

## Rid bosses

FROM PAGE 1

Administration Brig Gen Ismail Hossain said four cases have been filed with the drug courts against Rid Pharma in Sylhet, Brahmanbaria, Comilla and Narayanganj.

Another case will be filed under the Special Powers Act next week after consultation with the ministries of law and home affairs, he added.

On July 22, the Drug Administration sealed off Rid's factory in Brahmanbaria BSCIC area in connection with 24 deaths of children upon the intake of Rid's drugs. Some 34 children with acute renal failure were admitted to Dhaka Shishu Hospital and Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU) Hospital during the last one and a half months, all of whom were given Rid's drugs.

Prof Hanif, head of the department of Paediatric Nephrology of Dhaka Shishu Hospital, first noticed that the number of patients there with renal failures was on the rise. He collected information and samples of the paracetamol syrup from patients' parents and tested them in a private laboratory, which found the presence of a poisonous substance in the syrup.

The authorities of Dhaka Shishu Hospital later informed the Directorate General of Health Services of the matter. The government formed a seven-member investigation committee on July 21.

After examining 300 samples of the paracetamol and vitamin syrups of 10 companies, the probe committee on July 29 reconfirmed the presence of poisonous Diethylene

Glycol in Rid's paracetamol syrup.

It also revealed that Rid Pharma used Diethylene Glycol, meant for tannery and rubber industries, instead of Propylene Glycol since Diethylene Glycol is cheaper. Diethylene Glycol costs Tk 200 per litre while Propylene Glycol costs Tk 1,100.

Sources in the drug regulatory authorities said Rid Pharma received drug-manufacturing licence in 2006 and started marketing 12 drugs. Even though it only had permit for manufacturing paracetamol suspensions, it started producing paracetamol syrups in the package of paracetamol suspensions.

In 1992, at least 339 children died after taking toxic paracetamol. The government had then cancelled registrations of five pharmaceutical companies.

But the fact is poor monitoring of the drug market allows unscrupulous businessmen to adulterate medicine, experts say.

They, however, said taking action against only one pharmaceutical company is not enough since there are many companies producing spurious and low-quality drugs.

Prof Hanif said, "The government should enact a comprehensive law against adulterated and spurious drugs since manufacturing and marketing of drugs involve different ministries such as commerce, home, health and customs departments. If there is no comprehensive law for controlling toxic materials, such incidents may take place again."

## Swine flu

FROM PAGE 16

from high diabetes and hypertension, died of swine flu in Mumbai two days ago.

The seven-year-old who died in Baroda is the second swine flu victim in Gujarat after a non-resident Indian succumbed last Sunday.

The disease claimed the life of a four-year-old boy while a 32-year-old ayurvedic practitioner and a 35-year-old chemist also succumbed in Pune Monday. Pune recorded India's first swine flu death—that of a 14-year-old girl—on August 3.

Given the spurt in swine flu cases in Pune, Maharashtra government ordered closure of all schools and colleges in the city for a week and theatres and multiplexes for three days.

With swine flu cases in the country reaching near the 1,000 mark, the Indian government rolled out fresh initiatives to contain the spread of the deadly H1N1 virus allowing private labs to conduct tests for the disease and private hospitals to provide treatment.

On Monday, Union Health Minister Gulam Nabi Azad told the press here that screening of all passengers coming from abroad would continue at all international airports. Of the 4,084 people tested so far, 633 were detected through screening, he added.

Thermal scanners to identify people with fever has been installed in four airports and such scanners would be set up at all international airports in the country, Azad said.

The government, however, made it clear that there was no need to panic as out of a total number of 959 cases, 563 have been treated and sent back home while 396 are undergoing treatment.

Eight deaths have been reported so far—five in Pune and one each in Ahmedabad, Mumbai and Chennai.

Azad said anti-swine flu vaccines would be imported to immunise medical and paramedical staff involved in treating and testing H1N1 patients.

He said three companies in India are in the process of manufacturing the vaccines, one of which is already conducting trials on animals.

With a sharp rise in the number of patients for testing, the government is planning to manufacture an indigenous low-cost testing kit, which can lower the cost down to one tenth. Each test costs the government Rs 5,000 to Rs 10,000.

The government, meanwhile, has decided to procure another 22,000 testing kits immediately in addition to 27,000 kits already there.

Azad also asked Chief Ministers of 22 Indian states to take urgent measures to tackle the spread of the dreaded virus.

## Girl gang raped

FROM PAGE 1

Tushar Khan, 28, son of Moazzem Khan of Nolertak of Char Bishnupur allegedly raped the student of class six at a jute field at Heliport area in Char Vadrason.

On the morning of July 9, 2009, Kalam allegedly lured the girl to a jute field where he raped her as his associate Tushar recorded the incident on his mobile phone. When he was done, Tushar raped the victim and this time Kalam recorded it on the same mobile phone.

The two men then passed the footage around to friends, printed it on CDs which they sold in the local market and also uploaded the footage on a website.

According to the victim's family, the teenager was assaulted on July 9, 2009 while she was on her way to school at around 7 am. The frightened girl did not report the incident to anyone, but as the word spread of the video footage and people were able to identify her, she told her parents what had happened.

Sources of victim's family also said "May be she had a relation with Kalam, so when he called her she went with him and she was harassed and raped by Kalam and his associates."

The girl is now under the protection of a lawyer in Faridpur sadar.

Once informed of the incident, her parents went for help to local influential and Sadarpur police station. However, the police refused to register a case. They then filed a case with the Women and Children Repression Prevention Court in Faridpur yesterday afternoon.

The court has ordered a ban on sale of the CD and issued arrest warrants against the two men seen in the video footage.

Judge Abdul Mannan ordered the police to take necessary steps in this regard.

However, officer-in-charge of Sadarpur police station Naresh Karmoker said, "I am totally unaware of any such incident or order."

Ariful Haque, officer-in-charge of Char Vadrason police station said, "I have joined very recently and don't know anything about this matter."

## Tsunami alert

FROM PAGE 1

unlikely to affect the coast of Bangladesh as the expected time of 06:40 am (BST) Tuesday was over," said a bulletin of the Met Office.

"There is no signal for the maritime ports of Bangladesh," it said.

The US Geological Survey said a quake with a 7.6 magnitude hit the Indian Ocean about 257 kilometres north of Port Blair in India's Andaman Islands. Met office in Dhaka, however, said the magnitude of the tremor was 7.8.

Panicked people, mostly sleeping, came out of their homes after the quake jolted their houses in parts of the country. However, no casualty or damage has been reported in the earthquake.

Our correspondent from Chittagong said city dwellers woke up when the tremor hit. Panic-stricken people came out of their homes with family members and took shelter on roads to escape casualty.

Ferdous Ara, a housewife in the city's Dewanhat area, said she woke up experiencing the shake that lasted a few seconds. "It was an awful experience when my bed was shaking and I got out of my fifth floor residence with my family members," she added.

The powerful earthquake hit Tokyo and nearby areas shortly after dawn Tuesday, halting trains and forcing two nuclear reactors to shut down for safety checks. More than 30 people suffered minor injuries.

The Andaman Islands' quake was 33 kilometres deep, the U.S. Geological Survey said.

A tsunami watch was also called for India, Myanmar, Indonesia, Thailand and Bangladesh. The caution was later lifted without any tsunami being recorded, news agency Associated Press adds.

In Japan's magnitude-6.5 temblor, at least seven people were slightly hurt, the National Police Agency said. Public broadcaster NHK reported 43 were injured.

Japan's Meteorological Agency, which downgraded the quake to 6.6, also issued a tsunami warning, but that was later lifted. The quake was centred off Suruga Bay, south-west of Tokyo, at a depth of 20 kilometres.

A small increase of waves of up to 60 centimetres was observed along the coastline of Yaizu city, the agency said.

## Sand lifting

FROM PAGE 16

river course and endangering the banks of the densely populated areas nearby.

M/S Ali International filed a writ with the High Court on August 3 against BIWTA's suspension order. Following hearing the court issued a rule nisi on BIWTA as to "why the suspension should not be declared to have been issued without lawful authority and is of no legal effect".

The court also asked BIWTA to answer within four weeks. But the officials of Ali International hurriedly handed a copy of the court order to Hazaribagh police and resumed operation of sand lifting from August 7.

Meanwhile, Rapid Action Battalion-2 Deputy Director Major Amin examined the court order and found out that the HC did not issue any stay on the BIWTA suspension.

He summoned the owners of the company and asked them to stop the illegal operation. The whole operation of sand lifting came to a halt in the morning yesterday.

But the fleet of dredgers returned to operation in full swing at around 12 noon.

Locals say the company was making up to Tk 5 lakh every day at the cost of the river and their homesteads, which are endangered due to indiscriminate lifting of such a volume of sand.

"They (the company) have paid a huge amount of money to BIWTA for getting this work order. That is why they are so desperate and careless about us and the river," says a resident of Basila requesting not to be named.

Officer-in-Charge of Hazaribagh police station Abdul Razzak told The Daily Star he did not go into action as there is a court order against it. Asked if he has read the order, he replied in the negative and later admitted that the dredging was "entirely illegal".

"But I cannot do anything about it. The river is the jurisdiction of the BIWTA. Why don't they come forward and stop this illegal operation, which is destroying the river and threatening the villages?" he asked.

More than 30 people were hurt but none seriously, said officials in the two hardest-hit prefectures (states), Shizuoka and Aichi.

"The shaking was quite strong, even here. It wasn't the usual little ones," said Mitsuharu Wakamori, a police official in Aichi, about 140 kilometres west of the quake's centre. "I was nervous at the beginning, but now I'm relieved that the damage seems to be minor."

Two reactors at the Hamaoka nuclear power plant were temporarily halted for safety checks. No damage was reported. Reactors are automatically shut down whenever a quake of a certain strength is registered.

Koki Saguchi of Chubu Electric Power Co. said no problem or damage was initially detected at the reactors. Plant workers were to inspect the reactors fully before resuming operation. The inspection was expected to take at least half a day.

The tremble prompted Central Japan Railway Co. to stop operations of Shinkansen bullet trains briefly, and some local trains were still out of service hours later, the company said. Chief Cabinet Secretary Takeo Kawamura told reporters that the government set up a task force at the prime minister's office.

"We are trying to assess the extent of damage as quickly as possible," Kawamura said. "We'll do our best to rescue those who were affected." A magnitude 6.9 quake rattled the region Sunday, but caused no damage or casualties. The U.S. Geological Survey measured it at magnitude 7.1.

Japan is one of the world's most earthquake-prone countries, and experts believe Tokyo has a 90 percent chance of being hit by a major quake over the next 50 years. In 1995, a magnitude-7.2 quake in the western port city of Kobe killed 6,400 people.

Katsuyuki Abe, a Tokyo University seismology professor, said experts were studying whether Tuesday's quake could foreshadow a major temblor, that experts have warned is imminent in the region. Tokyo was devastated by an earthquake in 1923, and experts say it is overdue for another major jolt.

"We are closely monitoring the developments and examining any changes in the region," he said.

## BSF's bid to seize land foiled

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

The situation along Padua and Protappur borders in the district became tense yesterday when Indian Border Security Force (BSF) entered Bangladesh territory.

Sources said around 70 to 80 BSF troops intruded into Bangladesh land on Padua border in Jaintapur upazila at around 2:00pm. They tried to take hold of over 90 acres farmland, 150 yards off the borderline.

Their bid, however, was thwarted by the Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) men, and they had to leave the area after one and a half hours.

Meanwhile, a pre-scheduled battalion commander-level flag meeting between BDR and BSF may take place at Jakiganj upazila headquarters today.

## Muggers kill

FROM PAGE 16

microbus, three men on a CNG-run auto-rickshaw obstructed them and tried to snatch the money at gunpoint. The muggers shot Towhidul and stabbed Mintu as they tried to resist the loot, he added.

Critically injured Towhidul and Mintu were sent to Chittagong Medical College Hospital. The duty doctors declared Towhidul dead while Mintu was undergoing treatment at the Orthopaedic Ward.

A case was filed with Bandar Police Station in this connection.

Police had seized the auto-rickshaw used in the mugging and detained its driver who was being interrogated, said Second Officer Md Mainul Islam.

Officer-in-charge (OC) Abdul Baset said actions had been taken to apprehend the criminals.

## Govt to raise

FROM PAGE 16

Gas supply for power plants would be hiked during peak hours, and production in the non-gas power plants too would be raised.

Up to 300 megawatts of additional electricity will be arranged by increasing gas supply to power plants by 50 million cubic feet per day. This will be done through slashed gas supply to different industries, the meeting decided.

Petrobangla will soon sit with the industry leaders to decide which industries can do with reduced gas supply for the time being.

The meeting however snubbed the business community's call for allowing them to keep shops and markets open till 9:00pm. It instead urged officials to strictly enforce the government's directives to close the shopping malls by 8:00pm.

State Minister for Power and Energy Brig Gen (ret'd) Enamul Haque said load-shedding during Ramadan would be carried out mostly in the daytime to ensure uninterrupted power supply at night, adds UNB.

Prime Minister's Adviser Towfiq-e-Elahi Chowdhury, Energy Secretary Mohammad Mohsin, Power Secretary Abul Kalam Azad, chairmen of Power Development Board and Rural Electrification Board, and officials of Petrobangla and other power entities were present at the meeting.

## BNP

FROM PAGE 16

the party founder, Ziaur Rahman, who was also the country's president. A discussion meeting will also be held on the day.

A committee was formed with MK Anwar and Nazrul Islam Khan as its convener and member secretary respectively, to organise the programmes.

The meeting also decided that the party and its associate organisations will observe BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia's birthday on August 15, meetings sources said.

The day is also the National Day of Mourning, declared by the High Court, as Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman had been assassinated on the day in 1975 along with most of his family members by a group of army personnel. On the day the national flag is to be hoisted at half mast, and it is also a national holiday.

## Sissoo trees

FROM PAGE 16

skis and boats. The timber is also used for carvings and in floorings.

Scientists and researchers say *Plecoptera reflexa*, a leaf defoliator, *Dichmeria eridantis*, a leaf roller, *Stromantium barbatum*, a wood borer, and *Sinoxylon anale* and *Lyctus africanus* -- two types of beetles have been reported as causing considerable damage to the trees.

The fungus, *Ganoderma lucidum*, causing root and butt rot is also a common ailment that hits the tree. *Fusarium solani* and *Polyporus gilvus* also cause similar diseases. *Sishoo* also suffers minor damage from two foliage rusts and a powdery mildew.

*Sishoo* has been extensively planted at every corner of the country including riverbanks and private lands, especially in Dinajpur, Rangpur, Nilphamari, Joypurhat, Rajshahi Thakurgaon, Fardipur, Barisal, Kushtia, Rajbari, Bogra and Panchagarh. Trees in almost all of these regions have been afflicted by the fungal attacks.

According to Bangladesh Forest Research Institute (BFRI) data, in 1997 the total plantation area of *Delbergia sissoo* in the country was about 27,790 hectares. However this figure doesn't cover farmer's fields where this species is planted for profitable economic return under the agro forestry system.

Advocate ASM Mahmudul Islam planted about 5,000 *Sishoo* trees on five acres of land around five years ago of which 3,000 died within the last three years. Last week he had to have 66 trees cut down

to stop the spread of the fungal diseases. Another 140 trees are already infected.

He also said that some trees are being killed by termite attacks.

During visits to other *Sishoo* plantations, it was seen fungi diseases causing rotting of the trees' roots. Farmers also told The Daily Star that once the trees are infected, termites devour the trees.

The forest department however refutes this claim, saying termites cannot kill a full-grown tree but only feed on the dead bark of a tree. But they said that fungal attacks dry up these trees and after that termites do the rest of the damage.

Scientists and researchers have so far advised mixed plantations for *Sishoo* trees, extraction of dead and diseased plants to control spread of infection and controlling human interference in areas affected by the fungal diseases.

The tree grows naturally in the local climate. The *Sishoo* tree grows all around the globe including Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Bhutan and other neighbouring South Asian regions. The deaths have however been reported only in the subcontinent.

Forest officials of different districts agree that the situation is alarming. The forest department reported the matter to the Forest Research Institute and a team of scientists has already surveyed the affected areas.

According to them, different factors are responsible for the diseases. The depleting underground water table is one of the major reasons followed by climatic changes, said forest officials.

## Suu Kyi's confinement

FROM PAGE 16

the European Union threatening fresh sanctions and top US diplomat Hillary Clinton condemning the trial and demanding the release of US national John Yettaw.

Suu Kyi looked alert but tired during the 90-minute court session. After the verdict was announced, she stood and thanked foreign diplomats for attending her trial.

"I hope we can all work for peace and prosperity of the country," Suu Kyi said in a soft voice to diplomats seated nearby. She then was led out of the courtroom.

"Thank you for the verdict," a grim-faced Suu Kyi, wearing pink and light grey traditional Burmese dress, said after the court at Yangon's notorious Insein Prison announced the judgement.

The 64-year-old Nobel Peace Prize laureate has already been in detention for 14 of the last 20 years, mostly under house arrest, and the extension will remove her from the political scene while the country holds junta-organised elections next year.

The American, John Yettaw, 54, the epileptic former US military veteran who swam to her lakeside house in May, was sentenced to seven years of hard labour and imprisonment on three charges.

Two female aides who lived with Suu Kyi also had their sentences reduced to 18 months. The opposition leader and her assistants had both faced jail terms of up to five years.

Suu Kyi was later driven back to the house under tight security and the road outside the crumbling villa was sealed off, Myanmar officials said.

Home Affairs Minister Maung Oo had made a surprise entrance to the courtroom just minutes after the judgment was read out to announce Than Shwe's intervention in the case.

He said her time in house arrest could be shortened "if she lives well in the suspended sentence", saying that the move was "also for the peaceful security of the country and also to move towards democratisation".

The case has drawn international outrage amid claims that the junta was concocting the charges to keep her locked up for the elections due in 2010, Myanmar's first since the cancelled vote of 1990.

Suu Kyi's lawyers argued during the trial that she could not be held responsible for Yettaw's actions. Her lawyer Nyan Win said her legal team would decide whether to lodge an appeal.

Yettaw, a Mormon whose teenage son died two years ago in a motorbike crash, had testified that he swam to her house after receiving a "message from God" that he must protect Suu Kyi against a terrorist plot to assassinate her.

Clinton, whose country is

one of the leading enforcers of sanctions against Myanmar, said that Suu Kyi "should not have been tried and she should not have been convicted."

"We also call for the release of more than 2,000 political prisoners including the American John Yettaw. We are concerned about the harsh sentence imposed on him, especially in light of his medical condition," Clinton said.

The EU vowed to take "targeted measures" by reinforcing sanctions against the regime, while British Prime Minister Gordon Brown condemned the "sham trial" and French President Nicolas Sarkozy called for new sanctions.

Malaysia Tuesday led calls for an urgent meeting of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) while fellow members Indonesia and the Philippines firmly condemned the verdict.

Amnesty International's Myanmar analyst Benjamin Zawacki told AFP: "This is an attempt by the government to try to present a certain amount of leniency. But it's just enough to keep her away on election day."

However, Myanmar's state-run newspapers carried a commentary Tuesday telling foreign countries not to meddle in the nation's affairs and warning Suu Kyi's supporters not to cause "riots or protests" that would "harm democracy."

## Taliban torch

FROM PAGE 16

schools were closed for the night, he said, but the buildings were burnt to the ground.

Shams-ul-Arifeen, the education secretary of the North West Frontier Province (NWFP), confirmed the arson attacks.

Schools reopened in the restive area of Pakistan's north-west on August 1. They had been closed for nearly three months as the military pursued a fierce offensive to crush the Islamist hardliners in three districts including Buner.

The military claims to have largely defeated the extremists, and families who fled the fighting have been returning home in recent weeks, although sporadic attacks rumble on.

Officials have said that about 356 schools in the region were damaged by the Taliban and during the fighting. Authorities are working on an emergency plan to rebuild the schools or hire private buildings.

More than 600,000 children enrolled in schools in the conflict zone have missed up to one school year due to unrest, according to the UN.

In the NWFP, only 22 percent of women and girls older than 15 can read and write, the UN has said. The Taliban generally oppose the education of women, and frequently target girls' schools

## Shakib blows

FROM PAGE 1

for Bangladesh as the Tigers amassed their highest ODI total of 320 for eight after being sent into bat on an easy-paced surface. Bangladesh's previous best score was 301-7 against Kenya at Bogra in 2006.

In chase of the mammoth target, Charles Coventry and Sean Williams hit half-centuries after Syed Rasse's double strike to test the Tigers, but their efforts were not good enough to cause an upset as the home team were dismissed for 271 runs in 46.1 overs.

As usually Shakib's spin troubled the Zimbabwe batsmen most as he captured two wickets while pacer Nazmul Hossain and left-arm spinner Enamul Haque also picked up two wickets each to make sure the Zimbabweans lose wickets at regular intervals.

It was however Shakib's batting which hogged the spotlight on the day as the left-hander came up with the typically go-getting knock when the Bangladesh innings lacked momentum against the disciplined bowling by the Zimbabweans.

The 22-year-old stand-in skipper, who took over the reign from injured Mashrafe Bin Mortaza, started carefully, milking singles to settle down in the middle and then went for the kill. During his stormy 64-

## Illegal structures

FROM PAGE 16

Earlier at three-hour meeting, the committee observed that illegal parking of vehicles, unplanned road-digging by utility service providers and weak traffic management are the major reasons the city's traffic situation is worsening.

"We have also asked the departments concerned to construct diversion roads where kitchen and fish markets are near bus stops," Rony told reporters.

The committee chief said they have discussed ways to ensure uninterrupted BRTC bus services.

The committee stressed the need for purchase of quality buses to replace the present fleet, most of which is imported from China and does not run well after a couple of years.

It also asked the authorities to move to recover the huge railway land and property grabbed by vested quarters.

Rony, also a ruling AL lawmaker, said the problems that Bangladesh Railway faces are mountainous, and the committee has decided to resolve those in phases and in consultation with the other ministries.

Muzibur Rahman said they have asked railway authorities to expand rail tracks across the country, especially in the south to connect the Sundarbans to attract tourists to the world's largest mangrove forest.

On the cracks on Jamuna Bridge, he said the law ministry has already given a letter to the South Korean construction firm Hyundai, seeking compensation for negligence in building the bridge.

Committee members Zillul Hakim, Ekrumul Karim Chowdhury, Abu Zahir, HM Golam Reza and Apu Ukil attended the meeting.

ball 104, the left-hander smote nine fours and four sixes. In the process he bettered Alok Kapali's mark of 86-ball century by reaching three figures in just 63 balls.

Shakib played quite a few hits over extra cover and a few more to the straight boundary and