

7 lawmakers

FROM PAGE 1
left Dhaka for Berlin last night.

Earlier, the German parliament had invited Speaker Abdul Hamid and a group of MPs to visit their country and sent economy class tickets for the invitees as per their rules.

The speaker opted not to be on the team, as only days are left before the Jatiya Sangsad goes into session. He instead picked seven lawmakers for the tour, which is part of an exchange of parliamentary delegations, said parliament secretariat officials.

In February, a delegation from the Bundestag (German parliament) visited Dhaka. Their travel and other expenses were met by their legislature, which also offered an all-expenses-paid trip for the Bangladesh delegation, sources said.

But the seven-member team nominated for the tour said they would not go to Germany unless the tickets are upgraded, officials said.

At the insistence of the lawmakers, the parliament secretariat contacted the German embassy only to be told that their rules do not allow spending taxpayers' money on business class airfares.

In the wake of this, the secretariat decided to foot the bill for business class tickets.

According to airline officials, usually an economy class return ticket costs \$950 and a business class \$1,970.

Awami League lawmaker (AL) ASM Firoz, who is leading the parliamentary delegation, yesterday told The Daily Star that they had the tickets upgraded, considering the long journey to the central European state.

"It shouldn't cost much to upgrade the tickets," observed Firoz, also a whip of the ninth parliament.

Queried, he however could not say exactly how much was spent to upgrade their seats.

The delegation head said

the German government will bear all other expenses during their stay there from May 24 to May 29.

He said they would visit the German parliament to gain insights into their proceedings. Besides, they will meet local business leaders and discuss ways to enhance the trade ties between the countries.

AL lawmaker Abdullah Al Islam Jacob and BNP lawmaker Rehana Akhtar Ranu however said they were not aware of the ticket upgrade.

"It doesn't matter to me if I should fly business class or economy class," Jacob told The Daily Star.

The other members of the delegation are AL lawmakers Atiur Rahman Atik, Abdullah Al Kaiser, Nazma Akhtar and Jatiya Party lawmaker Hossain Makbul Shahriar.

The whip's personal secretary and Jatiya Sangsad's sergeant-at-arms are also in the entourage. The two were however given economy class seats, parliament officials said.

The MPs enjoy VIP status and thus are entitled to business class airfares. In previous parliaments as well, the secretariat upgraded air tickets on several occasions, added the officials.

River view

FROM PAGE 1
There is a specific law in effect -- the Open Space and Natural Water Body Conservation Act, 2000 -- which prohibits change of characteristics of any wetland.

Contacted, Dr Azizur Rahma, vice-chancellor of Uttara University, said: "No-body is obeying the law; why are you asking me only? We are not different from others."

"Besides, the government has no right to prohibit me from developing my land," he added. "We have checked the land documents several times and are sure all our land is legal."

He added they wanted to be very 'clean' as they are going to set up a university in that wetland.

"We haven't taken any government land or encroached on any river," he claimed.

According to the law, it is prohibited to change any natural land in the capital and all municipalities for conservation of all playgrounds, open space, parks and natural reservoirs.

If anyone violates the law, they should suffer five years in prison and may also be fined up to Tk 50,000.

Unfortunately, the law is hardly enforced, apparently encouraging the encroachers to repeat their offence again and again.

Pak troops

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Also in two neighbouring districts as a mission to "eliminate" militants.

Islamabad has the full backing of the United States, which has identified Pakistan and Afghanistan as central to its "war on terror".

The prospect of an assault on Mingora, which has loomed for days, has raised fears of a bloody battle and the possibility of civilian casualties.

US-based Human Rights Watch earlier this week quoted residents as saying the Taliban had mined Mingora and "prevented many civilians from fleeing, using them as 'human shields' to deter attack".

The group also said Pakistani forces "appeared to have taken insufficient precautionary measures in aerial and artillery attacks that have caused a high loss of civilian life".

Pakistani commanding officers have stressed that soldiers are under top-level orders to avoid collateral damage and not to use either artillery or air strikes in built-up areas.

Siemens scam

FROM PAGE 16
The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) on March 17 sued Arafat Rahman Koko, younger son of former premier Khaleda Zia for laundering money he had illegally taken from Siemens, a German industrial giant, a Chinese company and other sources in exchange for helping them get government contracts.

The former prime minister's son received at least \$1,80,000 (Tk 1.26 crore) as bribe in September 2005 for helping Siemens Bangladesh to win the contract to set up mobile network for state-run operator TeleTalk, according to sources.

Ain o Salish Kendra Director Md Nur Khan said the government needs to intensify its efforts to root out militancy from the country.

He suggested forming a national committee comprised of representatives from political parties, media and research organisations to fight militancy.

Amena Mohsin, professor at the international relations department of Dhaka University, said the government is showing positive signs in combating militancy.

Mithila Farzana of BBC moderated the dialogue on the country's current issues.

Low over Bay

UNB, Dhaka

A well-marked low formed over the southwest and adjoining west-central Bay moved slightly northwards and intensified into a depression yesterday afternoon.

It was centred at 3:00pm about 815 km south-southwest of Chittagong port, 745 km south-southwest of Cox's Bazar port and 725 km south of Mongla port, said a Met office bulletin.

"It is likely to intensify further and move in a north-west/northerly direction," the bulletin said in its forecast.

Under its influence, "deep convection" is taking place over north Bay. "Squally weather is likely over North Bay and may affect the maritime ports," it cautioned.

The maritime ports of Chittagong, Cox's Bazar and Mongla have been advised to hoist local cautionary signal number three.

Maximum sustained wind speed within 44 kms of the depression centre is about 40 kilometres per hour (kmph), rising to 50 kmph in gusts or squalls. Sea will remain 'moderate' around the centre of the depression.

All fishing boats and trawlers over north Bay and deep sea have been advised to remain close to the coast, not to venture into deep seas and proceed with caution until further notice.

BDR man

FROM PAGE 1
Two-days of initial tests he was brought to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) through the hospital at BDR headquarters on October 22 and was diagnosed with liver cirrhosis.

Meantime, he received treatment from medical experts in both BDR hospital and DMCH, the release said.

As his condition deteriorated, he was later admitted to BDR hospital on May 12 this year. He died yesterday while undergoing treatment at the hospital.

The body of the deceased was sent to his village home at Dupulia in Barisal Sadar, the release added.

The government on Thursday formed a three-member committee headed by a deputy secretary of the home ministry to investigate the causes of suicide and other unnatural deaths of BDR jawans after the mutiny at the Pikhana BDR headquarters.

Key JMB man

FROM PAGE 1
In India near Rajshahi border in the guise of a cloth trader," an interrogator told The Daily Star yesterday quoting Mizan.

He however declined to disclose the JMB operative's name and exact address in India.

Mizan, now on a seven-day remand, is being quizzed at the Task Force for Interrogation (TFI) cell in connection with the recovery of arms, explosives and explosive substances from two houses that Mizan had hired.

His remand expires today, and police might produce him before court to seek further remand.

The JMB explosives expert also admitted that he had visited twice his fellow operative's residence in India for organisational activities -- first a couple of years back and then six months ago, the investigator said seeking anonymity.

"Like him, many other JMB members also visit the absconding operative in India," Mizan was quoted as saying.

"JMB used to collect power gel and detonators from India as those are available there," said a top official of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) wishing anonymity.

He mentioned that those are widely used in India for razing hills.

Mizan also said 'Bhagne' Shahid alias Nazmul, who is JMB commander of northern region of the country, might operate a 'mini munitions factory' like the ones at East Monipur in the city, which Rab busted on May 15. He however could not give the location of the factory.

Nazmul was trained by Mizan in explosives.

Another investigator said, "Mizan hinted at some persons who are playing significant role in JMB activities but he is yet to give their whereabouts."

JMB used to pay him around Tk 30,000 a month -- Tk 1,200 for food, Tk 11,000 for house rent, Tk 15,000 as pocket money and for organisational activities and Tk 2,000 for clothing, the interrogator said.

Defaulting Huawei

FROM PAGE 1
BTCL official said the decision of imposing the penalty on Huawei was taken as the Chinese company had repeatedly failed to supply the generators.

He said the penalty was imposed in line with the signed agreement, to recover liquidity damage incurred by BTCL.

New BTCL Managing Director SM Khabiruzzaman however told The Daily Star that there had been no decision of imposing a penalty on Huawei.

He said now BTCL will buy the generators itself, after getting back the procurement money from Huawei.

Ashok Kumar Mondal, director (procurement) of BTCL, said penalties are usually imposed on vendors who fail to supply equipment within a project timeframe. In case of Huawei no delay has happened yet, he added.

The generators are required for BTCL's project titled 'Supply, installation, testing and commissioning of IP-based NGN TAX in Dhaka, Khulna, Kushtia, Barisal and Sylhet on a turn-key basis'.

Huawei and BTCL, the predecessor of BTCL, had signed a \$2.42 million deal in December 2006 for the project which was supposed to be completed by May 2007.

But the project still remains incomplete as Huawei failed to supply five French-made SDMO diesel engine generators, one of the major requirements of the project.

The anomalies in the equipment supply part of the deal between BTCL and Huawei was first uncovered through an investigation by a taskforce of the now-defunct National Coordination Committee on Corruption and Serious Crimes (NCC) under the immediate past caretaker government, which also found involvement of some BTCL officials in the irregularities including repeatedly changing clauses of the deal agreement.

According to the deal, Huawei was supposed to install French-made SDMO brand diesel generators.

But changes were brought to the agreement allowing the Chinese company to supply Spanish-made PRAMAC generators through a local vendor Rahimafrooz, as Huawei had claimed that the French manufacturer of the SDMO generators had been acquired by another company which had stopped manufacturing the specific type of generators, according to the NCC taskforce report.

Huawei somehow persuaded BTCL high-ups to amend the deal the two companies had signed, so the Chinese company could supply PRAMAC generators, the report added.

The investigation report also said BTCL, which was BTCL back then, however denied receiving any PRAMAC generator, claiming that bringing such changes in the specifications of the equipment to be supplied, is not allowed under the Public Procurement Rules (PPR).

The Billing of Quantity (BOQ) Committee also repeatedly denied accepting Huawei's proposal to amend the deal, the investigation report added.

But the taskforce report includes a document dated

December 24, 2007, which shows that BTCL's erstwhile chairman M Moudud Chowdhury, and erstwhile director (planning and development) M Shamsul Alam agreed to amend the deal.

Meantime, Huawei 'secretly' signed a deal with Rahimafrooz for supplying the low-priced PRAMAC generators, the task force report said.

Huawei, however, even failed to supply those Spanish-made PRAMAC generators on time.

According to another letter issued by the erstwhile project director of the then BTCL on December 24, 2008, BTCL had changed relevant clauses of the contract in order to accommodate the Chinese contractor's change of mind about which kind of generators it would supply.

"We understand that action should be taken against the contractor within the purview of the contract," the letter added in light of Huawei's failure to supply even the generators of the changed category.

Talking to The Daily Star recently, Ansar Uddin, managing director of Electro Mechanical Service Ltd, the local agent for SDMO brand generators in Bangladesh, said it is true that the company which used to manufacture SDMOs, was acquired by another company, but supply of that brand of generators never stopped even for a day.

He said SDMO brand generators are still being sold in Bangladesh.

Huawei however claims that it received a regret letter from SDMO's local agent, which said the required generators were not in supply.

But, Ansar Uddin emphatically contradicted Huawei's claim saying, "I am the person to issue that kind of a letter. But as far as my knowledge goes, I never issued any kind of regret letter."

HUAWEI'S VERSION

Thong Poh Wah, Vice Director (PR) Asia Pacific Marketing of Huawei Technologies, told The Daily Star that his company was unable to provide the French-made SDMO diesel engine generators because the manufacturing company had been acquired by another company, which subsequently stopped manufacturing SDMO generators of the specifications mentioned in the contract.

"Such information was not made available to us during the time of bidding as this bidding was re-tendered several times for more than one year. So that we proposed BTCL the new brand of DEG (diesel engine generator) with better specification as per the contract, once we got such information," Wah said in a written statement.

However, BTCL was taking too long a time to decide on the issue, Wah said adding, when Huawei proposed to substitute with PRAMAC diesel engine generators, BTCL decided to procure the generators on its own instead.

The decision was reflected in the inclusion of an additional provision in the agreement, Wah went on saying, Huawei did not fail to supply the PRAMAC generators, rather it refrained from supplying those because BTCL had decided to make the procurement itself.

Fit-again 7-yr-old

FROM PAGE 1
He was supposed to return to his normal life but instead he is now fighting for his life in the city's Apollo Hospital.

Before he was discharged from the clinic the on duty nurse of the postoperative ward was supposed to administer him an antibiotic injection as per the doctor's directive.

"As soon as the nurse pushed the injection the boy lapsed into unconsciousness," Shankar told The Daily Star.

"After he became unconscious we got anxious and called the doctor immediately. We collected the ampoule and showed it to the doctor," he said.

"The doctor said it happened due to reaction of the medicine and advised us to take Sanjoy to Dhaka immediately," he added.

In a state of confusion Sanjoy's family members went over to several doctors with the ampoule to ascertain what really had gone wrong and came to know that he was given anaesthesia.

"We rushed Sanjoy to Apollo Hospital the same day and since then he has remained unconscious for 11 days in the intensive care unit (ICU) of the hospital," Shankar said.

Wishing anonymity one of the doctors who is treating the boy at the Apollo Hospital told

The Daily Star on Friday over cellphone that functions of the brain and other parts of his body had collapsed.

"Only his heart is functioning and we are trying our level best," he said adding that they did not know why this had happened.

The child was unconscious and his condition was very critical when he was admitted to the hospital, he added.

Talking to The Daily Star correspondent, Dr Anadi Mondol who operated on the boy's hand said the operation was done successfully in the evening of May 11.

Anadi, an orthopaedic physician of Faridpur Sadar Hospital who practises in the Desh Clinic as consultant also said the boy was completely all right and he talked with everyone and even had his breakfast at the clinic.

"I saw them making preparation to leave the hospital," he said adding that he had prescribed for an antibiotic injection before the boy was discharged. But the nurse mistakenly injected anaesthetic sending the boy to an unconscious state.

Conceding the fact Helal Bari Babul, owner of the Desh Clinic, told The Daily Star that they would take action against the nurse, Lipi.

"We are negotiating with the victim's family members to come to a settlement," he said.

One killed, 25 hurt as AL factions clash

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jhenidah

An Awami League (AL) activist was killed and 25 others were injured yesterday in a clash between two AL factions over filling of a case at Dhaura village in Jhenidah.

The deceased was identified as Hafiz Uddin, 60, of Saibhanga village.

Meanwhile, at least 30 people were injured and 35 houses damaged in another clash between two rival factions of AL at Tikari village.

Superintendent of Police Nazrul Islam said AL leaders Motiar Rahman and Mohsin Shikdar became involved in an altercation over filing of a case with Shaikupa Police Station.

At one stage, the followers of the two AL leaders clashed with sharp weapons leaving at least 26 people injured. At least 20 houses were vandalised and valuables were looted from the houses during the clash.

On information, police rushed to the spot and fired six blank shots to bring the situation under control.

Wounded Hafiz was taken to the Shaikupa upazila health complex where he succumbed to his injuries.

The other injured were admitted to the health complex and other clinics.

Rab Commander Maj Tarik said they detained six people in connection with the incident and recovered sharp weapons and some looted valuables.

Members of Rab and police have been deployed there to avert any untoward incident.

Meantime, the followers of local AL leader Abdul Malek chased the supporters of Shahid Sikdar at Tikari village in the morning. Later, both the sides got involved in a series of clashes.

Of the injured, two were sent to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital while the others were admitted to the Jhenidah Sadar and Magura hospitals.

Furshandi union parishad Chairman Ohidur Rahman said the two AL leaders had been locked into a bitter dispute for a long time and their supporters often clash with each other.

Motiar Rahman, officer-in-charge of Jhenidah Sadar Police Station, said the clash between the two AL factions ensued over establishing supremacy in the area.

Additional policemen have already been deployed there to ward off any further clash, he added.

2 Jubo League

FROM PAGE 16
at United Hospital in the capital yesterday.

Police said Rinku, organising secretary of ward no-41 Jubo League in the capital city, was rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) after a gang of criminals shot him near his residence at Babar Road in Mohammadpur, leaving him critically injured.

Mohammad Shaheen, a relative of Rinku, told The Daily Star that two friends of Rinku--Rony and Soheli--called him out from his residence around 8:00pm on May 9 and shot in his head and back.

Nearby people rushed him to DMCH and informed Rinku's family of the incident on the night, he said, adding that Rinku was later shifted to the United Hospital.

Following the incident, Rinku's mother filed a case with Mohammadpur Police Station, accusing four people including Rony and Soheli.

Police could not ascertain the motive behind the killing but they arrested two youths in this connection.

A correspondent from Jessore says: Jubo League leader Ruhul Amin was a probable chairman candidate for the forthcoming election of Nirbakhola Union Parishad.

Locals and police said unknown criminals hurled a bomb on them at about 11:30pm on Friday while Ruhul and Ansar were returning home by a motorcycle after finishing their polls campaign at Sheordah village.

The killers also cut throats of the Jubo League men to confirm their death.

Police recovered the bodies and sent those to Jessore General Hospital morgue for autopsy. No one was arrested.

In the past, criminals killed Ruhul's father Siddique Hossain and elder brother Sirajul Islam.

Indian FM

FROM PAGE 1
minister of southern Karnataka state and party veteran to guide India's foreign policy during a period of heightened tensions with neighbouring Pakistan.

Palaniappan Chidambaram, seen as having overhauled India's security in the wake of the Islamist attacks on Mumbai last November that left 166 dead, will continue to head the home ministry, a government statement said.

AK Anthony will retain charge of the defence ministry, said the statement, which added the new parliament would convene June 1.

Sharad Pawar will keep the agricultural ministry while Mamata Banerjee will serve as railway minister.

Both Pawar and Banerjee are key regional allies in the Congress-led coalition which won 262 seats in the 543-member national parliament, just 10 short of the 272 needed for a working majority.

Singh, a 76-year-old, soft-spoken economist, is the first prime minister since the country's post-independence

Haji Selim

FROM PAGE 16
Terming the cases "fake" in his petitions filed with the Dhaka district magistrate, Haji Selim said the cases were filed against him and his political colleagues with political motives to harass them.

"The government has decided to withdraw false cases with political motives. Following the government's decision, the cases filed against me and my political colleagues need to be withdrawn," Selim said in his petitions.

The Dhaka district magistrate has been sending the petitions to Metropolitan Public Prosecutor Abdullah Abu for his opinion. Abdullah Abu is scrutinising the petitions and returning them to the district magistrate's office, which will forward the opinions to the home ministry.

The government has already formed a high-powered committee to review the petitions for withdrawal of the cases after receiving them from the home ministry. After scrutiny, the metropolitan public prosecutor will file petitions with the courts concerned, seeking permission for withdrawal of the cases.

Clarification

FROM PAGE 1
The SGFL board cancelled the tender "in the interest of the company". "So, there is no link whatsoever with the change of chairman of the board and any outside influences," the clarification reads. The SGFL earlier extended the closing time for the tender upon request of the companies that purchased the tender documents, not under pressure from any lobby, SGFL said.

OUR REPLY
The clarification did not explain why the re-tendering process was cancelled and just made the claim that it was done "in the interest of the company". When eight companies had purchased bid documents and held pre-bid meetings, how can SGFL justify cancelling it without giving a good reason? The only explanation given by our sources is that a certain company--represented by a powerful ruling party man--was not prepared enough to participate even though the SGFL had extended the tender closing time by a month.

The history of tender processes for this processing plant repeatedly exposed foul play and the SGFL has failed to complete this tender since 2005. So, we stand by our report.

Some of the injured were identified as Jahangir Hossain, assistant police commissioner of Motihar zone, and constables Azad, Monir and Rahman and Shibir activists Samad and Barkat.

After the clash, police started raiding different student messes controlled by Shibir in the area. Shibir activist Abdu Samad, a 2nd year student of physics department of RU, was arrested during the raids.

Injured Assistant Police Commissioner Jahangir Hossain told The Daily Star that Shibir had no permission for holding any procession or meeting in the area. Shibir activists used around 20 bombs during the clash, he claimed.

Delwar Hossain Saidee, president of RU Shibir unit, told newsmen that police first attacked them without any reason.

Earlier, Rajshahi district administration formed a 22-point action policy to keep educational institutions in Rajshahi free from student unrest and criminal activities and banned procession, meeting, rally and gathering inside of the university and near the university area.

South Korean

FROM PAGE 16
"He jumped off a rock on the mountain at 6:40 am (2140 GMT Friday)," former chief presidential secretary Moon Jae-In told journalists.

"He left a short suicide note addressed to his family members."

Police in Gyeongsangnam province confirmed a suicide note was found on Roh's computer at his home. A hospital in the southern city of Busan said he was pronounced dead from massive head injuries at 9:30 am.

"It has been so tough," local media quoted the suicide note as saying. "I caused so much trouble to many people."

"Please cremate my body. Please erect a small tombstone for me at the village."

A shocked President Lee Myung-Bak described the death as a national tragedy.