

BNP bodies

FROM PAGE 16 committee member, said competition among the young leaders for positions in the committees led to such disputes.

"The conflicts will end once effective leadership emerges through holding of councils," he told journalists yesterday at his Segunbagicha office.

Both Mosharraf and Mahub said the disputes are not serious and hoped that those would be settled once new committees are formed through holding of councils.

The newly formed convening committees will have to hold councils of all units including those for districts by November 15.

Two BNP factions got involved in clashes in Pabna centring the new committee. Some party men burnt the effigy of Shamsur Rahman Shimul Biswas, personal aide to the BNP chairperson.

Following the clash, BNP expelled local municipality mayor and party leader Kamrul Hasan.

A group of leaders of Panchagarh BNP declared district convener Mozaher Hossain unwanted in the district and threatened to quit

the party protesting his appointment.

Harunur Rashid Harun stepped down as joint convener of Chapainawabganj district protesting the appointment of former lawmaker Shahjahan Mia as district convener.

Najmul Haque Soni, joint convener of Naogaon, at a press conference announced his resignation from the committee.

Barisal district BNP leaders including former secretary general Nazrul Islam Rajan at a press conference protested the appointment of Sarfuddin Santu, a former PDP leader, as joint convener of the new committee.

BNP leaders and activists in Barguna declared district convener Motiur Rahman Talukder unwanted.

Shah Md Selim, joint convener of Comilla, resigned, saying the party high command failed to do justice to devoted leaders.

A group of party activists brought out processions in Jhalakathi demanding expulsion of Jeba Khan and Hossain Ali from the new committee.

Palestinians hold reconciliation talks in Gaza, West Bank

AFP, Gaza City

The two main Palestinian factions Fatah and Hamas convened meetings in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip on Sunday in a new bid to reconcile their differences, officials from both groups said.

"The reconciliation committee including Fatah and Hamas will convene today for the first time in Ramallah and Gaza to look for ways to ease tensions and pave the way for the next round of dialogue," Ibrahim Abu al-Naja, a senior Fatah leader in Gaza, told AFP.

"The committee is aiming to remove all obstacles before arriving at the announcement of a final agreement on the seventh of next month," he said.

The meetings come on the eve of the two-year anniversary of the Islamist Hamas movement's violent takeover of the Gaza Strip, which split the Palestinians into hostile rival entities.

The two main movements have made several failed attempts at reconciliation, including holding a series of inconclusive talks in Cairo since the start of the year. They are set to meet in Egypt again on July 7.

Tensions between the two groups flared in recent weeks when clashes between Palestinian security forces and Hamas militants in the West Bank town of Qalqilya killed nine people including a top Hamas commander.

"The committee will study how to resolve the issue of political detainees in the West Bank and halting the targeting of the resistance, the closing of institutions and media campaigns," senior Hamas official Ismail Radwan said.

Since the Hamas takeover each group has accused its rival of launching waves of politically-motivated arrests, mistreating detainees and closing political institutions.

Palestinian human rights groups have slammed the conduct of both parties.

Water minister

FROM PAGE 1 the project area. The government will take necessary actions on receiving the report of the delegation, the water resources minister said in a scripted answer.

He said discussion on construction of Tipaimukh dam on Borak river has been taking place since 1972.

Workers Party lawmaker Rashed Khan Menon, Jatiya Party lawmaker Hafiz Uddin Ahmed, BNP lawmaker Shahid Uddin Chowdhury Anne and Awami League lawmaker Apu Ukil raised questions on Tipaimukh dam project seeking answers from the water resources minister.

In response to a query of AL lawmaker Nazma Akhtar, the water resources minister said the government will implement a project titled 'Augmentation of Buriganga flow by restoring silted links with Jamuna' with a cost of Tk 610.70 crore to increase navigability of the river and to reduce pollution in it.

In response to another query of AL lawmaker Apu Ukil, he said the government has taken up a project titled 'Rehabilitation of embankments and excavation of rivers/khals' with a cost of Tk 547.95 crore to excavate rivers and canals across the country. "The government is considering to begin the project soon and the project is under approval," the water resources minister said.

Besides, the minister said the government wants to implement another project titled 'Development of the capital; dredging and action plan for the river system of Bangladesh' to carry out dredging in the inland major rivers.

He said terms of reference for the project have been finalised. On approval, a feasibility study on the project will begin.

Four out on bail

FROM PAGE 16 All the leaders who had long been absconding surrendered to the special judge's court on different dates in May following the HC order when they sought bail from HC.

Haji Selim was sent to jail on May 20 and former state minister Shahjahan Omar on May 6 this year after they surrendered to the court in separate corruption cases.

The lower court sent Maya and Mohiuddin to jail on May 19 on their surrender to it in separate corruption cases.

Babu was sent to jail on May 20 after he surrendered to the court in a graft case.

Laws lack teeth

FROM PAGE 16 in fighting against the powerful, she said, adding that the DoE too sometimes cannot implement the law because of influence of offenders and technical limitations.

Jamshed Ahmed, DoE director for Dhaka division, said that technical and manpower capacity of the DoE is too inadequate to cope with the volume of work assigned to it.

"The Dhaka division has so far filed only 167 cases with the environment court," he said.

Environment conservation rules of 1997 provide for prerequisite of EIA only for 'Red' category industries (highest polluters) but do not have any detailed guidelines on how to carry it out, said legal experts. It does not mention 'Orange Kha' category industries that are also potentially hazardous to environment.

One penal provision in the law is a fine of Tk10 lakh, which in many cases is too insignificant to become a deterrent to wealthy industrialists, they said.

Dr Ainun Nishat, country representative of International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), said that there should be provision to make the Environmental Management Plan (EMP) of an industry and public hearing on EIA report.

Dr Mihir Kanti Majumdar, secretary-in-charge to the environment ministry, said at a press conference on May 30 that the law has various shortcomings. The law has a penal provision for 10 years of imprisonment, which a mobile court cannot hand

6 die

FROM PAGE 16 Abu Amin Md Wayezul Haque Bachchu, 55, Rajshahi Haripur union parishad member Amad Hossain, 45, Hanif Paribahan bus supervisor Hamidul Haque, 30, truck helper Jewel Rana, 20, Panna Khatun, 33, of Kalia village in Chapainawabganj and Masud Rana, 35, of Boalia in Rajshahi city.

The injured, admitted to RMCH, were identified as RMJ, 32, Farhad, 22, Asadul, 55, Shahana, 55, Sabdul, 45, advocate Rabbi, 40, Mominul, 27, Rafiqul, 35, Rana, 18, Nazrul, 30, Rubel, 35, Shilpi, 25, Shahnaz, 28, Habiur, 25, Nurul Islam, 25, Masud, 30 and an unidentified youth of about 30.

A case was filed with Puthia Police Station.

Amnesty

FROM PAGE 1 Justifying the significantly large allocation for the agriculture sector, Masiur said such allocation would help keep prices of agro-products low, which is needed in the national economy at this moment.

He said the government would try to get Bangladesh's share of the global recession package worth \$1.1 trillion announced at the G-20 summit in London.

Lauding the government's new concept of public-private partnership (PPP) in the budget for improving the weak infrastructure and power sector, he said the government may go for gas exploration soon.

Masiur said the government has proposed 5 percent duty on import of newsprint to protect the local newsprint industry. "But, the government may reconsider it," he added.

He said the government would bring changes in Bangladesh Better Business Forum for making it dynamic.

FICCI President Waliur Rahman Bhuiyan, who moderated the meeting, opposed the provision of allowing whitening undisclosed money. Referring to the support extended by Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI) to the provision, he said the apex trade body does not represent all business communities of the country.

He said the FICCI supports privatisation of the loss-incurring state-owned enterprises.

Describing the proposed budget as a positive one for business growth, he urged the government to strengthen monitoring in implementation of the budget.

He also suggested that the government declare Sunday and Monday as weekly holidays.

down. "Presently, we are working along with relevant environmentalists and NGOs on bringing certain amendments to the law soon," he said.

A review committee is working to remove loopholes and bottlenecks in implementation of the law so that an aggrieved individual can seek legal recourse directly against environmental degradation, said officials.

The secretary yesterday said that the committee headed by director general of DoE has already prepared the proposed amendments to the conservation act and is working on updating the environment court act.

"It may take rest of June to complete it and then will be placed to the cabinet for approval," he said.

Bilal Hossain, DoE director (administration), said that hill cutting, wetland destruction and ship breaking issues are not covered in the law.

"We inspected a total of 951 industries in and around Dhaka during 2006 and April 2009 to check compliance with the Effluent Treatment Plant (ETP) and preconditions for clearance certificate," he said. "But we found most of their ETPs non-functional."

The DoE identified 903 polluting industries and factories in and around Dhaka in 1986. The number increased to 1,176 in 1995.

BFUJ, DUJ

FROM PAGE 1 of DUJ Abdus Shahid and general secretary Muhammad Baker Hossain in a joint statement said though the proposed tax is only five percent, the actual payable tax would go up to something almost equal to 30 percent when other taxes and duties are added up.

As the newsprint produced in the country is not of very good quality and its cost is also very high, the newspaper industry depends on imported newsprint, the statement pointed out.

They said this government initiative would deter the newspaper industry from flourishing, as the proposed tax will put the entire industry in dire straits.

The statement also demanded that government implement the seventh wage board to newspapers immediately.

BFUJ and DUJ also called on the Newspaper Owners' Association of Bangladesh (Noab) and BSP to take effective steps to implement the seventh wage board.

War trial

FROM PAGE 1 as most of the legal experts, asked to submit their views on the law by June 11, failed to do so. Moreover, some of them have sought a few more days from the commission.

The commission asked about 31 legal experts, including some senior lawyers and former judges of the Supreme Court and teachers of law at universities, to give their opinions on the law. So far, only four have tendered their opinions to the commission.

Besides, the office of the Law Commission that planned to complete the job by June 20 on the basis of the experts' opinions is not equipped with enough manpower and logistic support to do it by this month.

Moreover, recently appointed Law Commission member Prof Md Shah Alam informed the chairman of his inability to join office before June 28.

The government last month asked the commission to make recommendations for amending the law.

While talking to The Daily Star, Law Commission Chairman Justice MA Rashid hoped that they would be able to send the government their recommendations on the law by the end of this month.

He said if the government accepts the commission's recommendations and parliament amends the law, the trial of war criminals will start in July.

Law Minister Shafique Ahmed, however, said the government would start probe into 1971 war crimes soon after the passage of the next budget.

He expected the trial process to begin at the beginning of July.

"We shall not wait for the law commission's opinion on the International Crimes (Tribunal) Act to start the trial process," he said.

Experts

FROM PAGE 16 coalmine, which is causing land subsidence and drainage of underground water.

"The Barapukuria mine is operating amid very high risk. Its ventilation system is very poor. There is no ventilation plan. The safety and environment status is very poor compared to any mine in Australia," said Salek Sufi quoting observation of his colleagues.

Sufi is a former official of Gas Transmission Company Ltd (GTCL) now working on mines and minerals with Queens Monarch University, Australia.

He added wherever the land subsidence had occurred in Barapukuria coalmine, the untapped coal seams underneath have been completely damaged.

"These coal seams cannot be extracted in any method. In the present circumstances, this mine should complete its underground mining before anyone can consider other options like open pit mining," he noted.

Other expatriate experts are Dr Saad Anapil, professor and the chair of marketing, Pennsylvania State University, USA, Dr Khalequzzaman, head of geology department of Lock Haven University, Pennsylvania, US-based environmentalist Dr Sarwat Chowdhury, mining engineer working in Queensland coal and iron mines Masud Hossain, and Melbourne-based Global Positioning System and Global Information System expert Sultana Nasrin.

Energy adviser Dr Tawfik-el-Ehadi Chowdhury, Bir Bikram, five parliamentarians from North Bengal, representatives from the parliamentary standing committee on energy and secretaries of the ministries of power and energy would be present at the event financed by Petrobangla.

The chairmen of Petrobangla and Power Development Board (PDB), members from Geological Survey of Bangladesh, Bureau of Mineral Development, Barapukuria Coal Mine Company, Dr Hossain Monsur of the geology department of Dhaka University, and representatives from the Rajshahi University and the chemical engineering department of BUET will also take part in the session.

Foreign office

FROM PAGE 16 foreign secretary Syed Muazzem Ali. One source said yesterday Kader might get the post.

Former ambassador to US Ahmed Tariq Karim is due to succeed High Commissioner to India Liaquat Ali Chowdhury, who will retire. Tariq retired from foreign service and was appointed on contract as ambassador in Washington during the tenure of the previous AL government. He held the post for a short period.

Sources said Karim will go to India on a two-year contract that has been almost finalised. Gyashuddin, who served as a junior diplomat in Bangladesh High Commission in UK during the previous AL government's tenure, is getting contractual appointment as ambassador to Germany.

Career diplomats, who are getting new posting as envoy, include AKM Atiqur Rahman and Supradip Chakma. Atiqur Rahman, now envoy to Bhutan, is tipped to be high commissioner to Malaysia, and Supradip is to be envoy to Vietnam. Besides, Intiaz Ahmed, now envoy to Nepal, is moving to Sweden as envoy.

Besides, MAK Mahmood, who recently served as an additional secretary (UNCLCS, Research & ICT), has been made OSD. Sources said Mahmood was trying to become foreign secretary.

Ismat Jahan, ambassador and permanent representative to Bangladesh Mission in New York, is yet to move out to Brussels, where she has been posted five months back.

Sources said the government is looking for a competent person for posting in New York. Since there is a shortage of serving diplomats, it may go for political appointment.

Meanwhile, two diplomats are still at large or 'missing'. They are former high commissioner to Malaysia Maj (ret) Khairuzzaman, who has refused to return home on recall order, and Brig Gen Chowdhury Fazlul Bari, posted as defence adviser in the embassy in Washington.

The latter has reportedly asked for asylum in US but this could not be confirmed.

And Yasmeen Murshed, high commissioner to Pakistan, who was appointed on contract during the previous caretaker government's tenure, may be asked to return home shortly, sources said.

The government has recalled Ambassador to the Maldives Selina Mohsin.

Bill seeks

FROM PAGE 1 February 25 this year since it was not ratified in parliament.

Under such circumstances, the information minister placed the bill to impose a ban on purchase, collection or possessing equipments for the purpose of terrestrial television broadcasting by all but the BTV.

An individual might be punished with imprisonment for up to seven years and a fine up to Tk2 crore and not less than Tk50 lakh.

According to the previous ordinance promulgated by the past BNP-Jamaat led alliance government, one might be punished for a term up to three years and with a fine of Tk1 lakh, but not less than Tk50,000.

As per a provision of the new bill, if a company commits the offence under the proposed law, then the owner, chief executive, manager, secretary or any other official will be treated as violator of the law unless they prove themselves innocent.

The bill was sent to the parliamentary standing committee on information ministry for scrutiny, asking it to submit report to the House in three weeks.

Meanwhile, discussions on supplementary budget for 2008-09 fiscal year (FY) began yesterday amid absence of the opposition lawmakers. A number of treasury bench lawmakers participated in the discussion and lauded the proposed budget for next fiscal year.

They also blasted the past caretaker government for many of their controversial activities including arresting Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. They also criticised BNP for remaining absent from the parliamentary proceedings.

AL lawmaker Nurul Islam Sujon, former secretary of Supreme Court Bar Association, blasted the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) for its refusal to appear before a parliamentary body that summoned the anti-graft body.

He said the ACC's refusal to appear before the parliamentary standing committee undermined the dignity of the House.

Meanwhile, opposition chief whip Zainul Abidin Farroque

yesterday said they would return to the parliament proceedings once the speaker solved seating arrangement in the front row 'respectfully' and if the government resolved the issues with the leader of opposition in parliament Khaleda Zia.

"Government is creating different problems for the leader of the opposition. The government is not allowing Khaleda Zia's personal physician and other staff to enter her residence," Farroque alleged in a press briefing at media centre of the parliament.

Twin treat for star gazers in July

PTI, New Delhi

Come July, star gazers will be in for a treat -- a total solar eclipse that will remain unsurpassed in duration for the next 123 years. And in addition to it, they will also witness a lunar eclipse in the same month.

A total eclipse of the sun will be visible on July 22 from within a narrow corridor that traverses half of the Earth starting in India and crossing through Nepal, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Myanmar and China. After leaving mainland Asia, the path crosses Japan's Ryukyu Islands and curves southeast through the Pacific Ocean.

Its duration will total 6 minutes and 39 seconds, making it the longest solar eclipse to occur in the 21st century and it will not be surpassed in duration until June 13, 2132, astronomers said.

A penumbral eclipse of the moon will slightly dim the earth's only natural satellite on July 7.

It will not be visible to naked eyes as the magnitude will be 0.156. It will be the second of four lunar eclipses in 2009.

This eclipse will only enter the southern most tip of the penumbral shadow and thus will be very difficult to observe visually.

Iran cracks down

FROM PAGE 16 Mousavi, was so wide it could not be questioned and said the election was like a "football match" and the loser should just "let it go."

But clashes flared again on Sunday, a day after thousands of angry opposition supporters took to the streets over the election result, triggering rioting on a scale not seen in Iran for a decade.

In one street, police fired into the air to break up a demonstration, while on another, about 200 Mousavi supporters shouting "Death to the dictator!" lobbed stones at police who fired back with tear gas.

Among those arrested by police were around 15 reformist leaders and supporters of Ahmadinejad's defeated rivals who complained of fraud in the most hotly-contested presidential election in the Islamic republic.

Tehran's deputy police chief Ahmad Reza Radan said a total of 170 people had been arrested, including "masterminds" of the rioting, and warned that the security forces would deal "firmly" with the protests.

The election results dashed Western hopes of change after four years under the combative Ahmadinejad, who set Iran on a collision course with the international community over its nuclear drive and his anti-Israeli tirades.

One leading conservative in Tehran insisted that US President Barack Obama's "motto of change" and "velvet revolutions" had no place in Iran.

World governments have so far reacted cautiously, while voicing concern about the vote-rigging allegations and the election violence.

Official results gave 52-year-old Ahmadinejad 63 percent of the vote, crushing his closest rival Mousavi who gained just 34 percent.

But Mousavi, who has not been seen in public since the vote results cried foul over what he branded a "charade," saying it was marred by cheating and election irregularities.

Reformist sources said those arrested also included several people who served under two-time reformist president Mohammad Khatami, including his brother, and supporters of former parliament speaker Karoubi.

"Last night after midnight they came to our door, Taghi went to open the door and they arrested him right there and pushed him into a car," said Narges Mohammadi, wife of Taghi Rahmani, a prominent

nent dissident who has previously been jailed for harming national security.

Several have since been released, reformist sources said.

Iranian authorities said all unauthorised demonstrations were banned, and even before Friday's election the elite Revolutionary Guards had warned it would put down any "velvet revolution."

Iran's all-powerful supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who has the final say on all matters of state including foreign and nuclear policy, urged the country to unite behind Ahmadinejad.

The election campaign, with its mudslinging candidate debates and mass street rallies, appears to have galvanised a grass-roots push for change in a country where 60 percent of the population was born after 1979.

It highlighted deep divisions in Iran, with massive support for Ahmadinejad in the rural heartland and among the poor, while in the big cities young men and women threw their weight behind Mousavi.

But Mehdi Chamran, the head of Tehran city council and a prominent conservative, said Obama's "motto of change" had no place in Iran.

"Iran's identity does not allow a blind imitation... velvet and coloured revolutions do not work among our people," he said in the Hamshahri newspaper.

Obama has reached out to the Muslim world and called for dialogue with Iran after three decades of severed ties, a break from the approach of his predecessor George W. Bush who once labelled Iran part of an "axis of evil."

"We obviously hope that the outcome reflects the genuine will and desire of the Iranian people," US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said.

In Washington, analysts warned that Ahmadinejad's return would complicate efforts to resolve the standoff over Iran's nuclear drive, which Ahmadinejad said on Sunday was "history".

The West fears it is a cover for ambitions to build atomic weapons but Tehran insists it is for peaceful purposes only and has defied international demands to halt uranium enrichment despite UN sanctions.

Israel voiced concern over the return of Ahmadinejad, who has caused international outrage by describing the Holocaust as a myth and calling for the Jewish state to be wiped off the map.

10-truck arms haul

FROM PAGE 16 May 2, added the sources.

CID produced him before Metropolitan Magistrate Mohammad Mahbubur Rahman at 2:30pm Saturday. Recording of the 31-page confession began at 4:15pm and went on till 2:35am.

The ex-NSI director (security) gave every detail of the botched attempt to have the arms transported through Bangladesh for the United Liberation Front of Assam.

He shed light on two more meetings that took place in Dhaka on March 28 and in Dubai on an unspecified date.

Brig Gen Rahim was in the meeting in Dubai with officials of Dubai-based ARY group and Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence agency.

Sahab said Pakistan high commission in Dhaka was involved in the bid aided by NSI and Directorate General of Forces Intelligence.

He also said the weapons were coming in from China.

He however did not name the destination and the ship that carried the consignment into Bangladesh waters.

In the statement, Sahab once again accused among others Rezaul and Ex-NSI deputy director (mechanical) Major (ret) Liakat Hossain.

He claimed that the consignment was seized as Rahim pocketed all the money given for transportation.

He said a total of Tk 1.60 crore was received from ARY group. Of the amount, Rahim deposited Tk 1.20 crore in his account and bought a Lexus jeep with the rest.

Sahab was first remanded for three days on May 4 and then for six days at the Task

Force for Interrogation cell on May 8.

His latest remand began on June 3 and ended on June 6.

Liakat was held on May 26.

Israel PM to outline Middle East peace plan

BBC ONLINE

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is set to outline his policy for the Middle East peace process in a major speech, officials say.

Defence Minister Ehud Barak said the speech would be "cautious and vague", according to Army radio.

Mr Netanyahu has come under pressure from the US to back a two-state peace solution with the Palestinians.

He is also expected to respond to the re-election of Iran's hardline president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

Mr Ahmadinejad has in the past called for Israel to be wiped off the map, though the precise translation of his remarks is disputed.

Mr Netanyahu has previously called Iran the greatest threat to Israel