First verdict

FROM PAGE 1

He also mentioned that six civilian lawyers and one BDR official were appointed for legal assistance to the accused.

The trial was held in presence of visitors and journalists.

The convicts, soon after Mainul pronounced the judgement and left the court, cried out loud. Many of them said they have been punished for nothing while the real culprits are still at large.

Wife of convict Lutfor Rahman alleged her husband didn't get justice as the court refused to listen to the accused. On the day of the mutiny Lutfor was engaged in duties at the quarter guard, she said claiming her husband's innocence.

Abdul Qayum, brother of Sepoy Abdul Karim, said he was not allowed to see his brother even after waiting for four days.

Government lawyer Lt Col Sirajul Haque, commanding officer of 25 Rifle Battalion, in a press briefing said such verdict was necessary for a disciplined force.

He added the court has given its judgement after considering all the evidence. Allegations against the accused have been proved beyond doubt.

Rafiquddin Ahmed, lawyer for five accused, said there is no scope for questioning any witness in accordance with the BDR law.

Government lawyer Mosharraf Hossain Kajal said justice has been done and this is the first step to rid BDR of the stigma.

He noted, the special court is the highest court of BDR and no other option is left to challenge the verdict.

Charges were framed against the accused on April 4. Seven of them admitted their offences and begged pardon while the rest claimed to be innocent. None however agreed to give deposition for the accused, the BDR DG informed the court.

He also ordered government lawyers to send copies of the verdict to BDR headquarters, district commissioner, jail superintendent and superintendent of police.

The trial began on February 3 and was adjourned on February 4 giving the accused about 61 days to take preparation for their defence.

The Special Court-2 will resume hearing of charges against 51 BDR men of 20 Rifle Battalion today.

Free textbooks

FROM PAGE 16

The minister also enquired about the spelling mistakes in textbooks and directed NCTB to print the books more carefully amending last year's errors.

The meeting decided that all educational institutions, which have the government approval or are yet to be approved, will receive the free textbooks on condition that they inform the government beforehand about their requirements, sources said.

The NCTB will print 10.74 crore copies for primary level students, 8.60 crore for secondary level, 1.68 crore for Ibtedai (primary level of madrasa), 1.83 crore for Dakhil, and 27 lakh copies for students under Technical Board, said sources.

The meeting also decided to hold five percent buffer stock of all textbooks and 10 percent reserve of primary level textbooks.

State Minister for Primary and Mass Education Motahar Hossain, Additional Secretary to Education Ministry SM Golam Faruk, Secretary in-charge of Primary and Mass Education Abu Alam Mohammad Shahid Khan, Director General of the Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education Prof Nomanur-Rashid, DG of Directorate of Primary Education Shyamal Kanti Ghosh and Chairman of NCTB Mostofa Kamal Uddin also attended the meeting.

Rubel's uncle

FROM PAGE 16

Siddhirganj upazila in Narayanganj yesterday morning.

ADC Nazrul claimed that Altaf is a criminal of Nadda in the city and he maintains a gang for carrying out criminal activities.

He said they would produce Altaf before a court seeking his remand.

DB officials said they arrested Altaf following information gleaned from Rubel who already confessed to killing businessman Sadequr Rahman and his wife Romana Nargis at their Kalachandpur home.

According to his confessional statement, Rubel murdered his alleged girlfriend's parents since the couple "stood in the way of their love".

Top outlaw

FROM PAGE 1

triggering the gunfight. At one stage, Mandar's accomplices fled the scene. After the shoot-out, bullet-hit body of Mandar was found at the scene.

Police recovered one rifle, one LG, two bombs, one knife, one axe and 12 bullets from the spot.

WHO IS MANDAR

Mandar, son of Abzal Mondol of Khordobakhail village in Kushtia sadar upazila, got involved with Gono Bahini through his uncle Azibor in 1996.

He first killed Hobi and Kasem, cadres of his rival party Gono Mukti Fouz, at Lasmipur bus stand on June 18, 2000.

After that, he went on a killing spree in Kushtia, Chuadanga and Jhenidah. On August 1, 2000 he killed Khalil Mondol and Labu at his village. On October 22, he killed three of his opponents--Lalon, Kapil and Sariful--in the same village.

Police and Rab said Mandar and his accomplices also killed Raihan, chairman of Jhoudia Union Parishad Abdul Aziz, Nabis Uddin, Chhoto Hasem, Saheb Ali, Mojnu Kha, Hila Kha and Sarwar in between 2000 and 2001.

Mandar abducted Sawpan Kumar Saha, son of Harinaryanpur UP chairman Babu Jugol Kishor Saha in 2001. Sawpan still remains traceless. Mandar also abducted his father Jugol Kishore who is also still missing.

A police source said Mandar was involved in around 50 abductions for ransom during 1996-2008.

He abducted two sisters--Hasina and Shilpi--in 1999 and they went missing thereafter.

Aila-hit areas

FROM PAGE 1

They clean the water by using alum as the water sources in the area have either dried up or been contaminated with the dry season setting in.

"This pond too is being dried up. I don't know what will happen to my children?" she lets out a deep sigh.

"Most of the tubewells go under water during the high tide. The rest pump out salty water while the pond water gives out bad odour. What to drink?" she asked in utter frustration.

She pointed to the muddy water she had brought from the pond and said, "Can you tell me what will happen in high summer?"

Bijli is not lucky enough like few other villagers who collect water from another pond several kilometres away at a cost of Tk 30 a barrel.

"How can we bear the cost of water when we have no money to buy food?" she said with a blank expression on her face.

Crisis of drinking water took a serious turn in the Aila-hit Dakope upazila in Khulna.

Water-borne diseases are spreading fast in the cyclone-stricken areas in Dakope as people are compelled to drink water from the ponds.

During a recent visit to the area, many villagers complained to this correspondent that their family members are suffering from diarrhoea, dysentery, stomach ailments and skin diseases.

"Alum and water purification tablets are useless as they cannot remove the stench," said Nihar Ranjan Mandal.

"My six-year-old son has been suffering from diarrhoea for the last three days," he added.

The crisis of food is no less than water. Every month the government gives 20 kg of rice to each family in the area. Many of the inhabitants, however, said the amount is inadequate for a family of six to seven members.

"We are being treated as people living in a jungle. Nobody cares to listen to our problems. We will starve to death," said Mojibor Gazi from Chhoto Jeliakhali.

Most of the people in Dakope are farmers who are now either doing dam-repair work or catching fish to earn a living.

Dakope Upazila Nirbahi Officer Quazi Atiur Rahman said they give 20 kg of rice every month to each of 10,500 families in Dakope.

There is no immediate solution to the crisis until permanent rainwater reservoirs could be set up, he said.

A large number of people, however, have moved to other districts, as they could no longer bear with the hardship, he added.

Baby girl

FROM PAGE 16

trial of the perpetrator.

The girl's parents came to Dhaka from Gaibandha five months ago for survival. Her father, whose right leg is paralysed, pulls rickshaw in short distance trips in the area as the income of her mother is not enough for their survival, said locals.

The victim's mother said, "I take my only child with me to where I work. When I was working at the house of Malek Patwary, my daughter went out to respond to the call of nature. After about half an hour, my daughter returned crying.

"As I asked her why she was crying, she pointed to a nearby abandoned house," the mother said. "Then I noticed she was bleeding."

The mother rushed her child to Tongi hospital but the authorities there referred her daughter to Dhaka Shishu Hospital on Tuesday night. Doctors at Shishu Hospital referred her to DMCH because of her condition.

Dr Bilkis Begum, coordinator of DMCH One Stop Crisis Centre and gynae consultant, told The Daily Star, "During the operation, we found that the child's perinatal tier is severely torn.

"But we have conducted a successful operation," she said.

Sub-Inspector Yunus Khandker of Uttar Khan Police Station said the child was violated in an abandoned house owned by Aslam whose two teenaged sons--Nayon and Shahin--might have done the brutality.

The SI said they detained Shahin and were looking for Nayon.

Ties with KSA

FROM PAGE 1

The backdrop of Mirza Alamgir's remarks lies in Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's trashing of Khaleda Zia's allegation in parliament on April 4 that Bangladeshi workers are returning from different countries including Saudi Arabia due to the failure of the government.

Hasina retorted that some workers are returning home after completion of their job terms. "But she [Khaleda] suddenly raised the issue only to create panic among Bangladeshi workers abroad so that the workers will lay siege to our missions abroad. In fact the opposition is working with the ill motive of creating an unstable situation to hinder the war crimes trial," Hasina said.

Terming Hasina's statement irresponsible, the party said it might be harmful to the country if such comments come from people like the prime minister. It said the fate of 20 lakh labours might be thrown into uncertainty.

Mirza Alamgir also criticised the government for extending the term of Speedy Trial Act by two years. He said it was done only to "repress the opposition".

The act was made during the BNP-led four-party alliance government's rule amid strong opposition from the then opposition party Awami League.

Mirza Alamgir claimed that the government has totally failed and the economy has been destroyed. Law and order has deteriorated and 155 people were killed in crossfire in the last few months.

Replying to a query about the roadmap of electricity production placed by the prime minister before parliament, he said the government would fail to achieve the target of power generation as it is yet to make any convincing preparations.

He said according to the election manifesto of Awami League, they set the target of generating 7,000 megawatt of electricity by 2013.

On the upcoming Bhola-3 by-election, Mirza Alamgir asked the Election Commission to immediately create a congenial atmosphere in the constituency to ensure a free and fair election.

He alleged that there is no congenial atmosphere for election there.

Opposition Chief Whip Zainul Abdin Farroque said they would have to think twice about joining the budget session of parliament in June following the prime minister's "untrue and unparliamentary" words in the last session.

Party leaders Amanullah Aman, Ruhul Kabir Rizvi, Fazlul Huq Milon, Khairul Kabir Khokon, Habib-un-Nabi Khan Sohel were also present.

Kyrgyzstan govt

FROM PAGE 1

took control of the national television, the prosecutors' office was set alight and state media reported that a deputy prime minister was held hostage in the remote northwest.

The riots were the culmination of spiralling protests in the Central Asian nation with the opposition demanding Bakiyev's resignation and accusing his government of rights violations, authoritarianism and economic mismanagement.

Despite briefly arresting three leading opposition figures and declaring a state of emergency, the authorities failed to prevent the rebels from rapidly taking control of some of the main levers of power.

A health ministry official said 47 people had died, many from gunshot wounds, and more than 400 were injured. Officials said that the toll could be expected to rise.

Opposition leader Omurbek Tekebayev said separately that more than 100 people had been killed in the violence.

The United States, which maintains an air base in Kyrgyzstan used in the NATO campaign in nearby Afghanistan, voiced "deep concern", while Russia also appealed for calm in the former Soviet republic.

Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin said Moscow had no involvement in unrest in ex-Soviet Kyrgyzstan.

"Neither Russia nor your humble servant (Putin) have any links" to the events in Kyrgyzstan, Putin told reporters during a joint press conference with his Polish counterpart Donald Tusk in Smolensk, western Russia.

"At the same time, when (Kyrgyz President Kurmanbek) Bakiyev came to power a few years ago, he severely criticised (former president Askar) Akayev for nepotism, that only his family held power. I have the impression that Mr. Bakiyev is now stepping on the same rake," Putin said.

Prior to seizing the presidential offices, opposition protesters laid siege to both the national parliament and the offices of the government, demanding that Bakiyev quit.

An AFP journalist meanwhile saw flames coming from the ground floor of the four-storey prosecutors' office.

Riot police fired tear gas and stun grenades in repeated bids to disperse the demonstrators and Usenov declared a state of emergency, but all to little effect.

A police source and a witness said Interior Minister Moldomus Kongantiyev had been killed in the northwest hub of Talas where the first protests erupted.

Kongantiyev was attacked by protestors who had also taken deputy prime minister Akylbek Zhaparov captive, the Kabar Kyrgyz state news agency reported.

An interior ministry spokesman, Rakhmatullo Akhmedov, later said Kongantiyev was alive but admitted the government had little information on the situation in Talas, saying it was "checking" reports the minister was taken hostage.

Witnesses said security forces had fired live bullets into the air as between 3,000 and 5,000 protestors overturned cars and set them on fire in Bishkek.

Ministry's

FROM PAGE 1

standing trees without bark there not very high, the ministry says the report is exaggerated.

The ministry admitted plundering at the Madhupur Sal forests but said it was done during the era of the previous governments.

It said the report of allocation of timber to lawmakers, civil servants and so on is incorrect. The present government right away stopped issuing permits in the greater interest of safeguarding our environment, it said.

However, The Daily Star has a copy of a gazette notification about new allocation of timber, which was published in January, 2010.

We stand by our report.

Embankment repair

FROM PAGE 1

Arguing against the officials' excuses, most ministers and secretaries present at the meeting said the PPR allows exemptions for cases of natural disasters, and protection of the public.

"Please don't give me excuses of rules and regulations when the issue is to save peoples' lives. We should take risks to protect people, and end their sufferings," the prime minister told the meeting.

Hasina said in the future she will take the responsibility if any rule or regulation is not followed properly in order to protect people from natural disasters.

As the prime minister wanted to know what steps were taken towards repairing the embankments, the WDB officials said they had repaired 45 of the total 47 old breaches, but many new breaches occurred during the period.

Food and Disaster Management Minister Md Abdur Razzaque, who was present at the meeting, told The Daily Star afterwards that his ministry will soon take steps to rehabilitate the destitute. He said each Aila affected family is currently being provided with 20 kilogrammes of rice per month.

Asked whether he sees any chance for the embankments being repaired before the monsoon, he said it will be a near impossible task, since the breaches have become very wide while the water level is now much higher than it was two months ago.

Aila hit the country's southern coastal region on May 25 last year, killing 190 people while making thousands destitute, many of whom are still marooned due to the breaches in the embankments.

Yesterday's meeting also discussed the country's preparedness to face major natural disasters.

Prime Minister's Press Secretary Abul Kalam Azad told reporters after the meeting that the premier also directed the authorities to expedite repair of damaged roads, and rebuilding of destroyed houses.

Army chief Gen Mohammad Abdul Mubeen told the meeting that the situation would have been different, had his troops been engaged in the repair work much earlier.

EC for DCC polls

FROM PAGE 1

Mahbubul Alam Hanif, special assistant to the prime minister, told The Daily Star yesterday over telephone, "We will request the Election Commission to hold the polls in winter. It will be comfortable for all voters, candidates if the election is held in winter."

Hanif, also joint general secretary of ruling Awami League, said DCC polls during the hot summer would be quite difficult for voters, campaigners and candidates.

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday at his office, Election Commissioner Brig Gen (retd) M Sakhawat Hossain said the commission has decided to hold the DCC polls at the end of May.

"We are now ready for the election. We were waiting to have a set of rules finalised for conducting the election," he said.

In exercise of the power bestowed by the Local Government (city corporation) Act 2009, the EC on Tuesday enacted three rules--electoral rules for conducting the polls, code of conduct for candidates and rules for introduction of electronic voting machines, EC officials said.

The EC in its letter said all preparations including updating the voter list with photographs, preparation of the list of polling stations and polling personnel are complete.

Even though the EC decides when to hold polls, the LGRD ministry is responsible for the welfare and well-being of local bodies.

The tenure of this DCC expired on May 14, 2007. But election could not be held due to the state of emergency at that time, the EC in its letter said.

The DCC has now turned into almost a dysfunctional body failing to serve city dwellers.

EC officials said if the election to the DCC is not held in May, the polls to the Chittagong City Corporation might not be held in due time. The tenure of the CCC will expire on June 25 this year and according to the law, election is supposed to be held six months before expiry of its tenure.

PAC hopes

FROM PAGE 16

recommendations of the sub-committees.

The sub-committee No-1 is dealing with unresolved audit reports from 1972 to 1990. It has recommended disposal of 734 objections out of 1,417 concerning different ministries.

The sub-committee No-4 has taken up audit reports placed in parliament after 2005. It discussed 116 audit objections, and asked for disposal of 27 and realisation of money in case of 13 objections. It also asked for necessary steps on 32 objections.

The sub-committee No-3 is handling audit reports placed in parliament from 2000 to 2005. It has already discussed 26 objections, and recommended disposal of 12, realisation of money in four cases and necessary actions regarding 11 objections.

The sub-committee No-2 is examining audit reports from 1990 to 2000. It has discussed 21 objections, recommended disposing seven of those and taking necessary steps on the rest.

At yesterday's meeting, the PAC discussed special audit reports on Dhaka Electricity Supply Authority for FY 2005-06.

"We found about Tk 18 crore loss of Desa. Desa employees, their supervising personnel, the then minister and secretary of the ministry concerned are responsible for the loss. We asked the administration to recover the money from responsible persons," the committee chief said.

War crimes trial

FROM PAGE 16

during the Liberation War.

"Ain o Salish Kendra has been demanding the trial of war criminals since the 90's and collecting information regarding war crimes since then. Today, we handed over those documents and I think these will help the authority in their investigations," Sultana Kamal told reporters.

ASK also handed over some photographs of genocide, Al Badrs, razakars and peace committee members and a list with names of razakars and Al Badrs including their offences committed during the liberation war.

Earlier, Muktijoddha Sangsad Central Command Council handed over a list of razakars to Abdul Matin and demanded punishment to the identified war criminals. They also submitted a memorandum in this regard.

The chief investigator told reporters that all the documents would help them a lot for holding the trial.

Stalker beaten

FROM PAGE 16

used to stalk a student of class-VII of the same village on her way to school. The girl informed her family of the matter.

On Tuesday, family members of the girl followed her and caught Asadul on the way around 9:30am. They beat Asadul causing serious injuries.

Asadul was rushed to Kushtia General Hospital.

Sources said the doctors there referred the victim to Dhaka Medical College Hospital but his family did not pay heed to it.

Asadul died yesterday at 2:30pm at Kushtia General Hospital.

Officer-in-Charge of Mirpur Police Station Ashfaqul Islam said victim's brother Mosharraf Hossain lodged a case in this connection.

JS bhaban

FROM PAGE 16

He said he would blow up the parliament building like the twin towers of New York.

Talking to The Daily Star, Col (retd) Shawkat Ali last night said he along the speaker received the letters and submitted those to parliament security officials.

"I don't think its anything serious... It's rather funny," Shawkat Ali said, adding that authorities concerned are looking into the matter.

Solar panel

FROM PAGE 16

"We will not hear any excuse if any respective authority fails to do their jobs [regarding generation of power]," ABM Ghulam Mostafa, chairman of the committee, told reporters after a meeting at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban.

The committee has asked the authority concerned not to allow any individual or organisation to build any high-rise building if they do not have any plan for installation of solar panels, Mayeen Uddin Khan Badal, a member of the committee, said.

Those who can purchase a flat or build a high-rise building spending crores of taka, will also be able to install a solar panel, Badal, also a Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal lawmaker, said.

It asked officials of the energy ministry to make a detailed plan along with a time frame to produce 9,276 megawatt power by 2015.

Govt seeks

FROM PAGE 16

530 MW capacity was almost foiled when the ministry pressurised PDB to relax the tender criterion so that local companies with almost no experience can participate in the bid.

The tender drew huge bids with surprisingly low prices from local companies, who actually do not own power plant equipment. So when it came to contracts, most deals fell flat.

"Presently, we have only three rental power deals with local companies totalling 260 MW capacity which are supposed to be commissioned from June," says an official of the power ministry. The official adds they are not sure if these companies would be able to meet their deadlines as all the past rental power deals with local companies were seriously breached.

A PDB official notes, "Back in September-October last year, we had argued with the higher authorities that rental power tenders should be limited within companies that can actually deliver the power. But they did not listen to us. Now we are back to where we started."

In addition to rental power deals, which are supposed to be the fastest way for short-term solution, the power ministry is badly handling tenders of many other projects.

For instance, a one-year-old tender for a 300 MW power project in Siddhirganj funded by the World Bank has become totally uncertain due to poor handling of the tender by the Electricity Generation Company of Bangladesh (EGCB).

Other projects making progress at a snail's pace include the Bibiyana 450 MW, Sirajganj 450 MW, Khulna 150 MW and Sirajganj 150 MW.

Right now, different agencies under the power ministry are processing tenders of 13 independent power projects totalling between 1,800 MW to 2,300 MW capacity.

Of them, bidders will submit their prequalification documents for the dual fuel Meghnaghat phase two 300 MW to 450 MW plant on April 15.

On May 2, bidders will submit prequalification documents for the Bibiyana phase two gas-fired 300-450 MW, Bhola gas-fired 150 MW to 225 MW, Syedpur furnace oil-based 100 MW and Katakhali furnace oil-based 50 MW power projects.

Prequalification documents for the Chapainawabganj 100 MW and Khulna 100 MW furnace oil projects and Comilla 50 MW dual fuel plant will be submitted on June 27 and for Madanganj 150-225 MW and Keraniganj 150-225 MW dual fuel and Jamalpur furnace oil 100 MW projects on June 6.

The ministry is seeking the prime minister's approval for two dual fuel power projects of 200 to 300 MW capacity in Savar and Kaliakoir Hi-tech Park.

In addition, the ministry is working on the retender process of a 200 to 300 MW dual fuel plant in Ghorashal.

The ministry is also taking preparation to install five solar power projects which would be implemented by 2011 under public-private as well as private sector initiatives.

Of these five, the government aims at setting up a massive 100 to 200 MW solar power project in Anwara in Chittagong under private initiative. The other projects are Sarishabari 2-4 MW, Rajshahi 1 MW, Rajabarihat 2-4 MW and Kaptai Power plant 4-5 MW.

The ministry is preparing the prequalification document for a 100 MW wind-based power plant in Patenga offshore area under Build, Own and Operate basis.

Besides, the government is taking initiatives for six 500 MW coal-based power plants in Chittagong, Mongla, Jajira and Meghnaghat.

Thai protesters

FROM PAGE 16

"The state of emergency aims to resolve the situation and bring a return to normal," Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva told a nationally televised press conference.

The government security agency, known as CAPO, sent a Black Hawk helicopter carrying five soldiers armed with M-16 rifles onto the Parliament helipad to pick up ministers and lawmakers trapped inside, the agency said in a statement. INN television said Suthep was among those evacuated.

The Red Shirts have been camped in Bangkok since March 12 and say they will continue protests until Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva dissolves Parliament and calls new elections.

Abhisit, who left Parliament before the break-in to attend a scheduled meeting, has cancelled a trip to Washington DC to attend an April 12-13 international nuclear summit, said an aide, Sirichoke Sopa.

The Red Shirts virtually have had the run of the city since Tuesday, when police and army troops made little effort to block them from triumphant, motorized rallies through central Bangkok.

The Red Shirt movement known formally as the United Front for Democracy Against Dictatorship contends Abhisit came to power illegitimately in the years after ex-Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra was removed in a 2006 coup on corruption allegations. The group is made up largely of Thaksin supporters and pro-democracy activists who opposed the putsch.

In an incident reflecting unwillingness of security forces to get tough, a scuffle broke out between a lawmaker from a pro-Thaksin party and a soldier carrying an M-16.

The lawmaker shouted at the soldier, "This is the Parliament. Why are you carrying a gun!" and then chased the soldier out of the building where Red Shirts wrestled him to the ground and seized his rifle and a pistol. The protesters then turned the guns over to authorities.

The storming of the Parliament was led by Arisman Pongruengrong, one of the most radical protest leaders who last year orchestrated the take-over of a major conference, forcing the evacuation of Asian leaders by helicopters and boats.

Abhisit has been under pressure to use force to restore order. But on Tuesday, he defended his government's gentle approach against rowdy demonstrators who blocked major roads and pushed through lines of soldiers.

Abhisit said in a brief TV address that the government "eased our security measures to ensure that no confrontation would spiral out of control" and said the situation required "careful manoeuvring."

Many Thai columnists and editorials on Wednesday questioned whether Abhisit was losing the weeks-old confrontation with the protesters and the crucial backing of the military and police. At least four former prime ministers planned to step into the fray in an attempt to negotiate an end to the crisis, state media reports said.

"If I were the prime minister, I would have got rid of those who would not carry out my orders," said a former head of the National Security Council, Prasong Soonsiri. He said there was strong support for the Red Shirts within the civil service and law enforcement agencies.

Local merchants have complained that the boisterous demonstrations have cost them billions of baht (millions of dollars), and luxury hotels near the site have been under virtual siege.

Thai authorities moved thousands of troops in riot gear Tuesday to confront the demonstrators at their encampment in the middle of Bangkok's tourist and shopping district. The protesters had been banned from 11 main streets, but they surged past lines of soldiers and police to parade raucously down several. A tide of red streamed through the Silom Road financial centre, with horns blaring and loudspeakers playing the folk music of rural Thailand.

The English-language The Nation, said in Wednesday's front-page editorial, that Tuesday was "arguably the best day so far for the Red Shirts and definitely the worst day" for the prime minister.

"Also, for the first time, the prime minister must have started questioning the loyalty of the police and some in the military," the editorial said.

Charnvit Kasetsiri, one of the country's most prominent historians, called the situation "a game of brinkmanship."

"It's about who's going to blink or make the first mistake, and whoever makes the first mistake will inevitably lose," Charnvit said.

Political turmoil has increased in the years since the 2006 coup and deeply divided Thai society. The most striking aspect may be the sense of empowerment engendered in poor rural and city people, who have long been used to kowtowing to bureaucrats and more well-off countrymen.