

'Influential group

FROM PAGE 1
case also could have been filed under the existing law of the land.

The journalists said, "We have observed with surprise that after the publication of the Prothom Alo report one of the largest conglomerates of the country published advertisements in the newspapers against the Prothom Alo instead of following the traditional laws."

"We were flabbergasted at the personal attack by the quarter on the editor and publisher of the Prothom Alo without refuting any part of the news published in the daily and to our utter surprise a section of the press indulged in publishing those advertisements made out of personal malice," they added.

"The renowned newspapers and journalists have always maintained relations of mutual respect and harmony despite they are poles apart in their editorial policies. Intellectual debates took place as per the editorial norms but personal malicious attack or speaking ill of others has never been indulged," the statement said.

The third parties could never be able to poke their noses in to take the advantage of the argument. But some newspapers have deviated from this by publishing advertisement of the industrial organisation. It is a matter of great regret, the statement added.

The GD filed by the controversial business firm against the noted editors of the Prothom Alo and Samakal and the owners of the two newspapers who are known as the leaders of the business community is not only unacceptable it is also ridiculous. The common people of the country have undoubtedly rejected it, it said.

The established industrial house of the country rather made itself an object of ridicule by their acts. Their activities remind people of the army-backed caretaker government period when the powerful people brought allegations of extortion against journalists if they were displeased with them.

The slanderous remarks of the said business firm against individuals are a challenge to the healthy and investigative trend of journalism of the country. The journalists of the country will face the challenge with their honesty, sincerity and professionalism, they hoped.

"We urge upon all responsible media and journalists to unite and face all evil forces which are out to ruin the honest and investigative journalism. However powerful the evil force may be the media and journalists of the country will expose them. The last resort of truth and common people in the country is mass media. And the mass media is only accountable to them," the statement maintained.

The signatories to the statement are noted journalists ABM Musa, former president of Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalists (BFUJ) Habibur Rahman Milon, former senior vice president of BFUJ Syed Akhter Yusuf, former secretary general of BFUJ Shahjahan Mia, former general secretary of the National Press Club (NPC) Shafiqur Rahman, former

Reconstitute

FROM PAGE 16
Rashed Khan Menon, chairman of the standing committee told reporters after their meeting held at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhavan.

On irregularities in recruiting employees in NU, Menon, also president of Workers' Party, said, "The probe body has to submit their report before the committee by next one month."

The NU authorities formed the probe body few months ago to unearth irregularities in recruiting employees.

The committee also recommended that the proposed national education policy be finalised by this year.

It said, "To gain political influence, some quarters are deprecating the policy and confusing people with propaganda."

Menon said although importance has been given to modernise madrasa education in the new education policy, some Islamist organisations are spreading propaganda against the policy.

Besides, he mentioned that the information ministry has submitted the committee a copy of CD on DU incidents and the committee would review the footage and the information later on to come up with their decision.

general secretary of National Press Club Swapan Saha, former secretary of SAFMA, Bangladesh Zahiduzzaman Faruque, president of Women Journalists Centre Nasimun Ara Haque, former president of BFUJ Manzurul Ahsan Bulbul and former secretary general of BFUJ Abdul Jalil Bhuiyan.

Darfur kidnappers demand 3m euro ransom

AFP, Khartoum

The kidnappers of a Franco-British Red Cross worker in Sudan's war-torn Darfur region are demanding a three-million-euro ransom, a senior Sudanese official said yesterday.

Abdel Baqi Gilani, a state humanitarian affairs minister, said they have "demanded a ransom of three million euros (4.5 million dollars), but we will not pay a ransom, and the same goes for the Red Cross."

Gilani added, without elaborating, that the government had ruled out any military option to free Gauthier Lefevre, 35, kidnapped last week in West Darfur state near the Chadian border.

For her part, International Committee of the Red Cross spokeswoman Tamara al-Rifai said the kidnappers had asked for the ransom on Monday but stressed that the Red Cross did not discuss such demands.

"The policy of the ICRC is not to pay a ransom," she said, without disclosing any figure.

The ICRC said after a previous contact with the kidnappers that Lefevre was in good health.

This was the fifth abduction of a foreign worker since March when Sudan's ties with foreign aid groups soured after the International Criminal Court issued an arrest warrant for President Omar al-Bashir for alleged war crimes in Darfur.

It is the first time a Red Cross employee has been targeted.

Last week, two female aid workers - Irishwoman Sharon Commins and Ugandan Hilda Kawuki - were freed after being held hostage for 107 days in Darfur.

An Irish newspaper quoted a Bashir advisor, Musa Hilal, as saying they were ransomed for 150,000 euros (225,000 dollars). Irish, Sudanese and Ugandan authorities denied they were freed in exchange for money.

Mohiuddin's 2

FROM PAGE 1
and Freedom Party leader Abdur Rahim on Thursday.

On Sunday detectives arrested Sheikh Shafiqur Rahman Sofu from his Segunbagicha residence on the same charge.

Police told reporters that Sofu was former organising secretary of Freedom Party.

Both Dalim and Rashid have been holed up abroad since the trial of August 15 killing case began in 1996.

DB sources said they suspect that detained Sohel and Hasan might have link to the bomb attack on Taposh.

They added that police might get important clues from the two brothers about the bomb attack.

All the arrestees are being interrogated in DB custody, police said.

Assistant Commissioner (AC) of DB Nasir Uddin Khan told The Daily Star that they seized two passports of Mehnaz and also came to know that Mehnaz made trips to Pakistan every year.

Meanwhile, wife of detainee Sheikh Shafiqur Rahman Sofu yesterday at a press conference made an appeal to the Home Minister seeking release of her husband claiming that her husband was not a freedom party activist or leader.

When DB officials arrested Sofu from his residence, they did not let her know on what charge Sofu was arrested but the following day she found in the newspapers that Sofu was arrested for suspected link to the bomb attack on Taposh and Sofu was a leader of Freedom Party.

"My husband is a BNP activist but a tenant of my house was a Freedom Party activist," she claimed.

However, Additional Deputy Commissioner (PR) Walid Hossain of Dhaka Metropolitan Police told The Daily Star that Koly Begum's allegations and claims are baseless as DB personnel arrested Sofu following the information extracted from the other detainees.

BDR proposes

FROM PAGE 1

The BDR urged the government to write off Tk 4.5 crore loan for Operation Daal-Bhat, which has remained due out of the Tk 295.19 crore. Writing off the loan is necessary to close the accounts of the Operation, the report said, adding that food items worth Tk 4.5 crore have rotted due to lack of preservation after the mutiny.

It sought the home ministry's nod for building a museum and monument, and for observing the day in memory of the army officials and others killed during the mutiny.

The border force, which is going to be renamed Border Guard Bangladesh, also sought the home ministry's decision in principle for land acquisition to set up new sectors, battalion headquarters and border outposts.

The BDR also wanted allocation of funds for repair and maintenance of border pillars.

JS bodies

FROM PAGE 1

discussed ADR system as an effective measure to recover defaulted loans of over Tk 20,000 crore. The meeting, however, decided to hold more discussions with stakeholders and among committees to find effective measures to this effect.

On scrutinising the money loan court law (amendment) bill, the parliamentary standing committee on law ministry invited the members of other committee.

"We want to get rid of the culture of defaulting loans. For this we want to ensure practical measures," Suranjit Sengupta, chief of the parliamentary body on law ministry, told The Daily Star after the meeting.

He said, "The two committees held a joint meeting for the first time in the country's parliamentary history."

Suranjit said filing cases against the loan defaulters to recover loans has become uncertain. "We want to introduce alternative dispute resolution system to resolve the problems outside of the courts and to ensure recovery of defaulted loans," he said.

Therefore, on completion of talks with the finance ministry and other stakeholders, the parliamentary body that scrutinised the money loan court law (amendment) bill will recommend for including a new provision in the bill to introduce ADR system, he added.

Suranjit said the parliamentary body on finance ministry will hold talks with the stakeholders including bankers association, owners of sick industries with defaulted loans and will come up with concrete proposals to overcome the situation.

Meanwhile, the standing committee on finance ministry has already formed a sub-committee to work out ways to recover the defaulted loans, he added.

"We will invite the finance ministry to be present at the next joint meeting as well," Suranjit added.

He said only Tk 10,000 crore defaulted loans have been recovered in last 19 years. "The situation cannot be allowed to go on. We want to free the nation from the loan defaulting culture," he stressed.

Order to attach

FROM PAGE 16

Sessions Judge's Court also issued an order yesterday to attach the property of three other accused - Director of the company Abdul Guni, pharmacists Mahbulul Islam and Anamul Haque - in the case.

Assistant Director of Drug Administration Department, Comilla line, Abdul Khayer Chowdhury filed the case on August 11 with a Brahmanbaria court accusing five officials of the company.

The accused are Mizanur Rahman, two directors Begum Shiuli Rahman and Abdul Guni, two pharmacists Mahbulul and Anamul.

Of them, Mizanur is in Dhaka central jail in another case, his wife Shiuli Rahman was released on bail while Abdul Guni, Mahbulul and Anamul are still hiding.

In the case statement, Abdul Khayer said children died due to intake of substandard paracetamol syrup produced by Rid Pharma, and claimed that all medicines of Rid Pharma including vitamin syrup are below standard.

On July 22, Abdul Khayer sealed off Rid Pharma's factory at Nandanpur in Brahmanbaria as per the order of Drug Administration Department.

Besides, on August 10, three more cases were filed against Rid Pharma in Dhaka, Narayanganj and Sylhet.

Earlier, on October 19, Dhaka Metropolitan Session Judge ANM Bashir Ullah rejected Mizanur's bail prayer and sent him to jail.

SC denounces

FROM PAGE 16

submissions of advocate Abdur Razzaque Khan, counsel for Bangabandhu murder convict Sultan Shahrar Rashid Khan.

It was the 17th day of hearing on the appeals of five convicts against their death sentence.

Razzaque told the court that a few army personnel, who played roles during the incidents of August 15, 1975, are now in the custody while some are witnesses and others silent audience. He said those who gave directions and coordinated the killings are now out of the scene.

When the assailants entered his house, Bangabandhu made phone calls to different offices, including the Gonobhaban, Bangabhaban and Rajarbagh police control room, but nobody received the calls, Razzaque said.

Bangabandhu sought assistance from the then army chief Shafiqur Rahman by telephone saying the army had attacked his house and perhaps they killed his son Sheikh Kamal. Bangabandhu asked Shafiqur to send forces to his house to resist the attack.

Shafiqur replied, "Sir, can you get out of the house? Let me see what I can do for you." This cannot be a statement of an army chief and is not acceptable, Razzaque said.

He quoted the statements of Shafiqur, saying the telephone conversation between Bangabandhu and Shafiqur took place sometime before 5:00am on August 15, 1975. Shafiqur then ordered Col Shafiqat Jamil, then chief of 46 Brigade, and Rakkhi Bahini officials to save Bangabandhu. Shafiqur then telephoned Bangabandhu at 6:00am but the call was not received.

He said that the army chief did not know what his forces were doing on August 15, 1975, and such statement is "nothing but a farce".

At this stage the court asked the lawyer what benefit his client might get from the allegation against the then army chief. Perhaps the army chief was a "coward" or a "liar" or he did not want any bloodshed, it said.

Of those who gave directives and coordinated the incidents of August 15, 1975, Razzaque said the then chief of general staff of the army Brigadier Khaled Mosharrar had played a role at that time. The then BDR chief Khalilur Rahman was appointed the chief of defence staff and Sultan Shahrar Rashid Khan was appointed a staff under him on the day of the killings.

All of them played almost similar roles on August 15, 1975, but Sultan Shahrar cannot be accused in this case since he was not physically present at the place of

occurrence, argued Shahrar's counsel.

The allegation of hatching the conspiracy to kill Bangabandhu cannot be brought against Sultan Shahrar, he added.

He said the word "conspiracy" is mentioned several times in the High Court verdicts, but the names of the conspirators are not mentioned. There is no charge of criminal conspiracy against his client, he added.

The lawyer said declaration of the martial law is always illegal and unconstitutional. The full statements and evidence of this case should be reviewed so that such incidents cannot take place further.

The Appellate Division adjourned the hearing until 9:30am today.

Goodbye

FROM PAGE 1

(CSISA)-- said the short-duration aman rice varieties hold the prospect of farmers' growing potato right in time before they go for the next big rice season -- boro.

While visiting Char Dushmara, a remote Teesta char under Kounia upazila in Rangpur, these correspondents talked to Rahima Khatun, whose husband Abdul Monnaf is a farm labourer without having any land of their own.

Rahima said unlike the Monga period in previous years, this time they did not have to go unfed as her husband cultivated short-duration aman under sharecropping arrangement in one and half acres of land. They harvested the rice a few days ago.

Her neighbour Abdur Rahman had the same happy experience to share. Rahman recalled that in the previous years he along with other villagers used to go to Bogra in search of work during Aswhin and Kartik (Monga period in Bangla calendar). This time he did not go to Bogra as he found work in his own area.

Moreover, poor people in the char areas now feel less vulnerable because of the building of 'Rice Banks.' Under an NGO-initiative, marginal farmers form groups of 25 people each and get a one-time rice stock of one tonne to lend to any one of them who needs it badly.

Fuad Ahmed Khan, a monitoring officer of Rangpur Dinajpur Rural Service, who oversees a climate change coping project in Char Dushmara, said each member of 'Rice Bank' groups can take one maund of rice as loan and return the same with two to five kg interest, as determined by the groups, when crops are harvested.

Socio-political

FROM PAGE 1

and screening documentaries by information ministries, training imams, organising anti-militancy campaigns at madrasas and others.

Under the initiatives imams are to deliver anti-militancy sermons after Jum'a prayers and training on anti-militancy motivation would be imparted to chairmen and members of union parishads.

This campaign massively involves around 50.3 lakh Ansar and Village Defence Party (VDP) members for the first time as the networks of the two agencies have spread even in the remotest parts of the country where neither Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) nor police have regular access.

The force is yet to be engaged in collecting information on militant suspects, as the government is still to decide on the funds needed for training and other purposes.

"Proper implementation of those decisions and initiatives would have yielded significant result in curbing militancy, but you will hardly see any publicity campaigns in media, anti-militancy sermons by imams," said a top law enforcer who is also a member of the meeting.

He also said engaging union parishad chairmen and members and ansars is also far from reality.

"The committee would have been the best platform to tackle militancy in the country, but so far it has failed to reach the expected level," said a top law enforcer seeking anonymity. He also said proper monitoring is needed to make the forum successful.

Asked about the reasons for

First ODI

FROM PAGE 16

outplayed by their bitter rivals in every department of the game. The touring bowlers utilised the pace and bounce that was on offer on a lively wicket to good effect, fielders were spectacular, and the batsmen performed their duties with authority to script the comfortable win to go one up in the five match series.

Elton Chigumbura was the star for the tourists, first with a fiery spell of 3 for 27 accounting for Tamim Iqbal, Zuneed Siddiqui and Mohammad Ashraful, getting rid of Rokibul through a run-out and then bailing his side out of a spot of bother with an authoritative knock of unbeaten 60 off just 50 balls.

Chigumbura's exploits early in the Tigers innings saw them teetering at 79 for six at the halfway mark. And it was due to Mushfiqur Rahim's sensible half-century and a cameo of 41 from paceman Dollar Mahmud which enabled the Tigers post a score that gave their bowlers something to work on. Most of the Bangladesh batsmen looked out-of-sorts against the pacers, and some gifted their wickets away at the wrong time to collapse within 47 overs.

In contrast, the Zimbabwean batsmen looked at ease against the local pacers from the start and imposed their authority very early. They looked in trouble for a brief period when left-arm spinner Abdur Razzaq got three batsmen out in his very first over to set up the game for an interesting finish. But the latter Zimbabwe batsmen, especially Chigumbura mixing aggression with sensibility, took the game away and coasted home with more than fifteen overs yet to be bowled.

The second match which is also a day-nighter will be played at the same venue tomorrow.

JS sitting

FROM PAGE 16

number of seats in the front row of the House and ensuring security of its chief.

A senior leader of the party said the possibility to return to parliament soon is very slim.

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday over telephone, Opposition Chief Whip Zainul Abidin Farooque said neither the speaker nor the ruling party communicated with them to discuss the demands.

"Therefore, we are not joining parliament," he said, adding that they will join the House if their demands are met.

The current session might have a few more sittings to avoid summoning another session in December. The next session will begin early January and will have a presidential address.

Officials of Parliament Secretariat said a number of bills might be passed in the current session.

6 more JMB

FROM PAGE 1

September 21, confessed that he was an ex-active member of Rohingya Solidarity Organization, a militant organization of Arakan Rohingya independent movement, police added.

The four men were released on Monday. A Bandarban Judicial Magistrate's Court granted them bail.

Police said they arrested the four again during a drive against JMB and also because their movement seemed suspicious.

They were later, produced before a local judicial magistrate's court. Police sought a ten-day remand, which is to be decided today after the hearing of the charge.

"We have information that after release the arrestees were trying to contact other JMB men," Officer-in-charge of Bandarban Police Station Jahangir Alam told The Daily Star.

In a joint operation of Rab-6 and police two more JMB men were arrested on Monday at Gaola union under Mollahat upazila in Bagerhat.

The arrestees were identified as Akbar Ali Munshi, 24, son of Wahab Ali of Sharulia village and Daud Hossain Sheikh, 40, son of Abdur Rashid Sheikh of Udaypur village under Mollahat upazila.

Rab recovered 17 brochures and over a hundred of leaflets with instructions and guidelines on how to carry out militant activities.

Of the arrestees, Daud is wanted in connection with serial bomb blasts in Bagerhat town on August 17, 2005, police said.

Red alert at jails

FROM PAGE 1

"Security measures have been beefed up so they could not be successful in disrupting law and order," the state minister said while talking to reporters.

Sources said along with special vigilance, additional forces were deployed in all sensitive zones and establishments including airports, the Supreme Court, diplomatic zones, railway stations, bus and lunch terminals, important shopping malls, and other markets.

According to the sources, law enforcing and intelligence agencies as well as the government took the preventive measures on apprehension of attempts of subversive acts by criminals, if the death sentences of the convicts in the case are upheld by the Supreme Court.

Sources said Rab, police, and intelligence agencies also strengthened security measures for all foreign missions, diplomatic zones, and diplomats.

"Along with the red alert in all jails, additional forces from Rab and police have been deployed, and intelligence agencies also heightened their vigilance," Inspector General of Prisons (IG-Prisons) Brig Gen Dr Ashraful Islam Khan told The Daily Star.

When asked, the IG-Prisons admitted that the

home secretary, IGP, Rab DG, and other senior officials had visited Dhaka Central Jail, but declined to talk about the purpose of the visit.

The sources however said the government high officials held a meeting in Dhaka Central Jail, as the five condemned convicts in Bangabandhu murder case have been jailed there.

The officials directed the jail authorities to turn on all close circuit televisions, and to keep special watch on the convicts in the case.

Towhidul Islam, superintendent of Dhaka Central Jail, said apart from the intelligence vigilance and measures by Dhaka Metropolitan Police, 24 personnel from Rab, and 25 others from Armed Police Battalion were deployed around the jail.

Talking to The Daily Star, the Rab DG admitted that he had visited Dhaka Central Jail and said, "We have taken all necessary measures for dealing with any realisation of the apprehensions."

Asked whether they have any specific information about possible subversive activities or real threats of that nature, the Rab DG said, "We are aware of the existing situation in the country, and are prepared with all measures to deal with any threat."

Pak troops kill

FROM PAGE 16

captured strategic mountain tops and villages.

The military, which is so far the only source of casualty figures, said 42 militants and one soldier were killed, bringing to 239 the total number of insurgents and to 31 the number of troops to have died during the operation.

Security forces surround Nawazkot, one of the Taliban's strongholds, and militants were killed in fighting on the approach to Taliban bastion Sararogha to the east and Kanigurram further south, the army said.

Around 30,000 troops are pitted against an estimated 10-12,000 militants in the semi-autonomous and lawless tribal belt but experts say far more soldiers are needed for a successful counter-insurgency campaign.

More than 125,000 people have been registered since fleeing South Waziristan since October 13, UN refugee agency spokeswoman Arianne Rumery told AFP.

"They join the other 80,500 people which were previously registered. So this means the total registered caseload in terms of families is 28,242, which is around 206,000 people," she said.

Families began fleeing South Waziristan in late May when the military embarked on a campaign of air strikes ahead of the anticipated ground assault, but Rumery said the numbers could go down after verification is complete.

"The volatile security situation constrains our movement," she said.

Increasingly brazen militant attacks have revealed the extremists' reach across the country and embarrassed the powerful military.

Most audacious was an assault this month on the army's GHQ nerve centre in garrison city Rawalpindi where 10 gunmen kept up a nearly 24-hour siege claimed by the Tehreek-e-Taliban in Pakistan (TTP) movement.

Tigers to become

FROM PAGE 16

and weapons trade in Asia.

With such horrifying figures in the background, World Bank President Robert Zoellick lent his support to the cause of the conference yesterday through a video feed. "We have to stop it. We have to find out serious solutions to save tigers before time runs out. This is not a time for business as usual."

He made it clear that the bank will support saving wild tigers from extinction and that protection and sustainable solutions have to be found.

In fact, the World Bank's support came as a big push for the endeavour that has been joined in the conference by Global Tiger Initiative, Global Tiger Forum, Save the Tiger Fund, World Wildlife Fund (WWF), and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES).

Nepali Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal inaugurated the workshop. On the stage were also Thai Vice-minister for Environment Pimuk Simaraj, Russian Head of Federal Service for Natural Resource Management Oversight Vladimir Kirillov, and Indian experts.

Bangladesh policymakers were badly missing though.

The organisers of the workshop hope to pool a fund of at least \$200 million, and launch a platform to start taking actions to save wild tigers.

"We aim to stabilise tiger

population in two years, and then double the number in 10 years," said Eric Dinerstein, chief scientist and vice-president of WWF. "We need to intensify protection in 60 key reserves. The good news is tigers breed quickly and more than 1.1 million square kilometres of habitat remains."

The WWF official pinpointed poaching as the major threat to tigers and said new technologies like GPS (global positioning system) should be used for close observation of tigers to ward off poachers.

He said infrastructure development is putting more and more tigers in danger.

"Every year, about \$500 billion are invested in infrastructure and only \$30 million in tiger conservation," Eric said. "Tiger range countries should allocate at least 1 percent of their infrastructure investments for conservation," he headed.