

Wet gamchha

FROM PAGE 1
juvenile Hena 24 hours later in the middle of the night. Hena was too weak to walk there on foot and was carried by her parents to the arbitrators sitting at Mahbub's house 25 metres away.

The arbitrators after some proceedings gave the verdict. They sentenced her to suffer 101 lashes. As the crime of the rapist appeared more severe to the arbitrators, they ordered him to face 200 lashes to ensure "justice".

Shilpi organised the arbitration with members from her own relatives, avoiding involvement of the official local salish to avenge her husband's previous records of adultery.

In the process, Shilpi accused Hena of "volunteering" for the act. Shilpi also benefited from the arbitration, which forced Mahbub to give in writing on an official land deed 18 decimals of land and a small tin-shed house to her.

This was done upon Shilpi's appeal that she needed to be ensured about her own future with an "unfaithful" husband.

When the arbitration was in progress, Hena was already physically shattered and extremely frail.

Following the verdict, Shilpi's cousin Akkas Mirmalod selected her sister-in-law Monimala to whip Hena 100 times with the wet towel-turned-whip.

The arbitrators, in the same room, asked Mahbub's father Rabiul Khan to execute the order to lash Mahbub 200 times.

Witnesses say Mahbub was set free after his father lashed him ten to twelve times.

Halfway through the

lashing, fragile Hena collapsed on the floor. It was not until the following day that she was shifted to Shariatpur General Hospital in a critical condition.

Hena's poor family was forced by Mahbub's relatives to bring her back from the hospital at around 1:00pm on January 30. The next day she was taken to Mulfatganj Health Complex at around 8:00pm where doctors declared her dead.

After Hena's death her father filed a case with Noria police station accusing 18, most of who are on the run.

Police have so far arrested four -- Shilpi, local mosque imam Mafiz, Joynal Mirmalod and Ala Box.

Shilpi did not confess anything during remand before police, though Mafiz and Joynal made confessions and but claimed that they did not have any part in announcement of the fatwa.

During a visit to Noria jail for statements of the arrestees, Shilpi denied to talk to this correspondent.

Mofiz said, "In no way I was involved in the announcement of the fatwa. I was called there as the imam of the local mosque. Maulana Saiful gave the fatwa."

The other two arrestees could not be met immediately.

Following a report published in The Daily Star on February 7, Hena's body was exhumed from her grave upon the order of the High Court, which in a suo-moto rule the same day asked the authorities concerned to conduct fresh post-mortem on her.

The report of the second post-mortem, conducted by a team of doctors at Dhaka Medical College Hospital, is expected to be placed before the court today.

PM's share crash

FROM PAGE 1
market situation.

Mostafa Kamal, popularly known as Lotus Kamal, described the prime minister's allegation as a political statement in response to whether the premier's comment would affect the investigation into the share market scam.

He, however, said the prime minister might have information about BNP's involvement in the capital market debacle.

"BNP has created issues for calling hartal by manipulating the share market and hoarding commodities," the premier said on Monday at the weekly cabinet committee meeting.

On share market scam, Lotus Kamal said, "We want the investigation committee to work independently and reveal the real pictures."

Asked about reasons behind the recent stock market crisis, he said, "Manifold boom of share market along with high index were totally created artificially."

"Market index was 2,700 when Awami League came in power in 2009. But it abnormally touched 10,000 points in around two years," Lotus Kamal added.

He also criticised the government for giving extra favour and facilities to invest in the capital market.

As per the government policy, no question will be asked about the source of money if it is invested in the share market while the profit from here would be tax free.

"Beneficiary Owner's account increased from 14 lakh to 33 lakh after the policy was introduced and every account holder came into the market with modest amount of money," he said adding unusual demand of share was created in the market though there was not sufficient supply of good share.

Meanwhile, rejecting the prime minister's allegation that BNP was behind the share market crash and price hike of essentials, BNP secretary general Khandaker Delwar Hossain yesterday said, "Why you [prime minister] are in power if BNP is responsible for destroying share market and increasing price of essentials. Quit and see how Khaleda Zia's government

brings stability in the capital market and control prices of commodities."

Addressing a protest rally at Mahanagar Natya Mancho in the capital, Delwar also said, "The government has exhibited absolute failure in all sectors including controlling commodity and share market and maintaining law and order. The prime minister and her cabinet should quit admitting their failure."

He said the government has termed the hartal illogical but failed to explain why. He alleged that police attacked on BNP activists following the order of ruling party activists.

Party vice president Abdullah Al Noman presided over the protest rally. Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain, Moudud Ahmed, Mirza Abbas, Abdul Moyeen Khan and Rafiqul Islam Mia, among others, spoke in the meeting.

The party organised the rally as part of their two-day demonstration protesting the government atrocity during Monday's dawn to dusk hartal. As per earlier announcement, it will stage demonstration across the country today.

India to stop

FROM PAGE 20
Ministers Meeting in the Bhutanese capital, said a foreign ministry release.

The foreign minister also discussed increased supply of Ganges water to Bangladesh during the dry season, ministry officials said.

She expressed interest in joint venture projects to import hydro-power from Bhutan and also sought support for importing 200 megawatts of electricity from Palatana Power Project in Tripura.

The minister thanked Krishna for withdrawing proposed 14 percent countervailing duty on jute exports from Bangladesh.

She also requested her counterpart to allow road transit to Nepal and Bhutan through India for their use of Chittagong and Mongla ports.

Dipu Moni also had separate meetings with Foreign Minister of Sri Lanka GL Peiris and acting Foreign Minister of Bhutan Lyonpo Khandu Wangchuk.

UPDF's youth front leader arrested with guns, Yaba

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Rapid Action Battalion members detained a leader of Democratic Youth Forum (DYF) along with two light guns, two bullets and two hundred pieces of Yaba from a house of Pahartali in the port city yesterday evening.

Major Julfikar Alam, company commander of Rab-7, said after a tip-off they detained Michael Chakma, members' secretary of DYF, the youth front of United People's Democratic Front (UPDF).

DYF in a release protested the arrest. It claimed Rab members arrested Michael when he was visiting Pahartali as part of an organisational tour.

Pirates seize Italian oil tanker, mostly Indian crew

AFP, Rome

Pirates wielding rocket-launchers seized a large Italian oil tanker with a crew of five Italians and 17 Indians yesterday east of the Yemeni island of Socotra in the Indian Ocean, EU naval forces said.

The European Union's Atalanta mission to the seas off Somalia and the Gulf of Aden (Eunavfor) said the tanker was taken early yesterday 600 miles east of the island by a single skiff with five pirates who opened fire on the oiler.

Spokesman wing commander Paddy O'Kennedy told AFP that the 105,000-tonne, Italian-owned and flagged Savina Caylyn was "confirmed" seized and "is currently sailing west," towards the Somali coast.

Govt wheat

FROM PAGE 20
It was part of 1,118 tonnes of wheat the food directorate allocated to Central Marketing Company of Jessore free of cost for producing food for schoolchildren, Magistrate M Saiduzzaman told The Daily Star.

The World Food Programme (WFP) is the sponsor of the feeding programme.

City cops raid

FROM PAGE 20
were doing "something" in one of the rooms of the rented flat and soon after the explosion the youths ran away with injuries.

Police suspect a bomb exploded while the youths were making explosives. The gang might have been involved in mugging and other pretty crimes, they said.

BCL men

FROM PAGE 20
stab injuries in his chest, stomach and left hand.

Later, he was shifted to Square Hospital in the city as his condition was deteriorating.

Sources said a group of RU unit BCL activists led by Nayan, a fourth year student of Management department, Rocky, a fourth year student of Philosophy department and Abdus Salam, a third year student of Management department, stabbed Ahasan with sharp knives at the university Tukitaki Chattar at around 6:00pm.

On information, law enforcers rushed to the spot, rescued Ahasan and rushed him to the university medical centre in an unconscious condition. Then he was referred to RMCH.

Earlier, the university unit leaders and activists of JCD brought out a procession on the campus at around 5:30pm demanding release of their leaders and activists who were arrested by Motihar police on Monday during hartal.

According to the doctors of RMCH, Ahasan was in an unconscious state till filling of the report at around 7:30pm.

RU unit JCD Joint Convener, Saiful Islam told that BCL cadres attacked on Ahasan as he participated in the procession.

Officer-in-charge (OC) of Motihar Police Station, Abul Khayer told that he would look in to the matter after investigation.

However, no case was filed in this connection, he added.

Cruel twist

FROM PAGE 1
constant vigil by his bed by rotation.

He lost his father before his birth. His maternal grandparents married off his mother again after she stopped breast-feeding Maruf. Since then, he is brought up by his grandparents.

Rustom, Maruf's rickshaw puller grandfather, said: "The building owner gave me only Tk 5,500 for the treatment over the last 15 days. He assured me that he would come to the hospital and arrange his treatment. But he never came."

Rustom pleads the house owner Lutfur Rahman Babu Bhuyan for arranging Maruf's treatment everyday but that has fallen on a deaf ear.

On many occasions, nobody opened the gate when Maruf's grandmother Hasina went to meet the house owner. If she got hold of him after waiting for hours outside the gate, he promised to come to the hospital but did not.

Lutfur, an advocate, also opposed filing any cases, said Hasina.

"I cannot work since the accident. I have to buy injections and medicines everyday. But I have no money," said Rustom.

Maruf now lives on liquid. The duty doctor at DMCH said the child needs to undergo a critical surgical operation.

Most of his body parts became paralysed, he said, adding, they cannot say if the six-year-old will get back to normal.

As of Monday, the extension work of the five-storey building was going on.

Though next to the building is a densely populated

slum, the owner set no safety net to prevent falling of construction materials even after such an accident.

According to the Bangladesh National Building Code, the authorities concerned must ensure safety measures around the construction site.

Nobody opened the gate, despite repeated attempts for comments of the owner.

At one stage, some unruly people asked this reporter to leave the area. They said it was an accident and they have settled the matter. There is nothing to report on this, they added.

A criminal case has been filed against Lurfur Rahman with Rampura Police Station but he has secured bail from High Court.

UP elections

FROM PAGE 1
The last elections to over 4,000 union parishads were held in January-March of 2003. Tenure of the parishads expired at the end of 2007 and early 2008. But the elections could not be held in due time for various reasons, including the then state of emergency and some legal issues.

This time, 4,228 out of total 5,504 union parishads will go to elections.

Polis to the rest will not be held as some of the parishads' tenure is yet to expire. And elections to over 50 parishads did not take place for a decade due to legal complexities.

Talking to reporters at his office, Election Commissioner Sohul said the commission for the first time had made electoral code of conduct for candidates of the union parishad polls.

Proposals drafted

FROM PAGE 20
able to fine a person Tk 500, which can be realised instantly.

Besides, a committee can recommend the authorities concerned take punitive measures against individuals for their refusal to appear before it following summons or failure to produce required documents, say the draft proposals.

The Daily Star obtained a copy of the draft proposals.

On the much-talked-about issue of ministries' indifference towards implementing the committees' recommendations, the draft law proposed a provision so that a ministry or organisation is bound to respect the committees' suggestions.

According to the proposals, a parliamentary body, if it finds anything wrong in ministries' or organisations' activities, will send its recommendations to them within 15 days of completing its investigation.

The ministry or organisation concerned will have to take necessary measures to implement the recommendations within the next 60 days and will notify the committee about it.

The ministries and organisations concerned will have to provide the committee the reasons for their failure to comply with its recommendations within the stipulated time.

The law ministry drafted the proposals in line with Article-76 (3) of the constitution and sent it to the parliamentary standing committee on law justice and parliamentary affairs ministry for its consideration. This very committee had asked for the proposals for this law.

Article-76 (3) of the constitution says, "Parliament may by law confer on committees appointed this article for powers for (a) enforcing the attendance of witnesses and examining them on oath, affirmative or otherwise; (b) compelling the production of documents."

But successive governments failed to move to enact the law to empower the committees since the independence.

The parliamentary bodies have been facing tremendous difficulties in performing their duties as it cannot ensure attendance of witnesses or compel anybody to produce documents required for the committees to make decisions.

The parliamentary standing committee on public undertakings in April, 2009,

summoned the former chief of Anti-Corruption Commission Lt Gen (ret'd) Hasan Mashud Chowdhury and incumbent commissioners M Habibur Rahman and Abul Hasan Manzur Mannan. They refused to appear before the committee challenging the parliamentary body's authority to summon them.

The parliamentary body had accused them of contempt of parliament but finally no action was taken against them.

Similarly, former speaker Jamiruddin Sircar, his deputy Akhtar Hamid Siddiqui and former chief whip Khandaker Delwar Hossain also refused to appear before the all-party parliamentary probe body that investigated allegation of corruption against them.

The parliamentary bodies often allege that ministry officials fail to cooperate with them and refuse to produce documents they ask for.

After the two major incidents of refusal to appear before parliamentary bodies, the issue of enacting the law in line with the constitutional provision became prominent.

Chief of the parliamentary standing committee on law justice and parliamentary affairs ministry Suranjit Sengupta has moved to organise the February 15 meeting.

Talking to journalists at his office on Monday, Suranjit said enactment of the law is a must for effective functioning of the committee system and strengthening of parliamentary democracy.

Buriganga

FROM PAGE 1
construction firm Abdul Monem Ltd.

These individuals and companies encroached on the river mostly by earth-filling and building boundary walls and makeshift structures, said Md Sharif Afzal Hossain, deputy director of BIWTA.

Of them, Monir Hossain earth-filled a 500-foot long and 30-foot wide stretch of the river, he added.

The magistrate confiscated the dredger and the sand he used for the filling.

The team partially removed construction materials of Concord Group. The magistrate gave the company two days to remove all the materials.

The drive is scheduled to continue today.



Children choosing books at a stall of Amar Ekushey Boi Mela at Bangla Academy yesterday. The stall only sells books on the Liberation War of Bangladesh.

Inspiring readers to read books on '71

RAKIB AHAMMED

While most publishers at Amar Ekushey Boi Mela were busy promoting novels and poems by popular writers, freedom fighter Maj (ret'd) Qamrul Hassan Bhuiyan was fighting a different battle yesterday.

Sitting in his stall at the southernmost corner of the Bangla Academy premises, the bespectacled warrior was eagerly guiding readers looking for good books on 1971 Liberation War.

"I am not here for business but to inspire young readers to learn more about the war by reading books," said Qamrul.

The former soldier, also the chief of Centre for Bangladesh Liberation War,

said they have around 32 publications on Liberation War.

"I have very poor eyesight and need a magnifying glass to read. Still I want to help people choose good books on Liberation War as I have read all the titles available in my stall," he added.

Bangla Academy authorities have allotted a specific corner for stalls selling books only on the Liberation War, though very few of those have retained their exclusivity.

Qamrul's stall, however, have a good turnout of visitors daily, mostly college and university students who buy a number of books.

About 15 new books on the Liberation War have hit the fair so far this year.

Rubber factory

FROM PAGE 20
ordered to shut the factory's Reclaim Rubber Unit which emanates the malodour.

Led by Muhammed Munir Chowdhury, director (enforcement) of DoE, a team conducted the drive in the factory following complaints from residents of North Kunipara and Shantiniketan areas.

During the drive, the team found that the factory is emanating extreme malodour while recycling old rubber materials. Besides, the factory employees, workers and nearby residents are facing severe environment pollution as small particles of rubber are being discharged into the air.

The team also found that the factory authorities did not take any effective measure to control the pollution.

The factory is of the red-class category according to the environment act, as it manufactures rubber sheets, adhesive, and foam.

The DoE directed the factory authorities to install bio-filter, and dust collector to stop the pollution.

The factory authorities pledged to implement all the directives, the release added.

1,600 sued

FROM PAGE 20
Road, Bangshal during the hartal.

Additional Deputy Commissioner Masudur Rahman of Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) said Mohon was arrested following a specific allegation against him of torching the vehicle.

Earlier, police arrested Rafiqul Islam, another pro-BNP councillor of ward-68, from the Kotwali area on Monday for setting another bus on fire on the eve of the hartal near the court area.

Meanwhile, Sub-Inspector of Paltan Police Station Jashim Uddin filed cases against 1,600 people on Monday, mentioning names of 19 of the accused.

At least 83 persons were also injured in sporadic clashes between police and pro-hartal activists across the country on Monday.

The opposition called hartal citing a number of issues including protesting filing of a case against the party chairperson following recent clash at Arial Beel in Munshiganj, crash in share market and price hike of essentials.

The drive is scheduled to continue today.

Power tariff hiked

FROM PAGE 1
used to be Tk 560 till January this year.

For bulk level -- Desco, Dhaka Power Distribution Company Ltd (DPDC), Rural Electrification Board (REB), West Zone Power Distribution Company and Power Development Board (PDB) itself who purchase power from PDB -- the price will increase 11 percent on average. However, it will vary from metropolitan areas to rural areas.

Agricultural pumps, educational and religious institutions have been kept out from the price hike, said Syed Yusuf Hossain, chairman of the Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission (BERC), while announcing the new power tariff structure at a press brief at his commission office yesterday.

According to the new rate, the bulk price of the power will be Tk 2.63 per kilowatt, which was previously Tk 2.37, and will be applicable from February 1, 2011.

The price rise for the bulk level is for the next six months, as the government will again increase the price by 6.66 percent at bulk level on August 1 this year, taking the cost of each unit to Tk 2.8 -- nearly 18 percent rise for bulk users at the end of the year.

In case of commercial and other categories the five percent increase will be applicable for every slab.

According to Bangladesh Energy Commission Act, price increment in any level must go through public hearing. This time BERC organised the hearing only for the bulk users.

Hossain however said the price hike at retail level is an interim order, and they would readjust the price after the hearing at end-users level.

"We have increased the price at retail level to help bulk users remain in the business."

He said they have tried to fix the rate considering purchasing ability of the people.

Explaining the reason behind the retail hike, Hossain said, "If we wait for the hearing, the revenue situation would deteriorate further as bulk prices rises."

The commission chairman said the price hike is due to high import cost of furnace oil, and as part of

efforts to cut system loss and increase efficiency.

"We are being forced to increase price, as it was not adjusted in the past due to sheer negligence from the authorities," Hossain said. He said it was done due to the revenue collection difference between the rural and urban area.

The annual revenue collection per kilometre in DPDC and DESCO areas is around Tk 30 to Tk 35 lakh whereas REB earns Tk 1.7 lakh, West Zone Power Distribution Company Tk 5.95 lakh and Power Development Board Tk 7.14 lakh.

The revenue collection was considered while setting the new price, Hossain added.

The government also decided to create a maintenance fund financed by revenues from power consumption. The fund will be used for repairing old power plants and increasing their capacity.

Hossain said the government would give Tk 1,500 crore subsidy in this sector to fill the revenue gap.

However, according to the assessment of the commission, the revenue requirement of PDB is Tk 9,308 crore in 2010-11, to take the highly-subsidised sector to break even.

The increase evoked criticism from industrialists and businessmen, who said the government could have waited as the country has been suffering from acute power crisis for long.

"This is not acceptable. This comes at a time when we got only 30 to 40 percent of our total requirements from power," said Asif Ibrahim, president of Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

Consumers' rights group also voiced concern saying that the new tariff would create further pressure on the customers.

"Had the government fixed the faults at production stage, it might not be needed to increase price in such a way," said Quazi Faruque, president of Consumers Association of Bangladesh.

"The price should be increased if required, but if the authorities can stop pilferage then we will be able to save a lot of electricity," he told The Daily Star.