

Diplomats complain

FROM PAGE 1
official, adding, "As foreigners reside and stay in Gulshan and Baridhara areas, groups are active there to mug them for making quick cash and snatch other valuables."

Swiss Ambassador Dora Rapold, who is also the Dean of the Diplomatic Corps, wrote to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the first week of May informing that foreigners and diplomats, especially the women, are being victimised of mugging and other crimes.

There seems to be a pattern to the incidents that expatriates, particularly females, are made target. The fact of the use of firearms and knives in the incidents is extremely worrying and it has led to serious injuries to the victims in some cases," said the letter.

It also gave a list of criminal incidents in which diplomats and citizens of different countries were victimised since January 2009. The list also contained criminal reports provided by different embassies.

Citing an example it says, on January 29 a Spanish woman was attacked while in a rickshaw at Road No. 96 in Gulshan-2. A man came out of a car and grabbed her handbag. She fell to the ground and suffered injury that required medical treatment.

In another incident, the letter mentions that a EU-commission member was robbed at Road No. 104 while riding a rickshaw. Miscreants from a white Toyota Townace came out with a big knife and demanded all belongings.

Further says, another EU-commission member was robbed by five men. The miscreants came from a minivan and took away all the valuables from him.

Chief of Protocol of the foreign ministry Brig Gen Abu Sayed Khan later wrote to the joint secretary (political) of home ministry Md Nurun

Nabi Talukder to take urgent steps for improving law and order situation in the diplomatic areas.

"Such incidents are damaging the country's image. Thus, it has been urgent to improve law and order situation in the areas," he said.

The joint secretary (political) could not be reached for comment as he is now outside the country.

AKM Hafiz Akter, deputy commissioner of Dhaka Metropolitan Police for Gulshan zone, claimed that crimes like mugging have come down following their intensified drives and patrols in Gulshan and Baridhara areas.

"We have also received the letter, which was sent to the foreign ministry. We have deployed civil patrol teams after getting the letter. The teams are capturing muggers and seizing vehicles," he told The Daily Star yesterday.

He said the muggers become active with private vehicles after the evening and swoop on people whenever they get scope. Police seized two private cars in the area on Monday night, he added.

In the wake of rising number of mugging and extortion incidents in the capital, the Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) has been making special drives all over the city but it makes little difference as the menace still continues.

Govt urged

FROM PAGE 1
They also demanded a national committee comprising of experts to solve the international river issues and a regional multilateral committee to ensure natural flow of the rivers.

They said huge areas of river course according to the cadastral survey (CS) record had been shown under names of individuals in the SA and RS records.

The rivers are dying due to unplanned urbanisation, dams, and culverts and industrial waste disposal, said the speakers.

Not only the private organizations but also the government agencies are responsible for destroying the rivers, they said.

They said a natural catastrophe would be triggered across the northern part of the country if the Tipaimukh dam were built, as the regular water-flow during dry season will reduce by up to 80 percent while 25 percent during monsoon.

Among others journalist Syed Abul Maksud, Executive Director of Institute for Environment and Development Numan Ahammad Khan, Shahnaz Sumi of Nari Pragati Shangha, executive director of Citizen Rights Movement Tushar Rahman, member secretary of Unnayan Dhara Trust Aminur Rasul, member secretary of Jana Udyog Samsul Alam, secretary general of Peace Ifma Hossain, Chairman of Nirapad Foundation Ibnul Sayeed Rana, and chairman of A Latif Charitable Foundation Nure Alam Zitu Sardar addressed the programme.

PBA also formed human chains, arranged press conference and placed memorandums to DC offices in Chittagong, Comilla, Barisal, Pirojpur, Mymensingh, Netrakona, Narsingdi, Khulna, Satkhira, Jessore, Meherpur, Rajshahi, Gaibandha, Joypurhat, Thakurgaon, Bogra, Naogaon, Sirajganj, Sylhet and Sunamganj.

He said the gang stole two buses of Skyline and Balaka Paribahan near National University but the two vehicles are yet to be recovered.

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Liakat

FROM PAGE 1
where they identified Liakat on May 31.

Although Liakat boarded at the hotel using a fake name, he identified himself as a NSI official before the police at Chittagong Urea Fertiliser Ltd (CUFL) jetty.

Hafiz Uddin, one of the main accused in the case, in his confessional statement said a person named Abul Hossain boarded at the hotel and supervised the offloading of the consignment.

Liakat was given the responsibility to supervise the offloading as former NSI Director (Security) Wing Commander (ret'd) Sahab Uddin was suspected of being a double agent, said the sources.

Meantime, Sahab Uddin was placed on a fresh four-day remand yesterday.

His counsel advocate Zahirul Islam filed a petition for withdrawing Sahab's confessional statement he made on May 15.

Following his statement the investigators arrested former NSI chiefs Maj Gen (Ret'd) Rezaqul Haider Chowdhury and Brig Gen (ret'd) Abdur Rahim and ex-DD Maj (ret'd) Liakat Hossain.

The defence lawyer in the petition claimed that the statement was obtained 'by force'.

Rezaqul and Liakat are now being quizzed at the taskforce for interrogation (TFI) cell in Dhaka.

HC seeks river

FROM PAGE 1
petitions filed by rights body Human Rights and Peace for Bangladesh (HRPB).

Lawyer for the HRPB Manzill Murshid told The Daily Star that the court wanted the addresses following a supplementary petition filed by him.

Manzill said he filed the supplementary petition to pave the way for filing a contempt of court petition against the former industries secretaries and DGs of the DoE who did not take steps to prevent industrial pollution despite the HC verdict in this regard on July 15, 2001.

He gave the court their names yesterday.

Earlier on April 28 this year, Manzill filed with the HC a contempt of court petition against the incumbent industries secretary and DG of the DoE for not taking measures to prevent industrial pollution.

Upon a writ petition filed by Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association (Bela), an HC division bench comprised of Justice Md Joyntul Abedin and Justice ABM Khairul Haque delivered the July 15, 2001 judgment.

In that judgment, the court ordered the DG of DoE to ensure compliance with environment conservation rules in the industrial units and factories in "Red" (highest polluter) category within one year, and report back to the court within six weeks thereafter.

The HC also ordered the DG to ensure adequate measures to control pollution in the industrial units and factories in two other categories within two years.

The court directed the industries secretary to make sure that no new industrial units and factories are set up without taking adequate measures to control pollution, as required by the Environment Conservation Act, 1995, and the Environment Conservation Rules, 1997.

All MPs

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Asked how much money it will require to purchase vehicles for all lawmakers, Abdul Hamid said they are yet to calculate the amount, but he said no luxury car would be bought.

The Parliament Secretariat Commission approved the proposals for providing lawmakers with offices at the old MPs' hostels on the parliament building premises. Hamid said they would also get offices in their own constituencies in the future.

The meeting decided to launch a terrestrial television channel to broadcast parliamentary proceedings live. "A separate project will be taken up for launching the television channel," Hamid said.

The commission empowered the speaker to limit the office allowances of MPs in parliament as unlimited expenditures in the last parliament have drawn much criticism.

The MPs' offices in parliament include the offices of the speaker, leader of the House, deputy speaker, opposition leader, chief whip and other whips.

The meeting also empowered the speaker to increase benefits of the opposition chief whip.

The meeting approved the Parliament Secretariat's budget of around Tk 60 crore for the next financial year. It decided to increase the overtime bill for Parliament Secretariat officials to Tk 200 from Tk 100.

A four-member committee was formed at the meeting with the additional secretary of the Parliament Secretariat as its chief to remove anomalies in the organisational structure of the secretariat.

The commission cancelled recruitment of 41 class IV staffs appointed by former speaker Jamiruddin Sircar at the age end of his tenure.

Prime Minister and Leader of the House Sheikh Hasina, who is a member of the commission, attended the meeting.

Govt rolls into action

FROM PAGE 1
shouting on the deck of a boat. The DC said, "It is just a show off only to buy time for encroachers so that they themselves can remove the encroached parts of their structures."

BIWTA Senior Deputy Director Golam Kabir said the confusion surfaced because of lack of coordination in making decision.

At around 11:30am, two of the four boats, spluttered towards Pagar mouja to launch the eviction with officials backed up by 20 policemen on board.

As the eviction team approached the industrial estate of Noman Group, its Deputy Managing Director Nur-e-Yasmin Fatima came out and produced two temporary HC stayorders.

Hundreds of labourers gathered along the boundary wall of the Noman Group industry sensing the presence of the eviction team.

Fatima along with one Dipu Kazi then said that they also obtained a permanent stay but yet to receive the copy.

Senior on-duty executive magistrate Abul Bashir Mohammad Ameer Uddin said Noman Group composite textile mills have grabbed 20 feet of the river as per CS records. "But we can do nothing because of the HC stayon eviction," he headed.

Noman Group has six composite (dyeing and spinning) mills on its estate of 30 acres of land.

The team then moved to the Merchants Ltd, a dyeing factory, but twenty labourers and one hammer were too inadequate to do anything to the tough RCC construction of the factory that wenten feet into the river.

A BIWTA tugboat had to struggle hard in pulling down the iron gate of the factory. It then knocked down the upper part of the RCC construction.

The other team, by the time, started knocking down Bengal Indigo at 12:15 and it went on unrelenting.

BIWTA Deputy Director Saiful Islam said Tongi was declared a river port in October 2004 with a total area of 65 acres including 27 acres on the Gazipur end and the rest in Dhaka.

A joint survey by BIWTA and Dhaka and Gazipur district

administrations demarcated the port area of the river.

The list of illegal structures was first prepared in a survey in 2006 and it was resurveyed in 2009.

A total of fifty labourers were engaged on the first day and the government has allocated Tk 1.40 lakh for the three-day drive, said Islam. BIWTA chairman Abdul Mannan Howlader visited the eviction site.

Govt launches

FROM PAGE 16
officials of the information ministry, Bangladesh Television (BTV) and Bangladesh Betar at the ministry and asked them to utilise the state-run media for the campaign.

The ministry will also hold meetings with representatives from private electronic and print media, various professional bodies and involve Islamic Foundation in the campaign.

The government has decided to launch a massive campaign across the country to make people aware of the daylight saving time (DST) scheme that will come into effect on June 19 midnight with setting the clock an hour ahead," said State Minister for Power, Energy and Mineral Resources Shamsul Haque Tuku.

The cabinet led by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on Monday approved the ministry's decision on DST so that people can have an extra hour of daylight. The scheme is expected to help ease the power crises.

"Initially, the decision will remain effective for four months," Tuku said, adding that if the scheme is proved successful it will be practised every year.

"We shall sit with a cross-section of people to end all confusion about it," he told reporters.

Under the DST, offices and businesses will open and close an hour earlier than usual.

Like 70 other countries including the UK, the US, Japan, France and Taiwan, Bangladesh decided to introduce DST to make the best use of daylight and save power.

One killed

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of Pankury Cable Network at Banasri Housing Project in Rampura, Faruq Hossain, owner of March Money Exchange, and the driver of Faruq's car while the deceased could not be identified immediately.

Locals said a gang of three criminals fired three gunshots that left Mukter injured while he and his friends were gossiping in front of his business centre around 8:30pm.

Injured Mukter was taken to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) for treatment.

Local sources said the criminals escaped after the gun attack. Some criminals have been threatening Mukter with dire consequences for the last few months if he does not hand over the cable business to them, sources said.

The local criminals might be involved in the gun attack, they added.

Meanwhile, Badda police recovered the bullet-hit body of a youth from a lake at South Anandnagar in Badda around 8:00pm.

Police said two bullets hit in the head of the body, which was sent to DMC Morgue for autopsy.

Gulshan police said a gang of three muggers in a private car intercepted a rickshaw carrying Faruq and the driver of his car in Gulshan-2, and tried to snatch valuables from them.

As Faruq and the driver resisted the criminals, the gang fired bullets, leaving them injured.

Hearing screaming of the victims and gunshots, locals and patrol police rushed to the spot but the criminals managed to flee the scene.

Police recovered the car used by the gang and a pistol from the spot.

Taj changes

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ministers at the PM's official residence Jamuna last night.

"If I feel better, I shall attend office tomorrow [today]," Sohail Taj, son of the country's first premier Tajuddin Ahmed and the youngest member in the cabinet, told The Daily Star.

He tendered his resignation to the premier on Monday out of frustration over not being able to perform his duties properly at the ministry. But the prime minister did not accept his resignation and asked him to go on leave from June 6 to 23.

As Sohail Taj stood firm on his decision, Hasina asked LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Syed Ashraf Islam to convince him. But the minister failed to make him change his mind, said sources.

Before the last night's meeting with the premier, Syed Ashraf and Home Minister Sahara Khatun met the state minister at his official residence in the evening.

Failing to convince Sohail Taj, the two ministers took him to the prime minister's Jamuna residence where deputy leader of the House Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury was present at about 7:05pm, sources said.

When the meeting ended at about 9:00pm, Sohail Taj came out of the Jamuna on board the LGRD and cooperatives minister's jeep amid tight security to avoid journalists.

Sources said when Hasina directed Sohail Taj to continue his job, the state minister said he would do so if he is allowed to perform his duties properly.

Following the prime minister's assurance, he agreed to continue in office, the sources added.

Omar, Zahid

FROM PAGE 16
All the three were tried, convicted and sentenced to imprisonment in absentia for different terms in connection with the cases filed by the Anti-corruption Commission (ACC).

The HC bench of Justice MA Wahab Miah and Justice Marzi-UI Huq granted them bails upon separate appeals filed against their convictions.

According to the HC orders the bail orders will continue till disposal of the appeals.

The defence lawyers yesterday told The Daily Star that Shahjahan Omar and Zahid Hossain were each sentenced to 13 years' imprisonment for amassing illegal wealth and concealing information to the ACC and Abu Hanif Patwari to three years' imprisonment on charge of land grabbing.

Shahjahan's lawyer Khandaker Mahbub Hossain and Patwari's lawyer AFM Mesbahuddin said following the HC bail orders there is no legal bar to their clients' release, as they were not accused in any other cases.

Meanwhile, Ahsanul Karim, lawyer for Zahid, said his client could not be released following HC bail order since he is accused in other cases.

If additional manpower is available, such drives may also be conducted in a few other district and upazila towns.

Pintu instigated

FROM PAGE 1
Another allegation against Pintu came to light from the CID documents submitted to the court that he and his followers encouraged the mutineers by bringing out processions around Pilkhana in support of them on February 25.

CID sources say Pintu's above-mentioned involvement came to light during questioning of arrested BDR mutineers and in the witnesses' accounts.

The investigation officer, CID's Senior Assistant Superintendent Abdul Kahar Akand, said Pintu has been sent to the Taskforce for Interrogation (TFI) cell where he will be kept during his remand period.

He added CID representatives will visit the TFI cell and interrogate him.

The Detective Branch of police picked up Pintu along with his brother-in-law Mainur Rahman Apu on Tuesday afternoon from the High Court premises following a CID requisition to detain him.

Apu was later released on a bond.

The former lawmaker was taken to the Court of Chief Metropolitan Magistrate, Dhaka around 12:45pm in a prison van amid tight security.

Earlier, Pintu's counsels submitted a petition seeking bail along with cancellation of the remand order.

Moving the petition, the defence said their client was implicated in the case for political harassment and damage to his image in the society.

They also told the court Pintu was implicated in the case in an attempt to divert the investigation and save the real

perpetrators.

The defence also argued that it is not clear on which basis allegation Pintu was arrested.

COURT PROCEEDINGS

SUSPEND

Metropolitan Magistrate Mominul Hassan had to suspend the court proceedings for around 10 minutes and left the courtroom as there was a pandemonium due to the defence's 'unhealthy' competition on who will be the first to make submission.

Pintu himself tried to calm the lawyers, but they did not even pay heed to him.

At one stage Pintu shouted, "Why are you (lawyers) causing damage to me?"

As the lawyers later promised not to indulge in such behaviour, the magistrate took his seat again and allowed Pintu to defend himself as per his earlier appeal to the court.

Pintu argued that if he was involved in the incident, law enforcers could arrest him at that time.

He also said he has been suffering from heart ailment, chest pain, respiratory problem and lost sight in an eye. He said he even begged to a constable to buy him some medicine, but the policeman did not move.

Former president of BNP's student wing Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal, Pintu grabbed media spotlight every now and then not only for his alleged involvement in criminal activities, violence, tender snatching and corruption but also for his arrogant behaviour.

During the immediate past BNP-Jamaat alliance rule, the government withdrew as many as 76 cases against Pintu, who still faces several cases.

Poor hard-hit

FROM PAGE 16
believe the private sector uses bribes to influence public policy, laws and regulations, and the government efforts to combat corruption are generally perceived as ineffective, in addition to high levels of perceived corruption in political parties, parliaments and the civil service.

Although Bangladesh was not covered by the survey, the findings of the barometer in many ways reflect the situation in the country, especially impact of corruption on the poor and the powerless, role of the private sector as the supply side of corruption, said Dr Iftekharuzzaman, executive director of Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB).

Petty bribery was found to be on the rise in Venezuela, Ghana, Indonesia, Cambodia, Bolivia, Senegal, Russia and Kenya, compounding the already difficult situation of low-income households, as jobs and income dwindle in the economic downturn, the TIB barometer said.

"These results show a public sobered by a financial crisis precipitated by weak regulations and a lack of corporate accountability," said Transparency International Chair, Huguette Labelle.

"But we also see that the public is willing to actively support clean business. What is needed now is bold action by companies to continue strengthening their policies and practices, and to report more transparently on finances and interactions with government."

The business-related findings of the barometer send a powerful signal to the private sector and provide yet another incentive--in addition to the legal, reputational and financial risks of corruption--for companies to prove that they are clean and to communicate this clearly to the public.

In Cambodia, Hong Kong, Liberia and Sierra Leone, as many as 4 in 5 respondents said they would pay a premium for products and services from corruption-free companies.

Asked specifically how corrupt they perceived different domestic institutions to be, half of respondents said they saw the private sector as corrupt, an increase of eight percentage points over five years ago.

And in roughly a fifth of the countries and territories surveyed, including countries home to some of the world's major financial centres, such as Hong Kong, Luxembourg and Switzerland, respondents identified the private sector as the most corrupt institution.

"Companies must engage meaningfully with the reporting frameworks and anti-corruption codes now available and begin applying these in earnest, reporting clearly and honestly about their efforts, and benchmarking their policies and practices," said Robin Hodess, Director of Policy and Research at TI.

Only three in 10 respondents believed their government's efforts to fight corruption were effective, although opinion in Sub-Saharan Africa was notably more positive than in other regions.

Fewer than one in four who paid a bribe in the past year lodged a formal complaint, demonstrating serious deficits in the perceived legitimacy and effectiveness of institutions and channels for controlling corruption.

Echoing the findings of past editions of the barometer, 68 percent of respondents saw political parties as corrupt, and 29 percent saw them as the single most corrupt institution in their country. The civil service and parliament trailed political parties, perceived by 63 and 60 percent of respondents respectively as being corrupt.

Obama lands in ME

FROM PAGE 16
"I thought it was very important to come to the place where Islam began and to seek His Majesty's counsel," Obamasaid.

The king presented Obama with a gold medalion, known as the King Abdul Aziz Collar, considered the kingdom's highest honour, and called him a "distinguished man who deserves to be in this position."

The talks focused on Middle East peace efforts, energy issues and other regional topics, aides said, adding that Obama and the king broke off into a private session that lasted at least two hours.

On Thursday, Obama will travel to Egypt, another pillar of the Arab world, to deliver a personal appeal for reconciliation to the world's 1.5 billion Muslims, and hold his first talks with President Hosni Mubarak.

King Abdullah has been seeking to relaunch a 2002 Arab-backed Middle East peace initiative, which has been praised by the Obama administration.

But it was unclear whether Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's tough stand on settlements would dim US hopes of convincing the Arab world to make concessions towards Israel to inject momentum into the process.

The Saudi initiative calls for full normalisation of relations between Arab states and Israel, a full withdrawal by Israel from Arab land, the creation of a Palestinian state and an "equitable" solution for Palestinian refugees.

The US president's trip also

coincides with rising concern in the largely Sunni-ruled region over Shiite Iran's nuclear drive.

Obama's speech on Thursday at Cairo University fulfills a campaign promise to address the Muslim world after relations soured over the deeply unpopular Iraq war, the Abu Ghraib prison abuse scandal in Iraq and the Bush-era stalemate in Israeli-Palestinian peace-making.

In Israel, there was concern the president's outreach to Muslims, which the White House plans to make available on the Internet and on social networking sites, could come at the expense of the US-Israeli alliance.

"The American president has the right to try to reconcile with the Muslim world and compete with Al-Qaeda or Iran for its heart," said Transport Minister Yisrael Katz, a close Netanyahu ally.

"We have to