

Caretaker system

FROM PAGE 1 Participating in the discussion in the last few days of the running parliamentary session, many lawmakers have demanded increasing budgetary allocation for including more educational institutions under monthly payment order (MPO).

They suggested allocating at least Tk 600 crore in the budget for the purpose instead of the proposed Tk 112 crore.

Syeda Sajeda blasted the caretaker government led by Fakhruddin Ahmed for remaining in power violating the constitution and carrying out many "controversial" and "repressive" activities.

"The last caretaker government's unconstitutional activities destroyed the spirit of the very caretaker government system. They remained in power for about two years, violating the constitution. Their rule has destroyed the country's economy and increased sufferings of commoners as prices of essentials went beyond their reach," the deputy leader of the House said.

"If the Election Commission is strengthened, there is no need for the caretaker government system. So, I urge all members of parliament to scrap the system and strengthen the Election Commission," she said, adding that the December 29 parliamentary election proved that a strong EC can hold a free and fair general election.

She lauded various proposals made in the budget.

Jatiya Party chief HM Ershad said the caretaker government system is a "taint in politics". "We want to get free from the caretaker government system. We ourselves have tainted us by introducing the system. We want an end to it," he said.

The former military ruler, however, advocated for the last caretaker government, saying the existence of the country would have been threatened if January 11, 2007 had not occurred.

"Besides, we would not have been able to assume power if the parliamentary election had been stage-managed under a caretaker

government," Ershad said, hinting at the government led by Iajuddin Ahmed.

"So, if the caretaker government that assumed office after 1/11 made any mistake, they should be pardoned," he said.

On the construction of Tipaimukh dam by India, Ershad urged the prime minister to visit India to meet her counterpart to resolve the issue.

He opposed and suggested scrapping a budgetary proposal for imposing duty on import of newsprint, saying it would hamper the country's newspaper industry.

Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal chief Hasanul Haque Inu proposed increasing funds for defence purchase and salaries and allowances of the police force.

Lauding the proposed budget, ruling alliance lawmakers strongly criticised the main opposition BNP for skipping the budget session.

Participating in the discussion, AL lawmaker Tofail Ahmed proposed not giving the money-whitening chance to those who earlier took the opportunity. He also proposed taking actions against those who would not invest after whitening undisclosed money.

On Tipaimukh dam, the AL Presidium member said the government will not compromise the country's interest and hoped that the prime minister will be able to reach a respectful end to the issue.

Tofail urged the main opposition lawmakers to join parliament and speak on the issue.

Another AL Presidium member, Amir Hossain Amu, said the power situation has not improved following introduction of the daylight saving time system--it has rather worsened further. He urged the energy ministry to take necessary steps to improve the situation before Ramadan.

Blasting the main opposition BNP, he said Bangladesh has turned into an import-dependent country for "wrong policies" of the BNP when it was in power.

Tourism

FROM PAGE 16 Sources say most of the plots were allotted to BNP leaders, activists and their relatives since 2002. As a result, the zone earned its unofficial name as the "BNP Pally".

"Many leaseholders are using the plots for housing and other businesses in violation of the conditions. The violators' lease of land should be cancelled," commented Aviation and Tourism Minister GM Quader.

The ministry officials say many of the leaseholders are now applying for transferring ownership of the land.

The government on August 20, 2002 issued a rule saying ownership of the plots cannot be transferred or used for other purposes. But a contradictory rule issued on December 12 the same year allows transfer of ownership subject to prior approval by the government.

Land Minister Rezaul Karim Hira said the government now wants to go back to the previous rule, which says ownership cannot be transferred.

Hira said the inter-ministerial meeting also decided to place a proposal to form Cox's Bazar Development Authority to promote tourism.

GM Quader said there are many expatriate Bangladeshis and also foreigners who want to invest in Cox's Bazar.

"We are making a master plan for the tourism sector. So no land in that area should be allotted to others without the tourism ministry's concern," he added.

Pay scale

FROM PAGE 16 Pay Commission suggested making it 1:1.25.

However, the cabinet committee may recommend a 1:8.75 ratio.

As per the Pay Commission recommendations, officials under taxable income will pay the tax themselves.

The Pay Commission had suggested increasing salaries of grades I-X by 82-95 percent and those of lower grades XI-XX by 66-70 percent.

Reviewing the proposals, the cabinet committee suggested increasing the lower grade salaries by nearly 100 percent.

On the other hand, the Pay Commission had suggested Tk 45,000 as the fixed highest salary, but the cabinet committee recommended fixing it at Tk 42,000. The government will pay the tax in that case, the sources said.

They said most lower grade staffs do not have any other source of income, but skyrocketing of prices of essentials in the last few years has made their living difficult. So, their salaries will be increased.

The Pay Commission also recommended raising the age limit for retirement of government staff to 60 years, but the cabinet committee is in favour of continuing the present age limit of 57 years.

For the next fiscal year, Tk 3,146 crore has been allotted for implementation of the new pay scale and the finance minister in his budget speech said the new pay scale would be implemented in phases from July 1.

Ministry sources said the government may implement the enhanced basic salary from July 1, but government employees may have to wait until September-October to get the increased basic in hand.

Forest bosses

FROM PAGE 1 vehicles and commodities that harm environment:

Expressing concern at the use of polythene bags again, the committee asked the environment ministry to amend the existing law to prevent the use of polythene, which is a major cause of environmental pollution.

Momin Talukder mentioned that even the state minister for forest was embarrassed as grocers gave him a polythene bag while he was shopping. "The state minister felt embarrassed, and he shared his feelings with the committee members," said Momin, who is a BNP lawmaker.

One of the members, AKM Maidul Islam, informed the committee that birds and animals are dying due to environmental pollution caused by brickfields in his constituency Kurigram-3.

"Hence, we asked the ministry concerned to enquire into the matter and ensure that no brickfield can operate within three km from city limits across the country," Momin said.

The parliamentary body rejected a forest department probe report on stealing of wood worth Tk40 crore at Loochihara forest in Sylhet, teaching it incomplete.

"It seems woods were stolen, but the probe report said the issue was not so serious. So, we rejected the report and asked them to come up with a complete report," Momin said.

Turkish PM defends bill curbing power of military courts

AFP, Ankara

Turkey's prime minister said yesterday a newly passed bill curbing military courts' power sought to bring coup plotters to justice as controversy brewed over an alleged scheme to topple his government.

Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan was responding to opposition charges that the legislation was a disguised bid to influence controversial probes into alleged plots to discredit and topple his Islamist-rooted government.

Members of Turkey's military, which has unseated four governments since 1960, have been accused of being involved in the plots.

The military has been a strict guardian of the country's secular tradition, and critics have accused Erdogan's Justice and Development Party (AKP), the offshoot of a now-banned Islamist movement, of seeking to undermine secularism.

"The bill targets (military) coups and coup plotters. It aims to put those people, if there are any, on trial without obstructions," Erdogan said in a televised speech at a party meeting in Kocaeli, northwestern Turkey.

"Turkey is raising the standards of its democracy."

The amendments were passed hastily before dawn Friday after a last-minute proposal by the AKP, which dominates parliament, without any prior public debate.

The AKP said the bill aimed to meet long-standing European Union demands to limit the powers of Turkey's influential army, which has often clashed with the AKP.

The bill paves the way for

civilian courts to try military personnel in peace time for attempts to topple the government and offences related to national security and organised crime.

It also transfers to civilian courts the power to try civilians in peace time for offences outlined in the military penal code.

The amendments coincided with a simmering row in Ankara over a purported army plan to discredit the AKP, leaked to the media earlier this month.

The army rejected the document as a forgery and chief of general staff Ilker Basbug said it was part of a "growing and organised" smear campaign.

Several retired generals are already among dozens of suspects currently on trial as part of a controversial probe into an alleged plot to plunge Turkey into political chaos and prompt a military coup against the AKP.

Some suspects have said they never owned the documents implicating them in the purported plot, accusing the government-controlled police of fabricating evidence.

The Turkish army has kept a low profile in the past two years and Basbug has often emphasised respect for democracy.

The military's last major intervention in politics was in 2007 when it said it stood ready to defend the secular system when Abdullah Gul, a former Islamist, put forward his candidacy for president.

Despite the warning, parliament elected Gul president, and the AKP won a second term in office in general elections the same year.

Army officer killed during exercise

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

An army officer was killed while three others sustained injuries when a recoilless rifle shell exploded during a training session at Jalalabad Cantonment beside Sylhet-Tamabil highway yesterday.

The deceased was identified as Lt Mainul, 23, of the 17th East Bengal Regiment while the injured were Lt Touhid, Lt Julfikar and Sergeant Moniruzzaman, instructor of School of Infantry and Practice Field.

The sources said the explosion occurred when a 24 kg shell exploded while being launched from a recoilless rifle at around 1:00pm.

Lt Mainul died on the spot while three others were injured in the explosion.

The injured officers were flown by a helicopter to the Combined Military Hospital in the capital at around 2:00pm, sources said.

Fatwa leads

FROM PAGE 1 village arbitration while Wahed and Jalil executed the whippings, locals said.

Piara Begum filed a case with the Debidwar Police Station under the women and children repression prevention act accusing eight persons including the arrested six and 10 to 12 unidentified people.

ABM Atiqur Rahman Bashar from Devidwar reports: At the arbitration Piara was whipped 202 times and Mamun 101 times. They were also fined with Tk 30,000 each.

Piara, mother of five children, fell unconscious soon after the lashings and was taken to the Upazila Health Complex. The on-duty doctor ANM Bashir Ahmed said her condition was critical and she needed better treatment.

Deputy Commissioner of Comilla Manjurur Rahman and Superintendent of Police Shafiqul Islam visited the place.

Meanwhile, the six arrestees were produced before the Comilla court.

Dudmiah, acknowledging the fact, said, "I executed the fatwa issued by local religious leaders; I was given the task as a senior villager."

Officer-in-Charge of Debidwar Police Station Md Jahedul Islam said they had already arrested six people and are trying to arrest the rest involved in the incident.

The High Court in 2001 declared fatwa illegal.

HC asks

FROM PAGE 16 primary school.

The HC bench of Justice Syed Mahmud Hossain and Justice Quamrul Islam Siddiqui issued the rule upon a writ petition filed by advocate Salahuddin Dolon, a lawyer of the Supreme Court.

The bench asked the education ministry to reply to the rule within four weeks and said the matter will come up before the bench for further order after four weeks.

A report published in Bangla daily Samakal on June 26 says upazila education officer of the district Arif Ahmed made an objectionable remark against Sultana Arjuman Huq, headmistress of Atmaram Bishweshwar Government Primary School.

Attorney General Mahbub Alam yesterday placed the newspaper's report and drew attention of the HC bench for the action against Arif.

Later, advocate Dolon filed a writ petition with the HC seeking action against the officer.

Dolon last night told The Daily Star that Sutana has been awarded as the best teacher of the district for four times.

After hearing the remark, she became sick as she could not accept the insult at a meeting held on Thursday. She is now undergoing treatment in a hospital, he said.

The report says the education officer at the meeting had asked the female teachers to come up to school wearing scarves. He made the remark against the headmistress after around 50 female teachers present at the meeting instantly protested the instruction. They later boycotted the meeting protesting the objectionable comments.

The HC bench has issued a set of directives and guidelines recently to stop harassment of women at any place in the country.

Pakistan offers

FROM PAGE 16 Pakistan's border with Afghanistan, as the government prepares for an apparent offensive there aimed at eliminating Pakistani Taliban leader Baitullah Mehsud.

The military kept up its campaign in the region on Sunday. Jet fighters struck the village of Kani Guram overnight, leaving eight militants dead, while helicopter gunships hit positions in Shah Alam and Raghazai, killing three more fighters, the intelligence officials told The Associated Press.

Fayyaz Tooro, home secretary of the North West Frontier Province, confirmed to AFP that the government had placed the adverts, and said it was the first time that Pakistan had slapped a figure on al-Qaeda-linked Mehsud.

"This list has been issued by the interior ministry and has been published for the first time in close cooperation with security agencies, which provided invaluable information to the government," Tooro said.

He said copies of the list had been sent to all security agencies and police stations in the province, as well as tribal and local officials. There are telephone numbers on the advert form members of the public to call.

Mehsud already has a five-million-dollar bounty on his head offered by the United States, with the US State Department branding the warlord "a key al-Qaeda facilitator in the tribal areas of South Waziristan."

Pakistan blames Mehsud for a wave of deadly attacks which has killed hundreds here in two years of insurgency, and has vowed to unseat him from his fiefdom in the peaks of north-west South Waziristan.

All but two of the 10 other wanted men hail from the tribal belt, with bounties of between 10 to 15 million rupees each for his close aides Maulvi Faqir Mohammad and Qari Hussain and Taliban spokesman Hakimullah Mehsud.

Analysts and security sources have said that the military will likely try to fan rivalries among the Mehsud tribe to gain allies before any operation into the hostile, mountainous territory along the Afghan border.

That strategy was dealt a blow on Tuesday when Qari Zainuddin -- a rising tribal leader who had defected from Mehsud's Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) -- was assassinated in an attack claimed by the TTP.

Pakistan's northwestern tribal belt has become a stronghold for Taliban and al-Qaeda extremists who fled Afghanistan

after a US-led invasion toppled the hardline Taliban regime in late 2001.

Mehsud, believed to be in his late 30s, set up the TTP umbrella group of tribal militants in 2007, and has steadily extended his influence into North Waziristan and Bajaur districts and nearby cities of Tank and Dera Ismail Khan.

Pakistan has already offered a 50-million-rupee reward for the Swat Taliban chief Maulana Fazlullah. The interior minister has said Fazlullah is injured and close to capture, but the army has refused to confirm those reports.

Troops arrest Honduras president

AFP, Tegucigalpa

Honduran President Manuel Zelaya was arrested yesterday by troops who surrounded his home ahead of a controversial constitutional referendum, a top government aide said.

"Troops have taken the president from his home to the air force (base)," the president's personal secretary, Enrique Reina, told reporters.

"We're in the process of filing an international complaint," he said.

Elected in 2006 for a non-renewable four-year term, Zelaya had planned a vote Sunday asking Hondurans to sanction a future referendum to allow him to run for reelection.

The referendum has been ruled illegal by the country's top court and had been opposed by the military.

The apparent coup is the latest dramatic event in a tense political standoff over the past several days.

Last week Zelaya sacked the country's top military chief, General Romeo Vasquez and also accepted the resignation of Defense Minister Edmundo Orellana, after military commanders refused to distribute ballot boxes for Sunday's vote.

The heads of the army, marines and air force also resigned.

And in a tense rebuttal of the president's moves, the Honduran Supreme Court unanimously voted Thursday to reinstate Vasquez and hundreds of troops massed late last week in the capital Tegucigalpa, in a move some said presaged a military coup.

Dhaka, London

FROM PAGE 16 strengthening the coast guards to protect maritime boundary, border management and training of our law enforcers," Hasan Mahmud told reporters after the meeting.

He said activities of joint working group began at its first high-level meeting.

"Terrorists have no boundary and they have connection among themselves, they assist each other. If we want to combat them, we must have a network and cooperation among ourselves. That's why, the UK-Bangladesh joint working group was formed," he said.

The state minister said they asked UK side to form a cell under JWG for our border management. "They (UK) have responded positively in this regard," he added.

"We have sought assistance to enhance the capacity of our coast guards to protect our sea boundary, border management and in detection of explosive at the airports," he said, adding that the UK assured him of giving necessary equipment.

Mahmud said they also discussed how the two countries can cooperate in crisis management or when there is a security threat.

Lord West, who came here Saturday on a three-day visit, said, "Both of our nations sadly have been victims of terrorism and I think it is very important that we work together in the face of that, counter-terrorism."

"We are in discussion with many countries of the world. Because, terrorism is a global threat," said West, terming terrorism an international phenomenon which he said should be resolved bilaterally and internationally.

The UK minister said terrorists in Bangladesh and UK could have linked sometimes using information and communication technologies.

Asked about specific assistance for Bangladesh and UK could have linked sometimes using information and communication technologies.

Asked if Bangladesh is under international security threat, Lord West said all countries are under threats.

The first meeting of JWG is a follow up of the proposal made by UK Home Secretary Jackie Smith during her trip to Bangladesh in April last year.

Talking to The Daily Star after the meeting, Home Secretary Abdus Sobhan Sikder said the two sides discussed the areas of cooperation. "We also discussed from where security threats could come," he said.

He said both sides placed their recommendation in this regard and finalised the areas of cooperation. He also said Bangladesh look forward to form such group with US, Australia and Russia.

Foreign ministry officials said both UK and US have proposed Bangladesh and other countries in this region to form JWG to counter terrorism. "Like some other countries, we have also responded to their proposal," said a foreign ministry official.

Secretary to the PMO, defence secretary, chairman of Civil Aviation Authority, director generals of NSI, BDR, Rab, DGEI and Coast Guard, acting IGP, representative of Armed Forces Division, joint secretary (political), home ministry, and director general (Europe) of the foreign ministry, among others, were present at the meeting from the host side.

British High Commissioner Stephen Evans, Head of Counter Terrorism Department Robert Chatterton Dickson, Sian Price, Head of International Security Section Mark Clayton, Office of Security and Counterterrorism Paul Waters and Alaric Bonthron of Metropolitan Police Service, Jon Chorley from Cabinet Office, Philip Spicer from Defense Advisor and James Hopkins from the ministry of defence accompanied Lord West in the meeting.

Fugitive BDR

FROM PAGE 1 India through Hilly border, a Rab official said wishing anonymity.

The elite force yesterday handed over Noor to police. He was later sent to district central jail after he was produced before a Rangpur court.

The authorities on May 19 released to the media a list containing the names and photographs of 25 BDR jawans including Noor Hossain as fugitives, out of over 7,000 earlier said to have fled the headquarters after the mutiny that killed 74 people, including 57 army officers.

Ashulia erupts

FROM PAGE 1 by barricading the highway with blazing tyres.

As vehicular movement ground to a halt and snarl-ups grew longer, police resorted to baton-charge to disperse the protesters.

The workers retaliated by throwing stones. Soon chase and counter-chase ensued. Police started firing rubber bullets and teargas shells at around 11:00am.

At one stage, death of a worker stoked anger among the demonstrators and sent them on the rampage.

With things threatening to spin out of control, additional forces from Dhaka and Manikganj reached the scene at around noon. The situation came under control at 2:00pm.

Tension was still running high as a huge contingent of police was patrolling the area to avert further violence.

A little after midnight, OC Monwar Hossain told The Daily Star that two cases had been filed with the Ashulia Police Station for the day's incidents.

One was filed for assault on police and the other for the killing of a worker. Over 1,200 unnamed people stand accused in the assault case and 300 in the murder case.

Earlier, two cases were filed in connection with Saturday's violence and a worker's death in Ansar firing.

In one case, Ashulia police accused three Ansars--Rahmat Ali, Sihab Mollah and Shahjahan--of shooting dead Al-Amin of sweater factory S Suhi Industrial Park Ltd.

Sub-inspector Sekander Ali said the three have been confined to the headquarters.

Meanwhile, some 50 garment workers attacked a factory and damaged around

Microbus

FROM PAGE 1 of investigation.

Meanwhile, the two suspects who were picked up by the law enforcement agency from the crime scene on Saturday for preliminary interrogation, were taken on a three-day police remand for quizzing.

Sub-Inspector Munsir Shahidul Islam of Tejgaon Police Station, also the investigation officer of the case, said Shohagh and Pradeep, who were detained from the spot, already provided important information after the preliminary interrogation.

However, businessmen and traders of Karwan Bazar alleged that police did not allow them to bring out a procession in protest at the killings yesterday.

15 vehicles on Dhaka-Mymensingh road at Board Bazar yesterday afternoon.

The workers ran riot on rumours that a fellow worker injured while crossing the road had died.

Witnesses said the workers of Southern Garments staged the demonstrations. BGMEA REACTION

The BGMEA president said the way factories are damaged over trifling matters is extremely worrying.

"I request the workers and their leaders to understand that the present global situation doesn't bode well for our export sector."

He said there is no denying that workers have the right to protest unlawful practices by the factory authorities, while for owners it is reasonable to sack employees on just grounds.

BNP asks govt

FROM PAGE 1 power with India, he told journalists at his Segunbagicha office.

He, however, indicated that his party might consider sending a separate team to Tipaimukh only if the experts recommended by them are not included in the delegation.

Foreign Minister Dipu Moni recently said the government had received information on the project from the Indian government.

Earlier, BNP placed a proposal before the government for including five experts in the parliamentary delegation as a condition for announcing the names of its representatives for the all-party parliamentary team that will visit the site in India.

Rejecting the proposal, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina recently suggested that the main opposition party should send their own team to the site and submit its report to the government.

The BNP leader also urged the government to investigate whether poison was mixed with the food served to Hasina during her stay in jail.

He suspected that the same thing might have been done to Khaleda Zia in the sub-jail as the then caretaker government wanted to implement the 'minus two theory'.

Mosharraf said he did not have any specific information on the matter but he believes that the allegations brought by deputy leader in parliament Sajeda Chowdhury was based on facts.

Sajeda, on Saturday, alleged that Hasina was given 'poison-mixed food' during her stay in prison.

Jackson family

FROM PAGE 16 inconsistencies" over the death.

But the spokeswoman, Miranda Sevick, added: "Investigators say the doctor is in no way a suspect and remains a witness to this tragedy."

Frustrated by the lack of hard information, the family requested a second autopsy on Jackson's

body which was being kept at an undisclosed location, officials and local media reports said.