

Govt mulls

FROM PAGE 1
law and order situation of the region immediately," State Minister for Home Shamsul Haque Tuku told The Daily Star.

Sources in the home ministry said the state minister would direct the law enforcers to launch a combing operation in the region to capture outlawed party men and their firearms, prior to announcing the surrender process that the government is actively considering to give them a chance to lay down their firearms and return to normal life.

Earlier on August 20, Inspector General of Police Nur Mohammad and Director General of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) Hassan Mahmood Khandaker visited Kushtia and directed the law enforcers to launch a joint drive. Since then the law enforcers have been conducting a special drive in the region in which at least 16 extremists have been killed in 'shootouts' between the law enforcers and their cohorts.

"The combing operation will be launched to cut down the strength of the outlawed parties and force their armed members to give in," said a senior official of the home ministry.

The home ministry is working as to whether the outlawed party activists, if surrendered, could be brought under general mercy of the government like that of 1999 when 2,700 members of different outlawed parties surrendered with 2,100 firearms.

"This time we want to do it in such a way so that the two sides (government and the extremists) are benefited," state minister Tuku told The Daily Star on Wednesday.

He said the move could be similar to that of 1999 to improve law and order situation, by curbing criminal activities in the region.

Different sources said the outlawed party members have so far killed around 250 people in the southwest region after the Awami League-led grand alliance government assumed office. The southwest region includes Kushtia, Meherpur, Chuadanga, Jhenidah, Jessore and Khulna.

Besides, 30 outlaws were also killed in the hands of the law enforcers during this period. Half of them have been killed in last 15 days, sources added.

Talking to The Daily Star at his secretariat office, the state minister said the government would go tough against the outlawed parties if they do not surrender willingly.

The outlawed parties intensify their activities in the region through killings and extortion allegedly with the backing of some ruling party leaders.

Former home minister Mohammad Nasim who initiated the process of surrender during his term told The Daily Star yesterday that there is no alternative to surrender to improve the overall law and order situation of the region.

"You can temporarily improve the law and order by capturing the extremists but you can't make it permanent," he said, observing that the decision of the then government asking the outlaws to

surrender was a right one to establish peace in the region.

"Now the government will have to urge them to surrender alongside launching a massive combing operation. Then, the outlawed party men will become morally weak and surrender," said Nasim, also a central AL leader.

He said the government will have to initiate the process keeping long-term rehabilitation plan for the outlaws so that they do not go back to their banned party again. He observed that over 500 members of different outlawed parties, rehabilitated in Ansar Battalion on temporary basis after their surrender in 1999, have still been facing problems.

Sources said over 300 men left the battalion and returned to their previous occupations of killing, mugging and other modes of criminal acts.

Talking to The Daily Star, AL Joint General Secretary Mahbubul Alam Hanif, who hails from Kushtia, said the government could take the initiative and the party would provide all out assistance to this end.

Hanif, also a special assistant to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, observed that there were flaws in the surrender process initiated by the then AL government in 1999.

4 killed

FROM PAGE 1
Chowdhury, a passenger of the bus, said.

The truck driver managed to flee with the truck.

The injured were admitted to Shaheed Ziaur Rahman Medical College and a local private hospital in the area.

60 BCL

FROM PAGE 16
A Juba League adherent, with ten bottles of phensidyl at Sahebganj under Kotwali Police Station Thursday night. Tuhin was coming from Haragachh by a motorbike. He was also sent to Rangpur central jail.

Meanwhile, Kaunia police arrested five activists of Juba League and one of Swachhchasebak League at Teesta Railway Bridge as they beat up the bridge toll contractor Nojir Hossain for refusing to pay extortion money.

The arrestees are Abdul Motaleb, Saiful Islam, Siddique Hossain, Nur-un-Nabi and Rabiul Islam of Juba League and Mosharraf Hossain of Swachhchasebak League Kaunia upazila unit.

Kounia police sources said on information a team led by a sub-inspector rushed to Teesta Bridge and rescued Nojir from the clutches of the arrestees.

A sub-inspector of Kounia Police Station preferring anonymity said the miscreants were beating up Nojir as he denied paying Tk 10,000 as toll money.

Joint Convener of Swachhchasebak League of the upazila unit Jamsheer Ali admitted the fact and said earlier Juba League and Swachhchasebak League leaders of the upazila tried to make a negotiation with the toll contractor. However, the incident did not occur due to internal feud, he added.

Probe finds

FROM PAGE 1
administration said use of leased out hill land, which is meant for rubber cultivation and orchards, by a third-party is a violation of the lease contracts.

"As I understand, sub-leasing is prohibited, but what Destiny did is kind of a profit-sharing arrangements with the lease-holders. There is no question of us owning or grabbing land in Bandarban," explained Gen Harun.

The investigation report says people of the retired army chief cut hill slopes 5km off the Ali Kadam-Thanchi road and planted saplings on jhum land owned by indigenous people.

It says during a recent visit to the spot Toinfa Mouja Headman Reng Pung Mro, who was with the investigation committee, expressed his ignorance about how the retired general and his men got hold of the land there.

The probe body received allegations from locals that the mouja headman had sold out land ownership to retired army officials. Allegations of other wrongdoings were brought against the headman's staff Mojammeel Haq.

Arun Das, a member of the probe body, told The Daily Star that under the patronage of Destiny Group, Mojammeel grabbed land owned by indigenous people. He said U Ky Rang Tripura and Malini Tripura were evicted from their homes near the Dolujhri canal.

Destiny Tree Plantation's Director (Operation) Md Farid Akhter told this correspondent at his Dhaka office on Tuesday that they did not get any land allocation from the government in Bandarban.

"We made agreements with lease holders and they rented out the land to us for commercial plantation," he said.

Farid said they have around 3,500 acres of land in Bandarban under the plantation programme. Denying having evicted anyone from their ancestral land, he said Destiny Group is rather creating jobs for the local people.

In the wake of gross irregularities centring land by Destiny Group and mounting pressures on the administration from locals against land grabbing, Bandarban DC Mizanur Rahman issued an order on August 30 banning Destiny's tree plantation there.

Gen Harun, however, told The Daily Star that the ban was applicable for the disputed Toinfa mouja only--a claim the Bandarban district administration dismissed.

Earlier, Destiny said through press advertisements that a total of 5,330 acres of land is under its control by means of buying, leasing, hiring and partnership. And of this, more than 4,225 acres of land is in 22 moujas in Bandarban.

But Nazemul Islam Chowdhury, a director of Destiny Tree Plantation Ltd, could not explain how they owned land in Chittagong Hill Tracts region without any permission of the district administration.

14 hartal

FROM PAGE 16
Tuku told this during a discussion with the police officials in Pabna Circuit House here.

Stressing the importance of duty of the police officials, the minister said that those who will perform their duty properly, will be awarded in time.

But, if any official fails to perform the duty-bound tasks, they will be punished accordingly, Tuku warned.

The minister also urged the police officials to ensure their best performance while on duty.

Earlier, the state minister spoke as chief guest in an assembly held at Solonda Bazar in Santhia upazila of the district.

Tuku said there is no way the cases against Tarique Rahman and Arafat Rahman could be withdrawn because they have looted money from the country.

If their cases are withdrawn then it is meaningless to continue other people's trials in the country, Tuku added.

Lawmaker of Pabna-5 constituency Golam Faruk Khandaker Prince and Pabna-4 constituency Shamsur Rahman Sharif Dilu, Pabna Police Superintendent Nibas Chandra Majhi also spoke on the occasion.

Extortionists

FROM PAGE 1
under Savar Police Station.

Bachchu hails from Rajbari district.

He was chased and caught when he jumped into the river Turag at around 10:00am, Savar police said.

Meanwhile, body of Bahrain expatriate Mohammad Rafiq, 22, was found beheaded in Jhauchar village of Savar at around 9:00am yesterday.

Rafiq's father Fazlu Miah said his son went out of their house around 10:30pm on Thursday and did not come back.

He, however, could not ascertain the reason behind the killing.

Savar police said none was arrested in connection with the murder.

Poor flock to city

FROM PAGE 16
Bogra a few days ago along with a cousin. They want to work as rickshaw-pullers and make some money in the city as they can't find any work as day labourers or hired workers in Bogra.

Shukur told The Daily Star, "There is no work in our upazila right now. There are a few jobs as day labourers but the wages are very low and not enough to maintain my family of five."

"For around eight hours of labour on farmland as a hired worker, I earn hardly Tk 100 a day but here in this city, I can earn around Tk 500 a day. So even after paying Tk 70 to the rickshaw owner I am left with a neat income," Shukur said with a smile.

To cut the living cost in the big city, Shukur spends his nights at the rickshaw garage in Mirpura area along with fellow rickshaw pullers.

"All year round I eagerly await the two Eids. During the two Eids my income triples," said a smiling Abdul Mazid, an elderly beggar who has been making the move to the city twice a year from Mymensingh for the last five years.

"With people giving out Fitra and Zakat, I also get to eat some delicious food," says the elderly man.

Abdul Mazid, Mymensingh chose the Azampur Graveyard area as his route as he thinks he earns more in this area than others.

Dhaka pushes

FROM PAGE 16
any problems. They are now even in a position to bargain with the Malaysia authorities for increasing their salaries and other facilities," said Masudur Rahman, first secretary (Labour) of Bangladesh High Commission.

Mustafiz said Bangladesh government should lobby the Malaysian government for giving Bangladesh "source country" status.

Thirteen South and Central Asian countries have been recognised as source nations from where Malaysian companies hire manpower on a regular basis through a transparent system.

The migrant workers also believe that anomalies in manpower recruitment will end once Bangladesh receives "source country" status.

Workers and officials said agents usually send more workers to Malaysia than required under special arrangements rendering the additional workers jobless.

"Agents in both countries are bringing additional workers causing sufferings for them," Mustafizur Rahman, a small trader in Kuala Lumpur, told The Daily Star.

Mustafiz, owner of two shops, who has been living in Malaysia for 17 years, alleged that travel agents and syndicates manipulate the system and make money under the special arrangements deceiving poor workers.

RESTRICTION ON BANGLADESHI WORKERS
The Bangladesh high com-

Barapukuria

FROM PAGE 1
BCMCL sources said the agitating workers also had been obstructing the sale of coal since 1:00pm yesterday.

BCMCL officials led by Managing Director Kamruzzaman held a meeting at the conference room of the company with leaders of the agitating miners Thursday night to resolve the issue. But they failed to provide any solution, sources said.

Kamruzzaman admitted the miners' unrest at the BCMCL.

The BCMCL, a coal mining subsidiary of state owned Petrobangla, pays only Tk 4500 to 7200 to underground miners who produce 70 to 80 thousand tonnes of coal a month working eight-hour shifts.

Md Rabiul Islam, president of Barapukuria Coalmine Workers' Union, alleged that they had been trying to realise their demands since May but the authorities did not pay heed to it.

Meanwhile, at least 300 Chinese miners under China National Machinery Import and Export Corporation (CMC) have started extraction of coal from one of the coal-faces during the strike.

But sources said coal extraction by only 300 Chinese miners would not sustain for long as they will need to extract from more coal-faces.

BCMCL sources said they have to count a loss of Tk 3 crore a day if coal production remains suspended.

"On Fridays I sit in front of the main entrance to the graveyard as the people coming to the graves to offer fataha (prayers) for their beloved ones are generous in their alms," Abdul Mazid says.

Amir Hossain, a cab driver who has come from Karimganj thana in Kishoreganj a few days before Ramadan said, "Every year during Ramadan I drive a taxi cab here. My income goes up to around Tk 3,000 from the regular Tk 1,500 I earn back in my hometown."

"Though sitting through the thick traffic jams is sometimes intolerable, it still works out because during Ramadan people are more determined to get to their destinations on time so they don't haggle much," he headed.

Meanwhile, DMP Joint Commissioner (traffic) Shafiqur Rahman recently told The Daily Star, "The number of vehicles in the city is much more than the accommodation capacity of the city streets. This causes the horrible traffic jams."

"We have already taken special measures to keep the traffic situation under control during Ramadan. Already 800 traffic policemen have been deployed in different intersections of the city and a drive is ongoing to stop vehicles running without proper licences," he said.

So far 1,700 vehicles have been seized and 2,000 rickshaws fined have been under this drive, he said.

missioner said since Malaysia still has a huge demand for workers, it is likely to lift the restriction soon on hiring the 55,000 Bangladeshi workers, whose visas were cancelled early this year.

"We are holding talks with the Malaysian authorities. The restriction on the 55,000 visas is expected to be withdrawn anytime," he said.

Malaysia cancelled the work visas in March much to the frustration of the Bangladeshi workers, saying the country was hit by the global recession.

Malaysia hired around five lakh Bangladeshi workers from mid-2006 but irregularities in the recruitment process rendered many of them unemployed or unpaid.

There are allegations that a section of Bangladesh high commission officials in Malaysia joined hands with the unscrupulous manpower brokers.

Atiqur Rahman said he is very firm to check irregularities at Bangladesh high commission in Kuala Lumpur.

"My mission is to root out corruption from the high commission. But, I cannot take responsibility for corruption done earlier," he said.

Deal on sharing

FROM PAGE 1
soon after the joint hydrological observation team comprising experts from Bangladesh and India prepared the draft on water availability and other related issues.

During dry season, the river Teesta faces water crunch as India has constructed Gozaldoba Barrage in the upstream and divert water from the common river that enters greater Rangpur region of Bangladesh.

Bangladesh and India had dialogues on sharing of water of the Teesta for years.

According to Bangladesh Water Development Board, Bangladesh's Teesta barrage (first phase) in the downstream covers irrigation of 750,000 hectares of land.

Asked whether Anup Chetia to be handed over to India, the foreign minister said Dhaka's agreement with New Delhi is only on transferring sentenced persons. "Anup Chetia has already finished his jail term and will not come under the purview of the agreement," she said.

As per the agreement, Indian citizens sentenced in Bangladesh would be able to finish their rest of the jail terms in India if they apply to Bangladesh government. This goes vice versa for Bangladeshi prisoners in India.

Indian separatist leader Anup Chetia was caught in Bangladesh in 1997 for intruding into Bangladesh. He has recently finished his jail term.

Terming the four-day visit very successful the foreign minister said New Delhi would allow products from landlocked Nepal and Bhutan via India.

Dipu Moni said both the countries have agreed to discuss and resolve all the existing issues as a 'package programme'.

Police camp

FROM PAGE 16
Magura Mihir Kumar Das rushed to the police camp and assured the villagers of proper action against the police officer.

Locals said at around 8:00am yesterday ASI Lutfur arrived at a house adjacent to the camp uncalled-for and interfered in a quarrel between house owner Tayebur Rahman and his wife.

As retired army personnel Tayebur protested Lutfur's interference, the ASI furiously returned to the camp warning of dire consequences.

After a while, Lutfur along with some constables went to the house, took Tayebur to the camp and beat him indiscriminately.

They even uprooted two nails of his right and left legs with forceps leaving him critically injured.

On information locals laid siege to the police camp and demanded Tayebur's release.

ASP Mihir Kumar Das arrived on the scene and brought the situation under control. He sent the victim to Magura Sadar Hospital under police custody.

Tayebur had been undergoing treatment there in a critical condition as of 5:00pm.

Mihir Kumar told The Daily Star that Lutfur had been found guilty after primary investigation.

Obama leads

FROM PAGE 16
Obama stood with heads bowed outside the White House.

On a rain-swept day so different than that crisp September morning eight years ago, ceremonies were also being held in New York, at the Pentagon and in a Pennsylvania field where a fourth plane crashed short of its target.

It was the first time that Obama, who was driving to work as a state senator in Illinois when he learned of the attacks on the radio, had led the national remembrance ceremonies as president.

At New York's Ground Zero, all that is left of the two huge towers that were brought down by fuel-laden planes, volunteers began reading the names of the 2,752 people killed in the strike at the heart of US military.

Obama stepped out in front of the South Portico of the White House, with First Lady Michelle Obama, who was wearing a black dress.

After three chimes played by a US Marine in ceremonial dress, the first couple bowed their heads and observed the moment of silence, joined by around 150 members of the White House staff.

Obama raised his head, and put his hand over his heart as a Marine bugler played a haunting rendition of Taps, the military lament played over soldiers' graves.

For hours before the ceremony, rain had sluiced Washington, but moments before Obama and the First Lady appeared the rain tapered off and they were able to stand bare-headed.

As soon as they returned to the White House, the deluged resumed.

The President was later to deliver remarks and lay a wreath at the Pentagon, where another hijacked airliner crashed, on a day which sent shock waves around the world and left a political legacy Obama is still trying to master.

One US cable news network, MSNBC, marked the anniversary by replaying the terrifying minute-by-minute video of the first moment of the attacks, when planes hit the world Trade Center.

Indian

FROM PAGE 16
The tall and imposing minister for non-conventional energy, Farooq Abdullah, argued that economy class seats did not give him sufficient leg-room.

Their pleas compelled Singh to say that ministers could travel business class after all -- but only after seeking permission.

The reports came on the heels of Foreign Minister S.M. Krishna and his deputy Shashi Tharoor being asked to vacate their luxury hotels in keeping with the government's austerity drive.

With their official residences under renovation, both had been staying in deluxe hotels since joining the federal cabinet in May after Singh's Congress party was re-elected earlier this year.

Last month, Congress chief Sonia Gandhi had asked party colleagues to accept a 20-percent salary cut for a year.

India's economy has been reeling under the combined impact of the global slowdown and poor monsoon rains, which have depressed farm output.

swine flu vaccine

FROM PAGE 1
and a second time to be inoculated against swine flu, what doctors call the 2009 H1N1 strain.

Thursday's swine flu vaccine reports centre on adults; studies in children aren't finished yet.

But scientists had feared that people of all ages would need two shots about a month apart because the new H1N1 strain is so genetically different from normally circulating flu strains that most of the population has little if any immunity.

Chinese manufacturers gave the first hint a week ago that one dose could be enough. But different manufacturers make different formulations of the vaccine, so more evidence was needed.

Thus the CSL study, rushed out by the New England Journal of Medicine late Thursday, is welcome news. In a study of 240 adults, half younger than 50 and half over, one shot prompted the same kind of immune response indicating protection that is seen with regular flu vaccine. And a standard 15-microgram dose not the double dose that also was tested was enough.

"It's really striking how incredibly similar this is to every other study of a seasonal flu vaccine I've ever seen," said Dr John Treanor, a flu specialist at the University of Rochester who examined the data.

CSL, which is one US vaccine supplier, found the same side effects in its study that people experience with regular flu vaccine, which is no surprise since this shot is merely a recipe change from the annual standby. About 45 percent of recipients had mild reactions such as a headache, sore arm or redness at the shot site.

On Friday, the NIH is set to release results of its own studies of hundreds of adults that confirm that one shot works, Fauci said. Plus, the US work shows that people are protected between eight days and 10 days after that inoculation, he said.

One dose means tight supplies of H1N1 vaccine won't be stretched so badly after all. The US has ordered 195 million doses, based on the hope that 15 micrograms was indeed the right dose. Had it taken twice that dose, or two shots apiece, half as many people could have received the vaccine.

The winter flu vaccine is widely available now, and US health authorities urged people Thursday to get it out of the way now before swine flu shots start arriving in mid-October.

Despite all the headlines about swine flu, which has become the main influenza strain circulating in the world, doctors do expect some grade-various flu to hit this fall too the kind that every year kills 36,000 Americans and hospitalises 200,000.

"Take some individual responsibility to stay healthy during the flu season," said Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius, who scheduled her own seasonal shot for Friday.

Waiting to get the first inoculation out of the way "is not in anybody's best interest," added Dr Nancy Nielsen, past president of the American Medical Association. She said busy doctors need to have completed regular vaccinations by the time they have to deal with H1N1 shots.

There's no way to predict how much of either flu strain will circulate.

"This year, we are in uncharted territory," warned Dr Thomas Frieden, director of the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention.

He said some parts of the Southeast in the past few weeks have experienced as much flu as is usually seen in the middle of winter. So far, it's all the H1N1 variety, with schools and colleges experiencing outbreaks almost as soon as classes began.

Indeed, a typical school student who catches swine flu will spread it to two to three classmates, says a stark new estimate published Thursday in the journal Science. Flu specialist Ira Longini of the University of Washington in Seattle based the estimate on how swine flu spread through a New York City school in April, and some other schools since.

A separate report in Thursday's New England Journal suggested European manufacturers might get away with an even smaller dose. Novartis Vaccines added what's called an adjuvant, or immune-boosting chemical, to its version of the swine flu shot and found a 7.5-microgram dose was effective. It did, however, spark more of those reactions like injection-site pain.

Numerous countries allow flu vaccines with adjuvants to sell every year, but the US has never approved an adjuvant-containing flu shot.

Ex-president

FROM PAGE 16
corruption trial that he said was political revenge for his lifelong push to declare independence from China.

Chen, the first former Taiwanese leader to be convicted in a criminal case, boycotted the verdict in the Taipei district court, which also handed a life term to his wheelchair-bound wife Wu Chen-chien.

A court official said 58-year-old Chen -- held at a detention centre on the outskirts of Taipei since December -- was found guilty of embezzling state funds, laundering money, accepting bribes and committing forgery.

"Chen was using his background and position to cause damage to the country. That's why the court sentenced him to life imprisonment," court spokesman Huang Chun-ming said.

Hundreds of protesters rallied outside the court shouting, "A-Bian is innocent" and "Release A-Bian", using Chen's nickname.

Chen spokesman Chiang Chi-ming said the verdict was "totally unacceptable" and "illegal", blasting a decision to replace the judges in the middle of the trial.

"This is obviously a political persecution targeting former president Chen," Chiang told AFP.

Under Taiwanese law, a life sentence is automatically appealed.

The former president's son Chen Chih-chung got a prison term of two and a half years for money laundering, while daughter-in-law Huang Jui-ching received a suspended sentence for the same charge.

"We are very disappointed," Chen Chih-chung told reporters through his lawyer.

The verdicts marked the climax of a court drama that has gripped and divided the island's 23 million people for months.

Chen had blasted the trial as a vendetta triggered by his eight years in power when he was pursuing independence from China.

Taiwan has been governed separately from China since 1949, but Beijing still considers the island as part of its territory and has vowed to take it back, by force if necessary.