

Daud's crime network

FROM PAGE 16
 Rauf, sentenced to lifetime for killing Indian music baron Gulshan Kumer on Aug 12, 1997, said he has no link to Daud Ibrahim. But he confessed to his association with Chhota Shakil, a close aide to Daud Ibrahim.

Shakil had advised him to enter into Bangladesh, as it is a Muslim country and assured him that he would take care if something goes wrong, he added.

Another arrested Indian national Zahid also said he has link to Chhota Shakil who gives him Tk 10,000 monthly.

Sources said Zahid, a resident of 24 Pargona in West Bengal, escaped from India eight years ago and since then he had been hiding in Bangladesh identifying himself as a Bihari.

Rauf in the first week of this month took shelter at Zahid's Shekherterk resi-

dence and later they went to Brahmanbaria on May 21.

Sources said Zahid went to Mumbai in 1997 for working in a hotel where he met Rauf who was then a tempo driver. Zahid came in contact with Chhota Shakil through Rauf.

According to sources, DB arrested Rauf and Zahid from the house of Kamal at South Murulia under the Sadar upazila of Brahmanbaria.

Kamal Miah is one of their agents in Bangladesh and he helped them to manage the certificates from the municipality mayor, sources added.

The DMP commissioner said a case was filed with the Adabar Police Station against Rauf and Zahid for their illegal entry into Bangladesh and a preparation is on to file another case for using fake passports.

DMP Commissioner said Brahmanbaria mayor identified Rauf as a Bangladeshi by

attesting his application and other papers required for obtaining a passport. He also said Kamal had a hand in the forgery.

DB officials said they produced all the three detainees seeking a 10-day remand and the court granted eight days.

DB police recovered two Bangladeshi fake passports of Rauf and Zahid where their names were mentioned as Abdur Rahim Sheikh and Arif respectively from Zahid's flat in Shyamoli Housing at Shekherterk of Adabar in the capital.

Police said they also recovered an Indian driving license issued in the name of Samir Sheikh Patel.

Sources said, from the call list of Rauf's mobile phone, police suspect that he had regular contact with mafia don Ibrahim while staying in Bangladesh.

PM rallies for rivers

FROM PAGE 1
 Sewerage Authority (Wasa) have been polluting the rivers around the capital, Mostafizur said.

It will be extremely difficult to supply drinking water to the city dwellers unless these rivers are saved, he said.

High officials at the Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA) yesterday said they would launch eviction drives against river encroachers with the help of Gazipur and Dhaka district administration on Monday and Wednesday.

The matter will be finalised at the ministry concerned today.

Sources said the administration in the two districts has already assigned magistrates for conducting drives against the encroachers on the Turag, Buriganga and Balurivers.

A top BIWTA official visited Amin Bazar, Gabtoli, Ashulia and Tongi last week to witness the current status of the rivers following The Daily Star's ongoing campaign against encroachment on rivers.

"We shall remove all illegal structures and earth-filled portions from the Turag River at Gabtoli and elsewhere," said a BIWTA official.

Dr Mihir Kanti Majumdar, secretary in-charge of the environment and forest ministry, told The Daily Star that the executive committee of the National Environment Committee discussed the issue of river pollution at a meeting three weeks ago.

The meeting chaired by the state minister for environment and forest decided to review all recommendations made so far in this

regard.

The executive committee will make decisions based on the review and place them before the National Committee headed by the prime minister after June 5, the secretary said.

The High Court on May 23 directed the government to take necessary steps to stop encroachment, earth-filling and construction of illegal structures on the Buriganga, Turag, Balu and Shitalakshya rivers.

The HC also asked the deputy commissioners of Dhaka, Narayanganj and Gazipur, BIWTA authorities and director general of Land Directorate to explain why they shouldn't be directed to determine the real situation of those rivers by conducting a survey through formation of a special committee.

The HC bench fixed June 1 for hearing on the rule.

Besides, the parliamentary standing committee on environment and forest ministry on May 25 formed a four-member sub-committee to take necessary steps to save the country's rivers especially the Buriganga, Turag, Balu and Shitalakshya from pollution and encroachments.

The sub-committee members will visit the rivers to get a first-hand experience and prepare a report in two months.

Standing Committee Chairman Abdul Momin Talukder said on May 25 that at least 567 industries are yet to set up effluent treatment plant (ETP) citing it one of the major reasons for river pollution.

The committee will sit with the industrialists to discuss the issue.

Call to resist Tipai dam plan

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

National, regional and international public opinion should be raised to resist the construction of Tipaimukh dam by India, speakers at a BBC Bangladesh Sanglap said.

The dialogue on the country's contemporary issues was held by BBC Bangla service at Bangladesh China Friendship Conference Centre yesterday.

They also urged the government to send an expert committee to Tipaimukh dam site and arrange a discussion on the issue in the parliament taking it as a prioritised agenda.

Referring to the government's commitment to serve national interest, Chief Whip Abdus Shahid said the ministry would take a decision to send a delegation to observe the situation, adding that the issue could be discussed at the parliament.

Opposition Chief Whip Zainul Abdin Faruk said the government should send an expert team and a parliamentary delegation to the Tipaimukh site.

The government should place the issue before the United Nations to stop India from building the dam that would bring a catastrophe to the country, he said.

Editor of The New Age Nurul Kabir alleged that ministers of the government are giving confusing statements on the issue and said the government should create public opinion against building the dam.

About the Phikkhana incident, Abdus Shahid said the main culprits of the BDR carnage would be identified after submission of all the three investigation reports.

He said the government and the law ministry would decide under which law the BDR mutineers would be tried.

He also said deaths of BDR jawans in custody from heart attack would be investigated and the government should have a clear stance in this regard.

Zainul Abdin Faruk said name of BNP leaders mentioned in the investigation report by government formed probe committee is politically motivated.

Former director general of BDR Maj Gen (ret) ALM Fazlur Rahman said the government should form another probe committee to identify the main culprits of Phikkhana massacre adding that the BDR mutineers should be tried under the Army Act.

Nurul Kabir said the trial of the BDR mutineers should be conducted publicly so that no question could be raised against the trial.

Pakistan troops regain Swat

AFP, AP, Islamabad

Pakistan's military said yesterday troops had regained control of the main town in a key north-western district from the Taliban, in what would be a significant milestone in a month-long offensive.

The announcement came three days after the military vowed to wipe out the Taliban from Mingora, the administrative and commercial hub of the mountainous Swat valley, a region that has been torn apart by a two-year Taliban uprising.

"Security forces control the city. The Mingora fight is finished," chief military spokesman Major General Athar Abbastold AFP.

"Mingora is now under full control of the army," the spokesman announced publicly at a news conference.

It is impossible to confirm independently information released by the army because the conflict area is a closed military zone.

Abbas emphasised that while Mingora was cleared, the battle was far from over in the valley, where government forces are locked in a fight against Taliban guerrillas, and in the neighbouring districts of Buner and Lower Dir.

"We're only talking about Mingora. Much more fight in Swat is left," the military spokesman told AFP. But without laying claim to Mingora, the largest town in the district, the military would be unable to claim victory in Swat.

Taliban extremists determined to enforce their harsh brand of Islamic law had for weeks patrolled the streets of the town, but a Taliban spokesman said recently that fighters were withdrawing to prevent civilian deaths.

The military said 25 militants, including two commanders, were killed and three arrested over the last 24 hours in Pakistan's determined offensive, concentrated in the north-west in a bid to eliminate Islamist fighters.

Pakistan has said that around 15,000 soldiers are fighting up to 2,000 Taliban fighters in Swat.

Cushioned in the hills, 160 kilometres (100 miles) north-west of Pakistan's national capital Islamabad, Mingora once bustled with activity, filled with local merchants and tourists who came to relax in the scenic mountains.

Residents trapped in Mingora have complained of no electricity, scarce food and water and gunfire reverberating through the sand-bagged streets.

The military said Saturday that 21 doctors had reached Mingora in a bid to re-open a hospital, that gas was in the process of being restored and repair work had begun on restoring electricity, which would take at least two weeks.

Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani said his government had a comprehensive policy for the relief and rehabilitation of those displaced by the conflict, estimated.

3 rental plants

FROM PAGE 16
 Rental power projects are costly and different from conventional ones because the contractors are supposed to have plant equipment in their inventory and install the plants on short notice.

Both Energy Prima and Precision would also have to pay hefty fines for their failures.

Another local company Venture Energy saved its contract at the last moment by launching its 35MW plant in Bhola last month. However, faced with fines, it defaulted penalty payments and said it did not have enough finance.

All the companies were supposed to put their power plants into operation last year, within 120 days of signing the contracts, but they failed to do so.

The Energy Prima projects were supposed to come into operation in May, 2008 and the Precision project in October.

All the companies are inexperienced local companies that had ventured into rental power projects without having any plant equipment in possession. The success of rental power plants, which should be quickly installed for short- or medium-term purposes charging higher power

tariff, depends on having equipment ready for installation.

Fed up with the companies' repeated failures and constant lobbying for extending deadlines, the PDB last month decided not to entertain their failures any further.

As per the agreements, neither Energy Prima nor Venture Energy gave the PDB any additional liquidated damages after extending the first deadline.

The agreements dictate that the defaulting contractor shall pay \$500 per megawatt for each day's delay in project implementation.

The Power Cell of the Ministry of Power, Energy and Mineral Resources floated the rental power tenders in October-November, 2007 drawing 15 offers from six companies in eight locations totalling 300MW generation capacity.

The contracts for most of these were signed in January 2008. Of these deals, two 50MW power plants of Energy Prima came into commercial operation many months behind schedule and one 40MW plant of British company Aggreko came into commercial operation 15 days behind schedule.

BNP's BDR

FROM PAGE 16
 Selected portions of the national committee probe report were made public on May 27.

"It is not logical to demand investigation of the BDR incident by a parliamentary committee or express doubts about the probe when it is being carried out by the CID [Criminal Investigation Department]," Shafigue said replying to reporters' queries at the Jatiya Press Club after a Bangladesh Child Health Foundation lottery draw ceremony.

He also said the trial of the case would start soon after receiving the probe report from the CID.

On whether the CID's findings would be disclosed in parliament, the law minister said that it cannot be said for sure now but their report could be presented and discussed in parliament if the MPs want.

Faruk Khan said, "It pleases me to hear the remarks of BNP on the BDR incident because BNP understood how to work during the rule of a democratic government."

"They [BNP] have made some demands to the government. If the government wants, it might consider BNP's demands," Faruk said addressing the concluding ceremony of a teachers' training programme in the city.

BNP also asked for the findings of the army's own internal investigation into the BDR carnage to be divulged through restricted closed-door sessions in parliament.

Delwar claimed the national enquiry committee's probe did not reveal all facts and wasted time and money.

Grabbers flex

FROM PAGE 1
 Some influential people including Golam Hossain from Shyampur, former BNP lawmaker Md Giasuddin Ahmed, Haji Kamal from Kamrangirchar and Saber Chowdhury from Lalbagh are among the 147 encroachers, who produced fake documents to the court and sought the status quo when BIWTA planned to evict them.

A high official from BIWTA said Golam Hossain is encroaching on a vast portion of the Buriganga in Shyampur for long. Initially this local brick and sand trader took the land as lease from the land office under the deputy commissioner's (DC) office, he added.

"When we wanted to evict them, Golam Hossain filed a case against the land office, not against us," said the BIWTA official.

The BIWTA later willingly became a party to the case and finally won it in the lower court.

"But Golam Hossain went to the High Court and got the status quo about his portion of land."

In a recent visit to

Shyampur by the Buriganga and Kanchpur Bridge on the Shitalakshya, it was seen that Golam is not only running business but also rented out the grabbed land to some brick traders.

For his own business he filled up around 200 feet inside the river just beside the Shyampur BIWTA jetty.

On the other hand, Md Giasuddin Ahmed, former BNP lawmaker, encroached on a vast portion of Shitalakshya just under the Kanchpur Bridge to conduct his stone business.

The immediate past caretaker government in a drive to free the rivers demolished the establishments of Giasuddin and other traders.

However, as the BIWTA did not want to renew their licences and directed them to remove their business materials from the riverbank, they got the status quo from the HC.

All of them are still running their businesses on the grabbed land as the government agencies concerned are unable to take action and some corrupt officials help them remain there.

Woes prolonged

FROM PAGE 16
 The situation in Asshshuni is no better.

In Dumuria, Chalkbara, Shora-9, Shora-10 and other villages under Gabura upazila, the wrecked embankment is the only safe place for shelter.

Almost all the inhabitants have set up makeshift shacks on it. They are still reeling from the shock of the devastation. Many are sleeping under the open sky. Though they have received food in aid, there is an acute shortage of safe drinking water and sanitation facilities.

Octogenarian Daud Ali Gazi came to Dumuria from Shora-9, losing everything he had built over generations.

Anowara Begum, a resident of Dumuria village in Gaburia union, summed it up saying, "No house, no water, this is a living hell."

She walks all the way to Shora-9 village to collect drinking water from a pond there that has not been contained yet.

"We can't even find a place or facility to cook food, how can we boil water?" she asked.

Meanwhile, diarrhoea and other water-borne diseases are spreading fast among the survivors.

55-year-old Abdul Aziz said almost all the houses in his village Shora-9 were washed away. The few remaining are submerged in waist-deep water.

In the meantime, hundreds of affected people have started moving elsewhere fearing another tidal surge and heavy rainfall. People fear that the temporarily repaired portions of the embankments will not hold for long.

With his family of 24 members, Sheikh Wajed Ali, 71, moved from Shora-10 village to his cousin's in Parulia.

He said, "What should we do? We have no shelter, food and water here. Besides, the villages can go under water any moment."

Cracks were found at many points of the embankment at Protappagar union in Asshshuni upazila on Friday. The inhabitants of Gaburia

union said they are repairing small breaches, as it is not possible to handle the large cracks in the embankment.

Salauddin Bappi, a local social worker, said the repairs on the embankments should be done under experts' supervision.

Lutfur Rahman, executive engineer of Division-1 of Water Development Board (WDB), told The Daily Star that approximately 26.6-kilometre stretch of the embankment covering eight unions in Shyamnagar upazila was totally destroyed and a 134-km stretch was partially damaged.

"We have estimated over Tk 90 crore for repairing the damage, damage prevention and sluice gate. We have asked for a sanction of Tk 13 crore on emergency basis," he added.

Executive Engineer of WDB Division-2 Mujibur Rahman Hawlader said around 3.5 km of the embankment in Asshshuni upazila was washed away and 98 km was partially damaged, of which a 21-km stretch is in dire straits.

He said they have estimated a cost of Tk 26.74 lakh to rebuild the damaged embankment.

"We have also asked the government to sanction Tk 5.5 crore on an emergency basis to repair the damages in Asshshuni upazila."

The Health Minister AFM Ruhul Haque has meanwhile said, "We will repair the damaged parts of embankments at any cost."

He also said he had asked the Sakhira Deputy Commissioner to form a committee and take necessary measures for reconstructing the breached embankments by June.

Meanwhile, the health minister, Army Chief Gen Moeen U Ahmed, State Minister for Labour Monnujan Sufian and Khulna City Mayor Talukder Abdul Khaleque visited different Aila-hit villages in Shyamnagar.

Atulia air

FROM PAGE 1
 drinking water have turned salty in the tidal surge," she said adding that they cannot even cook since there is no high ground to place stoves or any fuel to light it up.

Masiron Bibi said, "I have lost everything. I have no house, clothes or medicine. We can go without food for few hours but no way we can survive without water."

Many villagers, especially children, have got skin diseases because of the dirty and contaminated water used for bathing and other purposes.

Tube wells could not be installed here due to salinity and iron in the water, said Rabiul Islam, another resident of the village. So most of the villagers used to purify pond water for drinking, but these ponds have been inundated, he added.

Wading through waist-deep water, Jahidul came to collect water from the lone remaining tube well at Uttar Atulia village. "There is no tube well in three kilometres and the water from it is too inadequate," he said adding that that tube well also went under water during the high tide.

Bimol Mallick of Baduria said he has to fetch water by boat, as his house is three kilometres away from Uttar Atulia.

"I have postponed issuing timber permit for government officials until 2010 to prevent illegal timber logging on any pretext," said the state minister in reference to overwhelming corruption stories in the forest department. "But it is difficult to end the malpractice completely," he added.

The government aims at afforestation on 12,000 hect-

Country falls

FROM PAGE 16
 plantation drives every year.

The prime minister today inaugurates the three-month long countrywide tree plantation movement at Bangladesh China Friendship Conference Centre and Tree Fair-2009 at the International Trade Fair ground in Sher-e-Bangla Nagar.

While government forestland covers only 15 percent of the country's total area, the minimum requirement is 25 percent for environmental equilibrium.

The state minister said it is very vital to develop green belt and have green coverage to combat greenhouse gas emission. "There is no alternative to afforestation for survival in these days of global warming."

Illegal tree felling and timber pilferage have also been going on alongside afforestation drives, said Rahman.

"I have postponed issuing timber permit for government officials until 2010 to prevent illegal timber logging on any pretext," said the state minister in reference to overwhelming corruption stories in the forest department. "But it is difficult to end the malpractice completely," he added.

The government aims at afforestation on 12,000 hect-

ares of denuded forestland in the current year, he added.

Responding to how the government takes care of the trees planted every year, the minister said that it remains a difficult task as the forest department runs with far less manpower presently with twelve hundred vacancies.

A total of 16 institutions and individuals will be awarded with the prime minister's medal this year for making significant contribution to the tree plantation movement.

Tree fairs will be held at divisional, district and upazila levels across the country following its launching at the national level.

Programmes of the tree plantation campaign include holding rallies across the country, planting sapling by the PM, involving religious leaders and heads of educational institutions, releasing newspaper supplement and arranging competition.

Budgetary allocation for forest development projects and programmes during the current fiscal year is Tk 43 crore, official sources said.

Secretary in charge Dr Mihir Kanti Majumdar and Chief Conservator of Forests in charge Abdul Motaleb among other high government officials were present.

Trio to be asked

FROM PAGE 1
 seven. Likewise, Akhtar Hamid used five and Delwar four against their entitlement to three vehicles.

Shajahan Khan, chief of the sub-committee, told The Daily Star that the trio drew Tk 1.36 crore as fuel allowance beyond the ceiling for them.

"In the report, we have recommended recovering the money and taking legal action against the three," he said.

On receiving the report from the sub-committee, the all-party probe body will place it before the House in the session beginning on June 4.

The report suggests recovering the furniture and electronic appliances that Sircar and Delwar did not return even after the end of their tenure.

According to the probe findings, Sircar had purchased furniture worth Tk 12 lakh for his official residence. Similarly, Delwar did not return air conditioner, refrigerators, furniture, and books--all worth Tk 20 lakh.

In another development, the sub-committee has lately gathered that the speaker and chief whip of the last parliament took entertainment allowances "showing fake invites".

Sircar hosted an iftar party for 2,200 people on October 3, 2006, but his office claimed expenses for entertaining 3,991 people, Mujib-ul-Haque said.

The sub-committee also recommends getting back Tk 75,000 that Delwar took for entertaining people when he was not even in the country.

It suggests formulating a policy on donations from Parliament Members' Club to put an end to this kind of irregularities.

In the absence of a policy, it observed, chief whip, whips and others of the last parliament could take out Tk 64 lakh in the name of medical expenses.

Besides, the report proposes enacting law to ensure punishment to a lawmaker for corruption.

Home minister

FROM PAGE 16
 station at Fatikchhari in Chittagong.

The same day in the capital, Law Minister Shafigue Ahmed said if any case is filed accusing extrajudicial execution, the government will investigate and ensure punitive measures against those who might be found guilty, the TV channel reported.

"We don't support extrajudicial killings," he said replying to queries from reporters after a function at the National Press Club.

Cases filed in connection with such killings are being investigated, he added.

Rights activists at home and abroad alleged that despite the new government's pledge not to put up with killing in the name of crossfire and encounter, the law enforcers continue the illegal practice with impunity.

Sources said around 800 people were killed in so-called crossfire or encounter since 2004. Of them, 570 were killed by the Rapid Action Battalion and the rest by the police.

Some 24 people were killed in last four months.

56 killed

FROM PAGE 16
 killed 30 militants in the Bala Murghab district, a region where the Afghan government has little control. Nine Afghan soldiers died in the battle, and four "disappeared," the Ministry of Defence said. The ministry did not elaborate.

The roadside bomb detonated on the main highway in Kunduz province, and shattered glass slightly wounded Gov. Mohammad Omar, said his spokesman, Ahmad Sami Yawar. He blamed the "enemies of peace and security," a phrase that commonly refers to militants.

Authorities in Afghanistan said Friday that troops had killed 53 militants in an upsurge of violence across the war-torn country that also left 11 Afghan soldiers and civilians dead.

The heaviest battle was early Thursday when Afghan and US-led troops came under heavy fire from militants while on patrol in southern Zabul province, the US military said.

"The combined forces returned fire and requested air support, killing 35 and wounding 13," it said in a statement.

The remaining militants fled, and the wounded were treated and taken into Afghan army custody, it said.

The military did not say whether the militants were suspected Taliban but fighters from that group operate in Zabul and other southern provinces.

It was impossible to independently confirm details of the clash in Zabul's Daychopan district, which borders Pakistan's Baluchistan, where extremist militants have bases.

Afghanistan is gripped by an insurgency led by the Taliban, who were in government between 1996 and 2001. Thousands of mostly US troops are based here to help the authorities fight the extremists who have stepped up their attacks in recent weeks.

Taliban and other militants often target Afghan officials. Northern Afghanistan was once thought to be a peaceful enclave unaffected by rampant Taliban violence in the country's south and east. But militants have increased attacks in the area in the last two years as the insurgency has spread across the country.

President Barack Obama is sending an additional 21,000 US troops to the country this summer to bolster the roughly 40,000 already there.

In other violence, five militants were killed in an operation in the Musa Qala region of southern Helmand province on Friday, the Interior Ministry said. Six militants were killed during a battle with police in the western province of Farah on Friday, said Raouf Ahmad, a police spokesman. Two would-be suicide attackers were shot and killed in Herat, also in the west, on Friday, he said.