

Outraged

FROM PAGE 1 said the locals barricaded the highway around 11:00am for an hour. They withdrew following assurance by the local administration and a former lawmaker of taking care of the issue.

Angry people thronged the Palli Bidyut Samity-2 office in Natore.

Hundreds of villagers of Joypurhat yesterday assembled at Bangladesh Power Development Board office and barricaded the highway demanding uninterrupted power supply in the district, reports our Dinajpur correspondent.

They, under the banner of National Committee for the Protection of Oil, Gas, Mineral Resources, Power and Ports Joypurhat unit, brought out a procession and laid siege to the PDB office in Joypurhat.

After police removed the protesters from the office, they went to Joypurhat-Bhamoirhat Highway and barricaded the road for about 20 minutes.

Our staff correspondent in Rajshahi reports: Locals and businessmen staged demonstrations at PN High School ground of Puthia upazila yesterday protesting against long and frequent power cuts.

They submitted a memorandum before the upazila Nirbahi Office around noon.

On Tuesday, people hit by power cuts vandalised power offices at two upazilas in Rajshahi that left over 20 people including Ansar members injured. They also laid siege to other electricity offices in other parts of Rajshahi, Tangail, Dinajpur, Chandpur and Jamalpur.

In the sweltering heat of summer, sufferings of people have worsened due to power crisis.

The PDB, however, blamed short supply of gas to power plants and increased demand for the outages. While gas supply shortfall has been affecting power generation for the last few years, the PDB lost a power plant in Ghorashal to a fire.

The fire that happened due to the negligence of an engineer has shut the plant for the last one month and the PDB is still unsure when it will be operational again.

Eid holiday

FROM PAGE 1 Long time improvement of law and order situation in the country.

Emerging from the meeting, Home Minister Sahara Khatun told the journalists the inter-ministerial meeting will propose to the authorities concerned to increase the Eid holiday from three to five days so that people can avoid traffic congestion and hazards while going to their near and dear ones.

It will also propose to the government to close all educational institutes of the capital from 10th of Ramadan to avert unbearable traffic congestion.

The meeting also decided to propose to the authorities concerned to ensure uninterrupted supply of electricity, gas and water during Ramadan, she said.

The home minister, who presided over the meeting, said the business leaders have decided to keep open their business establishments up to 8:00 pm from first to 10th Ramadan, up to 10:00 pm from 11 to 20th Ramadan, up to 12:00 midnight from 21 to 27 Ramadan and whole night from 28th to Eid.

The business leaders also proposed to the government to reduce the closure of business establishments from one and half days to one day or rearrange the holidays.

The minister told the journalists that the proposed committee headed by local lawmaker will supervise the over-all law and order situation of a particular area, especially to contain extortion, tender violence, drug trafficking and other crimes.

The Dhaka Metropolitan Police will allow the open ground or playground of different areas to be used as parking place for the public during the Ramadan, she said.

The law enforcers will monitor the prices of essentials while the Rab will conduct massive anti-adulteration drives in the capital during Ramadan, she added.

To reduce traffic congestion in the city, Sahara also urged the owners and pullers of illegal rickshaws not to run their vehicles in the capital

Matia

FROM PAGE 16 consume huge nutrients from the soil resulting in shortage of nutrients for other trees.

The forest department of the government in partnership with several local NGOs undertook the project in the 1990s.

Particularly, the mulberry project, also taken up during the same period across the country, by Brac was a failure, Matia said, adding, "Planting of boro (plum) trees would have done better."

She was speaking at the inaugural session of a workshop on "Development of agroforestry in Bangladesh: progress, challenges and issues" jointly organised by Brac and the Kenya-based International Centre for Agroforestry Research (ICRAF) at the city's Cirdap auditorium.

Brac Executive Director Dr Mahabub Hossain speaking on the occasion admitted that their sericulture mulberry project is facing "difficulties in competing" with other countries in the sector and so they will soon close it. He, however, stressed the need of sericulture projects in the country.

Sericulture is an agro-based industry. It involves rearing silkworms for raw silk, which is the yarn obtained out of cocoons spun by certain species of insects.

"Agroforestry is an area where we can take support from ICRAE," Dr Mahabub said, adding that Bangladesh heavily depends on sugar, and some research on how it can be produced out of palm juice can help, as palm trees naturally grow in Bangladesh.

Agroforestry is the practice of growing agriculture products and forestry on the same piece of land at the same time to optimise the land utilisation that can help protect environment and increase productivity.

Matia said there is nothing wrong about agroforestry but selection of species of trees for this must be done considering how much benefit people will get from them.

ICRAF Director General Dr Dennis Garrity said agroforestry in some of the African countries is helping in a great way to increase production of crops, fruits, vegetables and also firewood.

"Bangladesh could create its own version of evergreen agriculture. We are ready to partner," he said, appreciating the government's "one homestead - one farm programme."

BNP lawmakers

FROM PAGE 16 Asked about a ruling party leader's allegation that Tarique Rahman was involved in August 21 grenade attack on Sheikh Hasina, Moudud said it was "absolutely baseless and misleading".

While addressing a function recently in the capital, the PM asked Khaleda to admit to her 'past crimes' and make a pledge before the nation that she won't make any money through corruption.

The party leaders could not tell anything about the absence of a large number of senior BNP lawmakers like standing committee member Saaluddin Quader Chowdhury and MK Anwar, in the programme.

They would not comment on their absence in the human chain programme.

A few days ago, BNP also staged a demonstration at the capital's Muktangon protesting the prime minister's remark.

Help control

FROM PAGE 1 essentials, especially sugar and edible oil, goes up because of their high demand for preparing iftar items.

"We hope that essentials market will not be volatile during Ramadan," said Mostafa Kamal, chairman and managing director of City Group of Industries, a leading processor of essentials.

The premier took accounts of the stock and supply of essentials, Kamal said after the meeting.

The market is stable now and the prime minister had been informed about it, he said.

The commerce ministry earlier fixed prices of unpacked soya bean oil at Tk 76 and super palm oil at Tk 72 a kg, and mill gate price of sugar at Tk 43 a kg to contain a hike in their prices during the month of fasting.

The premier asked the traders to sell commodities at the prices fixed by the commerce ministry.

AK Azad, president of the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI), led the team of refiners, wholesalers and retailers at the meeting.

Interim govt

FROM PAGE 1 ment said it was the NCC that conceived the idea of forming Tac after realising that it would take a long time to put all graft suspects behind bars, which would not be possible before the general elections held in December, 2008.

Tac began its journey on August 3, 2008 with a five-month tenure and got dissolved in January, 2009.

The ordinance, that formed the commission, destroyed the constitution's basic concept, the HC judgment said.

The ordinance also destroyed the essential limb of the judiciary, namely the Supreme Court (SC), by setting up a rival commission parallel to the High Court Division, in the name of speedy trial of criminals.

Tac was given the authority to call upon the judiciary for assistance if necessary, it could stop trials and ask for records from trial courts before framing charges against any person.

"The supervisory power of the Supreme Court has been encroached and disregarded and the Administration of Criminal Justice are not functioning in accordance with law and procedure due to interference of the Truth Commission," the judgment said.

Tac was also given the authority of punishment like seizures, confiscations, forfeitures, removals, and attachments of properties, which is directly inconsistent with the constitution, the HC said.

Commenting on the activities of Tac, the court said, "It has occasioned deception and fraud by invoking a misnomer, misleading nomenclature, namely 'The Truth and Accountability Commission'."

The definition of commission ensures taking of oath from an offender, examination of evidence and deposition of witnesses, but Tac awarded clemency solely based on the offenders' statement, the HC added.

"It does not adhere to the ingredients of a 'commission' and it acts far in excess of a commission by assuming powers of determination that affects the fundamental rights of the individuals and is contrary to so many provisions of the constitution," the judgment went on.

Even scope was not given to test the validity of the ordinance as it was enacted for five months on June 8, 2008 at a time when the election was announced to be held in December the same year, the judgment added.

According to the current tradition, an ordinance is required to be placed before a parliament within 30 days of the House's formation, but the Voluntary Disclosure of Information Ordinance, 2008 ceased to exist even before the current parliament was formed.

The ordinance was in violation of the equality clause of the constitution as it gave "suitable atmosphere" and "special privilege" of exoneration to a class of offenders, the judgment said.

The very enactment of the ordinance was also in violation of the constitution because that was a policy decision, and a caretaker government is not allowed to take any policy decision, the HC concluded.

Unforgiving sea

FROM PAGE 1 confluence with the Bay of Bengal, laps wildly in the monsoon wind. The waves crash on the shore of Char Patila, a tiny island off Bhola in the south.

"Something funny is happening this year," says Uttam Majhi, a man in his 40s. "Hilsa have disappeared."

All he caught, since the hilsa season started in May, is a single fish.

After several fruitless attempts, Uttam has given up. Now he prefers to sit in the gloom of the tea stall by the bank of Char Patila and look at nothing.

Every failed trip means a huge loss for the fishermen. If they operate a medium-sized fishing boat, about 30 feet long, then they have to invest about Tk 3,000 in fuel, labour, ice, and food for a single overnight trip. And the size of hilsa the last boat brought in, about a foot long, fetches only Tk 450 a hali or a set of four. If the fish is bigger it may bring between Tk 600 and Tk 1,200 a hali. By this count, the catch of the last boat could bring in only about Tk 1,300. For these poor people, the gap between investment and return is huge.

These fishermen work on loans from the Mohajans who pay them every year to buy nets, repair or buy boats, hire hands, and buy ice. The system works rather strangely. These fishermen are then bound to sell their catch to the Mohajans. If they cannot repay the loan in a year, it will roll over to the next. They will have to borrow more and their debts will pile up. They have to blindly depend on the price the Mohajans offer.

This year bad catch means their loan burden will go up next year. Their dependence on rich traders will deepen, like bonded labourers.

"They will pay us back," Mohajan Hashem says. "We will feed them until the next season, and then they will come back with fish to repay. And pay they must."

No rule

FROM PAGE 16 getting justice is merely a pipe dream.

The law is applicable only to punish the poor, not the rich, Mizanur said.

There is a public perception that one has to buy justice with money, he said.

Incidents of human rights violation occur in the country due to malfunction of the judicial system, the NHRC chairman said.

Public hearings could be arranged for appointing judges and not only lawyers, but also academicians on law should be appointed as judges, he said.

Mizanur observed that the medium in court proceedings should be Bangla, not English, as most people cannot understand the court orders written in English.

The NHRC chairman urged the government to invest more money in the education sector and training of lawyers and judges to establish justice and rule of law in society.

BRAC University Vice Chancellor Prof Ainun Nishat presided over the function.

Law Commission member Prof Shah Alam, former ambassador Harun-ur-Rashid, director of BRAC School of Law Shahdeen Malik and IGS Director Manzoor Hasan, among others, spoke.

41 inspectors

FROM PAGE 1 "I felt my five-hour wait was a total waste," Robin said.

The BRTA is supposed to have 78 inspectors and even that is too small a team to carry out the job, BRTA sources said.

The vehicle inspectors are also the main men in the committee for issuing driving licences at each district. Their shortage hinders regular examination of people seeking driving licence.

The process for obtaining driving licence also slows down which in return encourages car owners to submit to middlemen to get a licence, Saiful said.

The inspectors are also burdened with rundown government vehicles at the government workshops, he added.

He also mentioned that Dhaka circle offices face the toughest problem. The Mirpur circle office alone checks fitness of around 500 vehicles a day with only 10 inspectors and the other circle office in Ekuria has just four inspectors.

The official, however, informed that the BRTA sought permission for recruiting 10 more inspectors and it is waiting for the approval of the ministry of communications.

The BRTA made its last recruitment of 10 inspectors two years ago, which failed to solve the problem of vehicle inspectors, sources said.

Ramadan

FROM PAGE 1 greater unity of the Muslim Ummah.

Later, the state minister inaugurated a month-long Islamic book fair on the Baitul Mukarram Mosque premises.

Meanwhile, the Muslims all over the country have taken preparations to welcome the holy month and start fasting from dawn to dusk with religious solemnity.

Tarabih prayers will be offered in the mosques at night. The devotees will take sheri and iftar.

Meanwhile, President Zillur Rahman and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday greeted the countrymen and all Muslims across the world on the advent of the holy month of Ramadan.

In separate messages on the eve of the fasting month, the President and the premier prayed for continued peace and progress of the country and welfare of the Muslim Ummah.

The president, in his message, said the holy month of Ramadan is the greatest gift for mankind. This month comes every year with the opportunity of self-rectification and forgiveness.

Draw up plan

FROM PAGE 16 Present Mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka continues to discharge duties even though his tenure expired in May, 2007. DCC election could not be held at that time due to the imposition of the state of emergency.

Khoka, also vice chairman of BNP, was elected DCC mayor on April 25, 2002.

The Election Commission on April 8 informed the LGRD ministry about its decision to hold the DCC polls on May 31. But it could not proceed with the plan as the government wanted to redraw the boundaries of the DCC wards before the polls. It asked the commission to delay the polls until winter.

The DCC officials, taking flak from committee members at the meeting at the Jatya Sangsad Bhaban for DCC's poor performance, alleged that the present mayor is not cooperating with them in the work of the organisation.

Committee chief Rahmat Ali, also an Awami League lawmaker, alleged that DCC Mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka has been involved in corruption.

Khoka however ruled out all allegations against him calling them baseless.

He also said if the committee has any evidence of corruption against him they should place them before the Anti-Corruption Commission for investigation.

The parliamentary body asked the DCC to make sure that pedestrians can use all

Cops raid

FROM PAGE 16 their meeting to create unrest in the country, said Shahidul Haque, officer-in-charge of Paltan Police Station.

Two separate cases were filed against them on July 1 and 3 on charges of creating chaos by damaging vehicles in Paltan, attacking police while carrying out their duties and attempting to commit seditious activities.

Around 150 members of Jamaat and Shibir were present at the office during the raid.

At the court, the detainees were shown arrested for their involvement in attacking police personnel and subversive acts, said Rowshan Ara, sub-inspector of Paltan Police Station.

After the Jamaat and Shibir men were produced before the court of Chief Metropolitan Magistrate, their lawyers and leaders pleaded for their bail but the court rejected their pleas and sent them to prison.

Meanwhile, ATM Azharul Islam, acting secretary general of Jamaat-e-Islami condemned the arrest of their leaders and activists as well as the raids by police at their office and demanded unconditional release of their men before Ramadan.

Earlier, Ameer of Jamaat-e-Islami Motiur Rahman Nizami, its secretary general Ali Hsan Mohammad Mojahid and Delwar Hossain Saydee were arrested on June 29.

Bangladeshis

FROM PAGE 1 Bangladesh Labour Attaché is already there and will send a detail report tomorrow [Thursday], said Sadia Muna Tasneem, director general of the external publicity wing of foreign ministry, told The Daily Star last night.

Names and other details of the deceased are yet to be known, she said, adding that the ministry is working with the local authorities to identify them and send their bodies backhome.

The cause of the blaze could not be known for sure as of filing this report around 1:00am.

Dubai Municipality is investigating the incident. The municipality officers were at the spot but they said it was too early to say what caused the fire.

Meanwhile, police arrested the company's Emirati owner and its Indian managing director for using the factory's premises to accommodate the workers and thus causing their death, the acting police chief in Dubai said.

There were some clear signs of illegal housing, said Redha Salman, the municipality's head of public health and safety.

"No one knew there were people inside the factory," said a Pakistani national who runs a business next to the factory.

Appointment

FROM PAGE 16 The decision to appoint two inspectors in each police station has been taken so that one can monitor crime and operations while the other, investigations. The ASPs or ACs will oversee their work.

As per the existing rules, the inspectors and sub-inspectors (SI) are made OCs while 37 percent of the ASPs or ACs are appointed through promotion from lower ranks.

The move to upgrade the post of OC upset the lower rank police officers because they feel the decision would block their chances of moving up to class-I positions and thus undermine their morale, said sources in the police seeking anonymity.

The Daily Star on Monday received anonymous fax messages opposing the decision.

The government claims that the measures would make around 1.24 lakh policemen in the country more efficient in dealing with crimes, investigations and maintaining law and order.

Bangladesh Police now have 561 ACs and ASPs in and outside metropolitan cities with nearly 1,850 inspectors and 8,775 sub-inspectors.

'Stalker' kills

FROM PAGE 16 Faruk has been stalking Nasrin for one year, and three months ago he pressurised Nasrin to give one of her photographs to him.

"He had also threatened to abduct her," Abul added.

Faruk is an employee of a cigarette factory in the area and comes from Gouripur in Mymensingh.

Tapan Kumar Saha, officer-in-charge of Tongi Police Station, said they have yet to ascertain the reason behind incident. No case was filed.

Philippines to hand out excess rice to children

AFP, Manila

The Philippines, the world's leading importer of rice, said yesterday it would hand out 50,000 tonnes of the surplus grain to children.

The give-away will free up space in 480 government warehouses where President Benigno Aquino has said unsold rice is rotting, National Food Authority (NFA) spokesman Rex Estoperez told AFP.

"All our warehouses are full and we cannot sell rice to the market," Estoperez said.

"We will be using overstocked rice for the feeding programme. That is one strategy to de-clog the warehouses."

He said about one million sacks of rice weighing 50 kgs each (50,000 tonnes) would be used in the mass feeding programme.

The rice would be made into porridge for students at about 48,000 day care centres operated by the social welfare department, Estoperez said.

No specific timetable was given for the programme, although Estoperez said it would be carried out "as soon as possible".

Estoperez said more surplus rice was available and the NFA would also give that away if the social welfare department requested.

"This would depend on the requirements of the DSWD (social welfare department)," he said.

The Philippines is the world's biggest importer of rice but Aquino, who took office on June 30, has accused the administration of his predecessor, Gloria Arroyo, of importing more than was needed.

Aquino last month ordered a review of government rice import policies and appointed a new administrator for the NFA, stressing that some of the overstocked rice were rotting.