and he himself immediately rushed to see Khaleda Zia off.

"But some BNP leaders and senior JCD leaders behaved indecently with the VC", he alleged.

BNP's students front Jatiyatadabi Chhatra Dal (JCD) yesterday staged demonstrations on DU campus protesting, what they said, the partisan stance of the DU high-ups.

JCD alleged that due to protocol was not given to Khaleda Zia. Meanwhile, Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL), AL's students wing, also staged demonstrations on the campus protesting participation of hundreds of outsiders in the JCD protest rally yesterday.

Following demonstration at noon by JCD and BCL activists a tense situation was prevailing on the DU campus.

(7,000 square miles) of territory until the middle of 2007, when the government launched its military offensive.

The defence ministry on Sunday said the number of people killed in a guerrilla attack on a Sinhalese village in the east of the island on Saturday had risen to 15.

It was the worst attack against a village in the multi-ethnic region in recent years officials said, adding that troop reinforcements had been rushed to the area.

74 miners killed

FROM PAGE 16

by flames still burning in the shaft, CCTV said.

The injured miners were suffering from carbon monoxide poisoning, Xinhua reported, citing doctors at a nearby hospital. Exposure to carbon monoxide, an odourless, colourless gas, can lead to death.

The mine is owned by Shanxi Coking Coal Group, one of China's largest producers of coking coal, which is used in the production of steel. The company operates 28 mines.

No accidents have been reported at the Tunlin mine in the past decade, Xinhua said. The mine produces 5 million tons of coking coal a year.

Although China has worked to cut mine accidents by closing more than 1,000 dangerous small mines last year, the country's mining industry is still the world's deadliest. About 3,200 people died in coal mine accidents last year, a 15 percent decline from the previous year.

While China's safety record is abysmal, the numbers mask great disparities. Large, state-run mines tend to have safety records nearing those of developed countries while smaller mines have little or no safety equipment and weak worker training.

Government figures show that almost 80 per cent of China's 16,000 mines are small, illegal operations.

Illegal industries

FROM PAGE 1

crore taka will be wasted if they do not get clearance," said State Minister Advocate Mostafizur Rahman Fizar.

Replying to a query of AL lawmaker Jahid Ahsan Russell, the state minister said this is a complicated issue and he thinks the House should hold discussion on it to determine the ways to resolve the problem.

He also said his ministry has got bad image because of corruption and irregularities during the rule of immediate past alliance government.

At that stage, Speaker Advocate Abdul Hamid who was presiding over the sitting urged the state minister to initiate steps to come out of the crisis.

During the question-answer session, the ruling alliance lawmakers also alleged that massive corruption and irregularities have occurred in the forest department during the tenure of the BNP-led alliance government. They also demanded actions against those involved in the misdeeds.

In response to a query of AL lawmaker Gias Uddin Ahmed, the state minister in his scripted answer said the forest department has lost control of around 1.30 lakh hectares of forestland.

"The forest department has lost control over the land due to increasing number of landless people, industrialisation, unplanned urbanisation and other reasons," he said.

Fizar said legal action is being taken against the grabbers. "Recovery of forest land from the possession of landless people through involving them in social forestation is an ongoing process," he said.

Thank you readers

FROM PAGE 1

will no doubt prove a serious challenge yet the fundamentals are still positive enough to make us hopeful. The prime requirement is good governance, to establish which this newspaper will continue to serve its readers with "journalism without fear or favour".

As the supplement proves, your favourite newspaper, The Daily Star, has come a long way. This has only been possible due to the generous support of our readers, patrons and advertisers, who have made us the unquestioned leader of English language journalism in the country. Please accept our grateful and sincere thanks.