

UN denounces

FROM PAGE 16
The rebels said the civilians had died as the military pressed ahead with its offensive, but the defence ministry accused the Tigers of firing mortars to create a humanitarian crisis and attract foreign intervention.

"They are bombarding their own civilians with heavy weapons to lay the blame on the Sri Lankan forces," the ministry said in a statement.

"Hopefully, in their calculation, this will attract the foreign countries to throw a life line to save their souls."

The government on Monday said 250 civilians had been killed or wounded in the attacks blamed on the rebels, while the pro-rebel Tamilnet website said that the weekend death toll had risen to 3,200.

Casualty claims from the war zone are impossible to verify as journalists and international monitors are not allowed to travel freely in the area.

Sri Lanka's government believes its soldiers are on the verge of defeating the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) after 37 years of conflict.

At the height of their power in 2006, the Tigers - who want an independent Tamil homeland in the Sinhalese-majority island - controlled roughly a third of the island.

The Tigers have since been driven back into a sliver of land on the northeastern coast, where the UN has accused

them of holding up to 50,000 Tamil civilians hostage. Sri Lankan leaders have refused all international calls for a ceasefire, despite reports from the UN last month saying up to 6,500 civilians may have been killed and 14,000 wounded in fighting since January.

Japan, which is Sri Lanka's largest aid donor, must "shoulder its responsibilities" and confront the worsening humanitarian crisis there, human rights and conflict prevention groups said Monday.

The appeal was made in a joint letter to Japanese Prime Minister Taro Aso from the heads of Human Rights Watch, the International Crisis Group, Amnesty International, and the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect.

"If the world continues to look away from the suffering of civilians in Sri Lanka, as it has largely done until now, it will be a failure of historic proportions," the letter said.

The Sri Lankan government has recently criticised Western nations for calling for a ceasefire that would end its campaign against the Tigers before a complete victory had been secured.

Last month the military announced that it had halted the use of heavy weapons in order to protect civilians as the fighting was confined to a small area measuring just a few square kilometres (square miles).

Russian team

FROM PAGE 1
Understanding will be signed between the Bangladesh Atomic Energy Commission (BAEC) and the Russian State Atomic Energy Corporation (RSAEC), MM Nezaiddin, joint secretary of the science and ICT ministry, told The Daily Star last night.

He said a final contract would be inked between the two countries in this regard in near future.

However, ministry sources said more discussions at higher level of the two governments will be required for finalising the contract.

"Crucial issues like the cost of setting up such a plant need to be determined through discussion. If we sign a contract we might seek soft loans from the Russian government," said a source.

A Bangladesh delegation headed by Science and ICT Minister Yafez Osman will visit Russia to see its nuclear power plants soon after the signing of the MOU.

Earlier, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina approved a draft proposal, prepared by the ministry, which explains how Bangladesh and Russia can cooperate with each other in peaceful use of nuclear energy, said a source.

The draft was prepared following three-day talks between Bangladesh government officials and a two-member Russian delegation in the first week of April.

During the talks, head of international cooperation of RSAEC Vladimir Averkiev briefed Bangladesh officials about Russia's nuclear technology and ability to set up plants.

Bangladesh has articulated its desire to set up two 1000MW power plants while Russia is keen to assist Bangladesh in this regard.

According to a paper prepared by the ministry the estimated cost of a 1000MW nuclear power plant ranges between \$1.5 billion and \$2 billion. Experts say installation of such a unit will take at least five years since commissioning of the deal for the project.

Bangladesh has been negotiating with several countries for setting up nuclear power units.

France and China have also shown interest in helping Bangladesh develop nuclear power plants.

Bangladesh has bilateral agreements on nuclear cooperation with the United States, France and China.

Advocates Delwar Hossain, Syed Ahmed Mostafa Rana, Khandaker Mohibul Hassan, Saidur Rahman Saju, and Abdul Mannan appeared for the petitioners.

Within moments of the court's order, pro-Jamaat lawyers thronged the court to collect the case documents.

The plaintiffs prayed that Ghulam Azam and the 35 others be declared war criminals for their involvement in genocide, rape, arson, pillaging and for collaborating with the invading Pakistani army in 1971.

They also prayed for barring all war criminals from forming any political party in the country, and for disqualifying them from participating in any election in the country.

The plaintiffs also mentioned in their plaint that in the immediate aftermath of Bangladesh's liberation, Ghulam Azam and the 35 other accused were identified as war criminals, but are yet to be tried.

The accused also killed a large number of intellectuals on November 14, 1971, the plaintiffs stated in their complaint.

Our correspondents from Rangpur, Dinajpur, Kurigram, Thakurgaon and Lalmonirhat report: The courts issued warrant orders after officers in charge (OC) concerned filed section cases with the Judicial Magistrate Courts of the districts on Sunday on charge of rebellion in different BDR sectors and battalions.

BDR sources said suspected BDR rebels were identified by examining video footages of different television channels and photographs published in different local and national dailies and on the basis of statements of BDR personnel.

Prior to the raids, administrations in the districts beefed up security deploying army, Rab and police personnel around BDR units.

Last month, 42 BDR jawans under Dinajpur sector were sent to Dhaka Pikhana BDR Headquarters for interrogation.

Our court correspondent adds: The Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court, Dhaka yesterday placed 37 BDR jawans on remand after the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) produced them before the court with a petition for a seven-day remand for each of them.

The court, however, granted only five-day remand for them. Of 37 BDR jawans, 30 were shown arrested earlier while seven others were shown arrested yesterday raising the number of total arrestees in the case to 1382.

BDR carnage

FROM PAGE 16
orders situation". Earlier on Saturday night, the BNP postponed its human chain programme scheduled for Sunday because of the death of nuclear scientist Dr Wazed Miah.

Meanwhile, BNP Secretary General Khandaker Delwar Hossain will sit in a view exchange meeting today with Dhaka city unit leaders, including the party's MP nominees in the last election, pro-BNP city councillors, thana unit president and secretaries, city unit leaders of associated bodies.

The party in a press release signed by Office Secretary Rizvi Ahmed has requested all leaders of its city unit to attend the meeting.

Focus back

FROM PAGE 1
March 25, 1971 in Dhaka. During the nine-month bloody War of Independence Ghulam Azam and his party Jamaat actively played a key role alone and along with their other political partners in attempts to foil Bangladesh's independence struggle.

Immediately after independence Ghulam Azam and many others like him fled to Pakistan and returned only after the brutal killing of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and his family in 1975.

After victory on December 16, 1971 the first issue of newspapers of the new nation carried the government's decision to ban five communal parties including Jamaat-e-Islami on December 18 with immediate effect.

The banned parties including Jamaat were given the green light to do politics during the regime of late president Ziaur Rahman after the assassination of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in 1975.

As Ghulam Azam returned to Bangladesh after 1975 he became Jamaat's undeclared ameer, while another alleged war criminal late Abbas Ali Khan served for many years as the acting ameer.

In early 90s Ghulam Azam was officially declared ameer of Jamaat and Shaheed Janani Jahana Imam launched a unique mass movement demanding trial of war criminals.

She held an unprecedented Peoples' Court as a symbolic trial of Ghulam Azam where thousands of people gathered and the court gave verdict that Azam's offences committed during the Liberation War deserve capital punishment.

After long movement against war criminals launched by Jahana Imam, Jamaat decided to change its chief in 2001 though Azam obtained Bangladesh citizenship from the higher court in mid-90s.

Motiuur Rahman Nizami, the incumbent ameer of Jamaat, in 2001 succeeded Azam, who disappeared from open politics since then.

Though Azam was the brain behind Jamaat's anti-liberation efforts, the present ameer, also the then president of Islami Chhatra Sangha, played a vital role in collaborating Pakistani junta in committing genocide.

The Pakistani forces and their Bangladeshi collaborators committed genocide and war crimes that left three million people killed and around quarter million women violated besides the planned elimination of the best Bangali brains on December 14, 1971.

The Sangram quoted Nizami on September 15, 1971 as saying: "Everyone of us should assume the role of a Muslim soldier of an Islamic state and through cooperation to the oppressed and by winning their confidence we must kill those who are hatching conspiracy against Pakistan and Islam."

Jamaat Secretary General Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mojahid, head of Al-Badr in Dhaka in 1971, led the killings of the intellectuals a couple of days before independence, according to numerous research works, academic papers, accounts of both victims and collaborators, publications including newspapers and secret documents of the Pakistani home department.

Mojahid directed party workers to build Al-Badr force to resist freedom fighters, according to a "Fortnightly Secret Report on the Situation in East Pakistan". In line with an official procedure, the report was regularly being dispatched by the then East Pakistan home ministry to General Yahya Khan, the head of the government.

Mojahid came to spotlight and drew huge flak making an audacious comment in October 2007 that "in fact, anti-liberation forces never existed".

LGRD ministry

FROM PAGE 16
officials concerned to take measures to curb corruption and improve public service.

"Corruption remains in LGRD and DCC, the dens of corruption, as it was during the four-party rule," Chairman of the Standing Committee Rahmat Ali told the press after the meeting. "The committee has asked the LGRD and DCC officials to submit reports on corruption in the committee's next meeting," said Rahmat Ali.

The committee also asked officials of Milk Vita, a co-operative organisation under LGRD ministry, to place a report on its corruption and irregularities.

He said, "If the committee is not satisfied with the reports, and if they conceal any information, we will form a probe body and take stern actions against the officials responsible."

"We have also asked the officials concerned to report why LGRD ministry, its different organisations and DCC have lost pace in their activities," said the committee chief.

Jamaat leader Mir Kasem Ali was general secretary of East Pakistan Islami Chhatra Sangha in 1971.

On December 10 the same year, Al-Badr force organised a rally at Baitul Mukarram Mosque to orchestrate public opinion against "Hindustani attacks". Kasem also addressed the rally, according to a news report published in the Daily Azad on December 11, 1971.

"We are fighting for truth and fairness. Victory must be on our side with the blessings of Khoda," Kasem was quoted in the report as saying.

M u h a m m a d Kamaruzzaman, senior assistant secretary general of Jamaat, has a tainted past with Islami Chhatra Sangha and is blamed for his close links to Al-Badr.

"The Chhatra Sangha of Mymensingh was converted to Al-Badr and provided with military training. The man responsible for organising the Chhatra Sangha into Al-Badr was the chief of the Mymensingh district Islami Chhatra Sangha Kamaruzzaman," says a book titled Genocide '71.

In the early 1990s, a People's Inquiry Commission was formed to investigate the activities of war criminals and collaborators.

According to a report by the commission, the dreaded year, 1971, calls to mind the active role of Delwar Hossain Saydee, now a member of Jamaat's central executive committee.

Saydee played an active part in organising Razakar, Al-Badr and Al Shams forces in the southern district of Pirojpur, his stronghold, to assist the Pakistan army in the crackdown on Bangladeshis.

"Saydee was not associated with any political party in 1971 but conducted his activities in his individual capacity as a 'maulana' or Islamic scholar. There are allegations that he actively helped the Pakistani forces in their campaign of killings, looting, rape and arson by forming local paramilitary forces," says the report.

"During the war, he along with four associates formed an organisation called 'Fund of the Five'. The principal aim of the organisation was to loot and take over property of freedom fighters and Bangalee Hindus. He used to sell looted property and run a profitable business from the sale proceedings."

The report adds Salahuddin Quader Chowdhury opposed Bangladesh's independence and took a number of measures against the freedom fighters. He used to provide all-out support to the Pakistani occupation forces in his area greater Chittagong district.

These are the few examples of the anti-liberation political elements, which stood against independence of Bangladesh and a Dhaka court yesterday summoned them along with more than two dozens defendants in a case.

Khaleda's principal counsel Tah Khan said the judges have taken oath to dispense justice, but some of them are breaching that by refusing to entertain the writ petition.

At that point, Justice Haque said he was not feeling embarrassed, but still he could not entertain the petition.

The bench then sent the matter to the chief justice for a decision.

Talking to reporters afterwards, Khan and Moudud Ahmed said the judges' refusal to give their petition a hearing has in fact tarnished the apex court's image.

Moudud, also former law minister, said he wonders how things would be in cases of ordinary people when a person of a former prime minister's stature does not have access to justice.

NOTICE ON GOVERNMENT
The BNP chief's notice on the government says if the show cause notice is not withdrawn, cancelled or rescinded within five days, the matter will be taken to the HC where a writ petition awaits hearing.

It describes the supplementary notice as one issued in bad faith and without lawful authority. "It has been served to pervert the course of justice."

Besides, the supplementary notice has no application with regard to the property leased out to Khaleda Zia, it continues.

The government's second notice that followed the filing of the writ petition amounts to a fraud against the court, notes the BNP chairperson's letter.

Defence secretary, cabinet division secretary, director of the Directorate of Military Lands and Cantonments, the military land administrator and military estates officer concerned are among the recipients.

Asked about the 'reply', Additional Attorney General M Enayetur Rahim told The Daily Star that it does not explain under which legal authority she has been occupying the cantonment residence.

Her reply rather proves that she has been occupying the house illegally, he added.

7 CRIMINAL CASES HC asks Nadim to surrender to trial courts

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court (HC) yesterday directed former BNP lawmaker Nadim Mostafa to surrender before the trial courts concerned within eight weeks in connection with seven cases filed against him.

After hearing separate petitions filed by Nadim, an HC bench of Justice MA Wahhab Miah and Justice Marzi-ul-Haq also asked the government not to harass or arrest him in those cases during the eight weeks.

Sources said the seven criminal cases were filed with Ramna Police Station in Dhaka and Bagmara, Atrai and Naldanga police stations in Rajshahi between 2004 and 2007.

He has been accused of various crimes including misappropriation of the state money and extortion in those cases.

Deputy Attorney General ASM Abdul Mobin, who represented the government in court yesterday, told The Daily Star that the HC gave the verdict since Nadim has not been convicted in any of the seven cases.

On May 3, an HC bench directed Nadim to surrender before a trial court within two weeks in connection with another extortion case filed against him. A Rajshahi court had sentenced him to 10 years rigorous imprisonment in absentia in that case.

Govt worried

FROM PAGE 1
price," Food and Disaster Management Minister Abdur Razzaque told reporters after a meeting of the food procurement committee.

He blamed the middlemen and rice mill owners for not getting fair price.

The minister said the government would buy more rice and paddy to help farmers get fair prices.

He said if necessary, the government warehouses would be evacuated for stockpiling rice and paddy after procurement.

Dr Razzaque said directives have been given to the local committees for procurement of rice and paddy to ensure that the farmers get fair prices.

Committee members Finance Minister Abul Maal Abdul Muhith, Agriculture Minister Matia Chowdhury and LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Syed Ashrafur Islam were also present at the meeting.

4th HC bench

FROM PAGE 1
Haque, said he thinks he is "disqualified to hear the petition".

He said as a law ministry official in 2000, he had rendered his opinions in a file regarding allotment of the house to Khaleda Zia.

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Newsprint import

FROM PAGE 1
conspiracy to destroy the country's newspaper industry. The free flow of information will be disrupted if the demand is met.

"This industry will fall into a deep crisis and newspapers will have to face financial crises if the import cost is increased," the statement read. "It will not be possible for the newspapers to survive independently if the demand is met," it said.

Noab said the fate of journalists and workers involved in this industry will be uncertain because 80 percent of newspapers' spending goes to newsprint purchase.

It will be difficult for them to bear the extra expenditure and no newspaper will be able to give their staff their due wages and salaries as per rules, it added.

Following a long-standing Noab demand, import duty on newsprint was brought down to zero from 30 percent in 2007-2008 fiscal year's budget, the statement said, adding, "We are giving 19 percent [tax 15 percent and PSI one percent] of the cost of imported newsprint to the government exchequer according to the rules."

The newspapers are implementing the Seventh Wage Board from June 8, 2008 with the condition of zero percent import duty. For this, the cost of the newspaper institutions has increased greatly, the statement added.

"As there is scope for importing newsprint without duty, the newspapers are somehow bearing this increased cost but if 100 percent duty is imposed on newsprint imports, this will be possible no more."

The statement further said no newspaper will be able to provide the due wages and salaries to its staff according to the Seventh Wage Board if 100 percent duty is imposed on newsprint imports.

Noab said the Bangladesh Newsprint Mills Association demands that it is made mandatory for newspapers to buy 50 percent of their required newsprint from the local market. If their demand is met then newspapers will have to buy low quality local newsprint at a high cost while the remaining 50 percent of the newsprint will be imported at higher price since it will be imported with 100 percent duty, Noab argued.

Noab hoped that the government would continue with the present system of importing newsprint without duty in order to keep the newspapers independent and free flow of information undisturbed.

The experience of newspapers is that the quality of local newsprint is far inferior to that of the imported ones, it said, adding the local newsprint mills do not pay attention to improving their product's quality.

The price of each tonne of local newsprint is Tk 50,000 while the price of one tonne of foreign newsprint is Tk 42,500.

Noab allegedly patronised militancy using local police and district administration of Rajshahi during 2004-05.

JMB operations commander Bangla Bhai before his execution had disclosed Aminul's name as one of the patrons of the militancy.

Aminul remains a fugitive since July 2007 when a Rajshahi court sentenced him to 31 and a half years' imprisonment for abetting militancy of the banned Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh.

Swine flu

FROM PAGE 16
"This is our country's first case of A(H1N1)," its spokesman Mao Qunan said in a statement on its website.

State television said the man, surnamed Bao, was in a stable condition. He flew from Tokyo to Beijing on a Northwest Airlines flight before connecting on a domestic flight to Chengdu, the ministry said.

China, which has come under criticism from abroad for its tough swine flu quarantine measures, was seeking a number of passengers, including foreigners, who took the same Northwest flight as Bao, state media reported.

They included 144 passengers on the flight to Beijing and about 150 on the Beijing-Chengdu flight aboard Sichuan Airlines, state television added, saying some had already been located.

The virus was first reported in Mexico in April but has spread to more than 30 nations since and the global number of infected cases is at least 4,380.

In response to the outbreak, Beijing has barred direct flights from Mexico and banned imports of Mexican pork.

Relations between China and Mexico soured when scores of Mexicans were put under quarantine after a Mexican who flew to Hong Kong was confirmed with the virus.

The Mexican foreign ministry said Sunday that 14 nationalities remained under quarantine in China, most of them in Shanghai.

China says its measures are needed to stop the virus spreading through Asia and to avoid "catastrophic consequences" in the world's most populous nation.

Separately, five new cases of swine flu were reported in Canada on Sunday, bringing the total number of people infected there to 286.

Sweden confirmed its second case of swine flu in a man recently back from New York, health authorities said.

The United States, which has now overtaken Mexico as having the most swine flu patients, confirmed its third death nationally, a man in his 30s with an underlying heart condition in the northwestern state of Washington.

the statement read. Mentioning the issues of printing on substandard local newsprint, Noab said local newsprint causes newsprint wastage, which eventually costs newspapers money.

It said obligatory newsprint quota system was introduced in 2001 and newspapers were forced to purchase poor quality local newsprint.

Despite this, the newspaper mills of the country could not achieve the desired quality of newspapers till 2007-08 fiscal year, it added.

With the budget approaching, they are again trying to force the newspapers buy their low-quality newsprint at a high cost, the statement said, adding, "We think the local newspaper mills will have to be competitive in the market by achieving the desired quality of newsprint."

"We can in no way support the move of local newsprint mills to force newspapers buy their poor quality newsprint at their usual price," it added.

The government should not make any decision that will destroy the present state of the country's newspaper industry achieved through long and arduous struggle, it said, adding, "We are seeking the government's assistance for the sake of the country's free and independent mass media."

Aminul seeks

FROM PAGE 16
Terminating the cases filed against Aminul 'false and politically motivated', the petitions say the cases were filed against the former minister to harass him and tarnish his image.

An appeal has been made in the petitions to withdraw the cases - four in Rajshahi and one in Naogaon. Three cases were filed against Aminul for abetting militancy while two cases for embezzling CI sheets from the government's relief fund.

One of the three cases was filed against barrister Aminul for killing Monwar Hossain Babu of Bagmara. After the killing on April 1 in 2004, the executed JMB leader Siddique Islam Bangla Bhai began his so-called 'vigilante operation' in the Bagmara area, it alleges.

"We submitted the application as a provision has been kept in the government circular to review the false political cases," said Ashrafuzzaman Mollik.

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The ongoing outbreak of novel influenza A(H1N1) continues to expand in the United States," the US Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) said.

"More cases, more hospitalisations and more deaths from this outbreak will occur over the coming days and weeks."

The United States on Sunday said it had confirmed 2,532 cases of swine flu with 104 people hospitalised; Mexico has 1,578 confirmed cases, including its 48 deaths, and done 5,580 tests, according to the government.

Mexico was due Monday to re-open most primary schools after a shutdown to contain the outbreak, but six of 32 states were keeping schools closed due to further flu fears.

Japan, meanwhile, stepped up follow-up checks to prevent any spread after confirming its first cases in four Japanese who had arrived at Tokyo's Narita airport on Friday on the same flight from the US city of Detroit.

The four confirmed cases and another 48 passengers who were sitting nearby are either in hospital, or have been taken to a hotel near the airport to be isolated for 10 days.

Spain, Britain,