

Save Modhupur sal forest HC also asks govt to settle land disputes there

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday issued a rule upon the government asking for protecting natural Modhupur sal forest in Tangail and settling long-standing disputes over the land and forest rights of indigenous people there.

The court asked the government to explain why it should not be directed to arrange an alternative settlement for indigenous people living at salban area before cancelling their settlements.

It also asked the government to explain why it should not be directed to demarcate the salban area properly, and frame rules on village forestry, and stop commercial

SEE PAGE 15 COL 5

Blast blows off gas station roof 4 staff critically injured; leak in booster pipe seen as reason

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A huge blast blew off the roof of a CNG refuelling station, leaving four employees, including an engineer, critically injured in Uttara in the capital yesterday.

Authorities of the "Tasin CNG Filling Station" in Abdullahpur apprehend booster pipe leak might have caused the explosion around 7:15am.

The injured are engineer Rajib Mallik, 25, operators Idris Ali, 30, Aminul Islam, 28, and worker Fakhru Amin Pias. They were rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital with burns on their mouths, throats and abdomens.

The condition of the injured is stated to be critical.

Witnesses say they heard a bang, which blew off the roof of the electric control building and damaged all the doors, windows, electronic equipment and booster pipes there.

The shock also damaged some portion of the glass wall of adjacent main building of the CNG station.

Idris told The Daily Star at DMCH that on hearing a high hissing of gas emission from the booster pipe, he rushed inside

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3



A huge explosion of the booster pipe at a CNG filling station in Uttara blew the roof of the station's electric control room on to a neighbouring building. The shock wave also damaged glass walls of the station's office nearby. Inset, the control room after the blast.

PHOTO: COURTESY



PM LEAVES FOR CHINA TODAY Dhaka to seek \$2.2b for infrastructure projects

Second Padma bridge, Jamuna railway bridge, Karnaphuli tunnel, rail link with Myanmar, fertiliser factory on project list

M ABUL KALAM AZAD

Bangladesh will seek around \$2.2 billion assistance from China for its 12 projects for infrastructure development and setting up of a fertiliser factory during Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's visit.

Sheikh Hasina will leave Dhaka for Beijing this afternoon for a five-day visit at the invitation of Chinese Prime Minister Wen Jiabao. This is her first visit to China since Awami League-led government assumed office in January 2009.

The projects include construction of Second Padma Bridge at an estimated cost of \$579 million, Karnaphuli Tunnel at a cost of \$289 million, single line metre-gauge railway track from Chittagong to Gundum near Myanmar border at a cost of \$210 million, Second Meghna-Gomti Bridge at a cost of \$125 million, a railway bridge with a dual-gauge double track over the river Jamuna at a cost of \$172 million and Kazirtek Bridge over Ariakha river at an estimated cost of \$22 million.

"We hope the Chinese authorities would consider some of the projects, if not all," Communications Minister Syed Abul Hossain told The Daily Star yesterday. He said discussions would also take place about the purchases of passenger carriages and commuter trains.

During the talks, Bangladesh will also seek financial assistance for setting up the Shahjalal Fertiliser Factory Limited at an estimated cost of \$600 million. Earlier the government in the face of growing demand for fertiliser decided to set up the

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4

2 bodies found at bus office 'Muggers' stab lawyer to death

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A businessman and an employee of a bus company were murdered inside its ticketing office at Arambagh in the early hours yesterday while a lawyer of the High Court was killed late Monday night at Dayaganj in the capital.

Unknown assailants committed the murders at bus office and 'muggers' stabbed the lawyer to death.

The two killed at Arambagh were identified as Abu Sufian, 40, a mobile phone accessories trader at Sundarban Square Market in the city's Fulbaria, and Ilias Kanchan Payel, 18, an employee of Soudia S Alam Paribahan at its ticketing office. They were lying dead with their throats slit.

Police recovered the bodies yesterday morning from the office breaking open its door which was locked from outside.

A knife and an iron rod used in the killings were seized from the spot.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1

'Criminal' killed in crossfire Rab major injured

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A suspected criminal was killed and a Rapid Action Battalion official injured in a gunfight with Rab at Sharulia in the capital's Demra area yesterday.

The deceased was identified as Asaduzzaman Rubel, 28.

The injured -- Major SM Kamruzzaman of Rab-10 -- was admitted to Combined Military Hospital in the city.

Acting on a tip-off, a team from Rab-10 cordoned off a two-storey building on Garden Road at Sharulia where Rubel used to spend

SEE PAGE 15 COL 8

Passengers suffer as vessels kept anchored

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Passengers on all river routes suffered immensely on the first day of an indefinite inland water transport strike yesterday.

The workers called the strike after a marathon tripartite meeting among the government, the workers and the owners failed to reach a consensus about a new pay scale on Monday.

Passengers were seen stranded at the Sadarghat launch terminal in Dhaka, as well as various launch terminals in the districts of Barisal, Chandpur, Sirajganj and Rangpur.

Water transport is of major importance to trade in Bangladesh -- there are approximately 20,000 motorised water vessels plying 300 routes on any given day.

The water transport sector has a 40 percent share of the total passenger traffic and there are around 1.5 lakh workers involved in the sector.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4



One of the 310 BDR jawans accused in a mutiny case gives a blank look while being transported to the special court at Pilkhana in a prison van. All the accused in Kashimpur and Dhaka central jails were produced before the court yesterday.

310 BDR rebels appear in court Next hearing May 9

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

As many as 310 alleged BDR rebels in an unprecedented move were hauled before a special court of Bangladesh Rifles yesterday.

Such a large number of accused were sitting in the dock of the three-member Special Court-5 set up at the Darbar Hall of BDR Pilkhana Headquarters.

All the accused except one of 36 Rifle Battalion of Dhaka sector were in uniforms without official cap and belt, with many of them growing a beard.

One alleged mutineer was produced before the court in an ambulance as he was ill. The ambulance was parked at the porch of main entrance of the courtroom and a loudspeaker was set for him to hear the trial proceedings.

Maj Gen Md Mainul Islam, president of the court, set May 9 for the next day of hearing and ordered the accused to be in the same official appearance they had during the mutiny on February 25-26 last year.

Prosecutor of the case Lt Col Tarik Imam Siddiki briefly placed the charges against the accused. The proceedings began at 10:35am and lasted until 11:30am.

As per the BDR Act of 1972, the accused get at least 27 days to prepare their defence and appoint lawyers after the prosecutor places charges on the second day of proceedings.

So the court adjourned the proceedings till 10:00am of May 9 and set hearing on charge framing on the same day.

Security inside the HQ was stepped up due to the trial. Army soldiers were mainly guarding the court building taking position

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1

Abubakar's feat comes after death

DU CORRESPONDENT

Abubakar Siddique, the student of Dhaka University who lost his life in a clash between Chhatra League factions at DU last month, secured the highest grade point in his fourth semester examination.

His brother Abbas Ali who runs a vegetable shop in Tangail said, "My brother's success now torments us and reminds us of his hard work for this achievement."

"He wanted to become a teacher of the university. Now when he was about to reach

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

Uproar in JS Speaker's order defied

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The BNP-led opposition lawmakers squabbled with Speaker Abdul Hamid yesterday for permission to speak on points of order, plunging the House into chaos.

The situation worsened as the treasury bench deputies began countering them.

Many lawmakers from either side leaped to their feet and sneered at each other.

As the speaker tried to restore order, several BNP lawmakers refused to obey him. Shahid Uddin Chowdhury Anne in particular was more aggressive as he was shouting all along louder than his peers.

Irritated, Hamid said, "Things cannot go on like this. "Mr. Anne, I am sorry. I cannot accept your behaviour. You are shouting even when I am speaking. It's a parliamentary norm that everybody hears when the speaker speaks."

Censured, the BNP lawmaker took his seat, and so did others.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7

BNP demands 'test case' election

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Shifting from a stance for "midterm election", the main opposition party BNP yesterday asked the government to hold a "test case election" in some constituencies to judge their popularity.

"Hold some test case election in few constituencies and judge popularity. Our less popular leaders will contest against your most popular leaders and let's see who gets the support of the people," BNP Secretary General Khandaker Delwar Hossain said yesterday while talking to reporters at

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

6-MONTH REVIEW OF FY 2009-10 BUDGET Tk 946cr surplus on less spending, high earning

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The first six months of the current fiscal year saw a budgetary surplus of Tk 946 crore, due to low expenditure, increased foreign assistance, and high revenue income.

The information was revealed by Finance Minister AMA Muhith yesterday when he was reporting to the parliament the fiscal year's first six months' trends in government income and expenditure, with an analysis of the state of the economy.

It was the first time in the country's history that a government submitted a half-yearly budgetary report to the parliament.

The report said the corresponding period of the last fiscal year saw a budget deficit of Tk 6,129 crore, and the estimated total deficit for the current fiscal year was fixed at Tk 34,358 crore in the annual budget.

The government has Tk 12,000 crore cash in hand even after repaying bank loans of a huge amount of Tk 11,108 crore in cash as well during the period.

Mentioning that the placing of the half-yearly budgetary report to the parliament was the first of its kind in the country, the finance minister said through the move the government conformed to the Public Finance and Budget Management Act 2009. He hoped that the move will ensure the government's budgetary accountability.

While presenting the report, he referred to the budget he placed in the House in June last year saying, "The budget was not based on emotions or over ambition, rather it was prepared in light

SEE PAGE 2 COL 2