

Rab 'shootout'

FROM PAGE 20
The deceased, Rashedul Islam alias Murgi Rashed, 25, was a listed criminal in the area and was accused in a number of cases, including extortion, Abdul Latif, officer-in-charge of Kafirul Police Station said.

Flight Lt Khairul Mamun of Rab-4 said a patrol team challenged Rashed and his gang while they were holding a 'secret' meeting near High-Tech Hospital at Kachukhet at about 2:30am.

Sensing Rab's presence, the gang opened fire at them compelling them to shoot back.

Rashed was caught in the line of fire and died on the spot while his accomplices managed to flee the scene, he said. Police sent his body to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) morgue for autopsy.

A foreign-made pistol, three bullets and a cartridge were recovered from the scene.

Meanwhile, at Paltan, two alleged muggers were rushed to DMCH with bullet wounds on their knees as a team of Rab-3 shot at them.

Joyal Abedin Rubel, 18 and Md Sohel, 20 along with two others were attempting to mug pedestrians at Shahid Nazrul Islam Sarani in Paltan around 1:10am when a patrol team of Rab challenged them, said Riazul Huq, deputy assistant director Rab-3.

Rab opened fire at them when the criminals tried to flee the scene.

A toy pistol, a knife and four mobile phone sets were recovered from their possession, police said.

Amini

FROM PAGE 1
while the other for making derogatory comments against Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

However, the reasons behind withdrawal of the orders could not be known immediately.

Earlier at noon, the court issued an arrest warrant for Amini hours after AB Siddiqui, president of Bangladesh Jononetri Parishad, filed a case against him for making derogatory remarks about Hasina.

In the complaint, the plaintiff alleged that Amini at a March 18 rally in the city's Muktangan had said the prime minister would be forced out of the power.

The same court also summoned Amini and Maulana Abdullah Wasel, publicity secretary of Islami Ain Bastobayon Committee, to appear before it on April 26 in the other case filed for making anti-state remarks.

Hafez Maulana Ziaul Hasan, president of Sammilito Islami Jote, filed the case in the morning with the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court.

Ziaul Hasan in his complaint said Amini at a conference at Bangladesh Photo Journalists Association auditorium in the city made the remarks while criticising the national women development policy on March 21.

When asked about the withdrawal of the order, Dhaka Bar Association President Sheikh Hemayet Hossain, also counsel of Ziaul Hasan, told The Daily Star the magistrate, after hearing the case, issued summons upon Amini and Wasel in presence of the complainant and a number of journalists.

"I could not realise how the same magistrate withdrew the order without informing the complainant and others about it," Hemayet said, adding that such order has tarnished the image of his client.

When contacted for comments, an official of the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court told The Daily Star that Chief Metropolitan Magistrate AKM Enamul Haque was out of his chamber.

Meanwhile, the leaders of Islami Ain Bastobayon Committee (IABC) at a meeting yesterday warned the government of 'dire consequences' if 'anything happens' to Amini.

The meeting was organised in front of the Jatiya Press Club following filing of cases against Amini, president of IOJ, a component of BNP-led four-party alliance.

Participating in the meeting, IABC leaders said they will stage demonstrations across the country if anything happens to their leader Amini, also president of IABC.

"We will make the April 4 hartal a success at any cost. Government's repression and arrest of leaders will not be able to prevent us from observing hartal," said Abul Quasem, chief of Dhaka city unit of IABC.

The IABC activists also brought out a procession and chanted slogans demanding withdrawal of cases filed against Amini.

Escape mission

FROM PAGE 1
where they had jobs.

To them Tunisia meant hope and a chance to get home in one piece, and see their wives, parents, children.

Two days into their journey on March 4, fellow travellers were too tired to have a look at the beautiful mountain road snaking its way through the valleys. As always with mountainous areas, the evenings approach fast.

The minivan was trundling along and about to get on to a highway when it slowed down even more. The slow speed caught the attention of all inside and they looked up from whatever they were doing to see what was going on.

It was the thing they feared the most. Cold chills were running down their spines as the minivan ground to a halt at a check post. They had no idea who the armed men with tough looking jaws were. And they knew this was a huge problem.

Not knowing whether you are dealing with Gaddafi loyalists or rebels could be a matter of life or death.

"We were all muttering Suras [verses from the Quran], knowing these could be our last moments on earth. A numbness gripped us," said Suruj Mian, 37, a resident of Rashidabad in Kishoreganj.

"They instructed one of us to unlock the door and they opened it with brute force."

Two men in plain clothes, one with a microphone and the other with a large video camera, were among the team of around 15 personnel.

"The two men brought the microphone and the camera inside the vehicle and started taking our interviews.

"We could not guess whether they were Gaddafi loyalist or rebel army forces. And truly speaking, nothing but the thought of death was in our minds.

"The man with the microphone asked me whether Gaddafi was a good man and if his country was normal.

"I replied in the affirmative without actually understanding what I was saying."

Then the man moved on asked the same question to the young Bangladeshi sitting behind Suruj in the back seat.

The young man said an unsafe condition was prevailing in the country and Gaddafi was an Ali Baba (a character in the tales of Arabian Nights who stole from robbers).

From then on things went out of control, not that anyone in the minivan were in control of anything.

One of the men in uniform came into the van and dragged the young Bangladeshi out to the roadside.

Shots were fired at his chest one after another as all inside the minivan looked in

horror and disbelief. Echoes of gunfire shattered the calm of the valley as the young man dropped to the ground.

They prayed and dreaded their turn.

A man in uniform then asked them to leave.

The young Libyan driver did not wait a single moment more. He put the car in gear and drove away with seven on board and leaving one lying on the roadside behind.

There was absolute silence inside the car.

They reached Tunisia border the next day and was taken to Choucha camp in Tunisia on a bus.

Suruj said the young man of around 30 years came from Sirajganj. He did not know him well as they worked in different sections of the construction firm Al Jamal Sorika.

He said, "It seemed we were making our way through the land of death, as all too often we saw dead bodies left lying beside roads."

The Libyan owner of his firm left when rebels took over Benghazi.

The owner told the workers that he could not take care of them any more in such a situation in Libya.

Around 300 Bangladeshis used to work there and they left in groups.

Suruj and the other seven waited until water ran dry at the firm.

At Choucha camp, a tent was provided and their passports were taken away by the authorities.

"We only knew we were alive and that was all that we could hope for."

In Choucha camp, very often four to five men had to share a small piece of cake no bigger than 100 to 150gm. Sometimes hundreds standing in the queue for food never got any, he said.

Those who were lucky enough to get food had the heart to share it with their tent mates.

"I could neither stand in a queue nor walk during the last few days at the camp," Suruj said.

He came home on March 16.

Suruj is the lone bread winner of his family of seven, including four school-going daughters and elderly widowed mother.

He said a manpower broker took Tk 2.75 lakh from him promising a job to fetch him Tk 20,000 a month.

He went to Libya on January 20, 2010, but his employers never paid him and kept him confined to the site and forced him to work.

He ran away in May and started working for Al Jamal Sorika. He was being paid Tk 27,000 a month there.

He is now very weak and broke. "I can't even afford the pills the doctor prescribed," he said.

Suruj was a bus driver before he went to Libya. He had borrowed money with high interest to pay the broker. Now he has no money to pay back the loan.

Alim gets bail

FROM PAGE 20
cabinet, had filed a petition with the court seeking bail on medical and humanitarian grounds.

Granting his prayer, the tribunal said Alim will have to stay in his son's residence at the capital's Banani until further orders.

Alim was also asked to surrender his passport to the tribunal registrar and appear before the court whenever summoned.

The court said Alim's son Faisal Alim and his counsel Tajul Islam will pay Tk 1 lakh bail bond as security money to the registrar.

As per the conditions, Alim must not make any statements to the print or electronic media and has to co-operate with the investigation agency in discharging its duties. And he has to give his cellphone number, if he uses, to the registrar.

The bail order will be cancelled if any of the conditions is violated, the court said.

The court fixed April 28 for further order and asked the accused to appear

before it on that day.

Prosecutor Syed Haider Ali yesterday opposed the bail prayer saying that Alim was getting proper treatment in jail and should be kept under detention for holding a fair investigation into allegations against him.

Alim's lawyer Tajul Islam told The Daily Star in the afternoon that the police did not release his client from jail until then, as the bail bond was yet to be paid.

The police picked up Alim from his Joypurhat residence on March 27.

The tribunal on that day issued the arrest warrant following a petition by the prosecutors saying that Alim was involved in killing more than 10,000 people in collaboration with the Pakistani occupation forces during the Liberation War.

The petition also stated that Alim, then peace committee chairman in Joypurhat, killed local Awami League leader Abul Kashem on July 26, 1971.



Work goes on, may finish

FROM PAGE 1
"The main construction work will begin in June. Meanwhile, we are doing the piling and other ground works," said Colonel Abu Sayed Mohammad Masud, project director (PD) of the Tk 193 crore initiative.

As per a study about 30,000 vehicles will use the flyover every day.

He said the construction of the 0.8 km Banani overpass will be completed four months ahead of the cantonment flyover.

The flyover and overpass will establish a direct east-west linkage between Mirpur and Zia Colony on the Airport Road.

Presently, the residents of Mirpur and Pallabi are to take a long detour at Bijoy Sarani to go to Airport due to the restriction on the cantonment roads.

"Once the flyover is opened, these people will cross the cantonment in just 10 minutes without any

checking and move in Airport, Badda or Banani directions," said the PD.

Similarly, people coming from the Airport and willing to go to Mirpur and Pallabi will use the flyover. They will also use the overpass and head straight towards Kakoli, avoiding the level-crossing at Banani Staff Road.

A link bridge will connect the overpass with the flyover for those who are coming from Kakoli-Mohakhali direction and willing to go to Mirpur and Pallabi. People coming from Mirpur and heading towards Banani or Kakoli have to use a U-loop just before Radisson hotel.

Once the flyover and the overpass are opened, U-turns on roads from Kakoli to Zia Colony will be stopped. The U-turns will be kept open for internal vehicular movement of the army, navy and other establishments on either side of the Airport Road.

The army's Special Works Organisation (SWO) took charge of the project in June 2010. It then engaged two contractors -- Mir Akhter Hossain Ltd for constructing the flyover with Tk 90.55 crore and Abdul Monem Ltd for the overpass and the linkage bridge with Tk 71.38 crore. The cost excluded construction materials.

The Armed Forces Division is to supply the construction materials -- cement and rod -- to the firms with rest of the budget money.

Project Consultant Prof Azadur Rahman said the project will benefit the Mirpur people but vehicles will have to remain stuck at Kakoli crossing, Banani road No-11, and Chairmanbari points disrupting smooth flow of traffic.

He suggested construction of either U-loops or underpasses at the points to mitigate the problem.

Experts had earlier recommended the government construct an underground tunnel linking Jahangir Gate and Rokeya Sarani so that Agargaon and Rokeya Sarani-bound vehicles can move through it lessening the congestion in front of Prime Minister's Office.

Communications Minister Syed Abul Hossain yesterday visited the construction sites and expressed satisfaction over the progress of the construction works of the flyover and the overpass.

"The entire Dhaka city will take a different look towards the end of the present government's tenure," he said, adding that construction of three flyovers, several level-crossings and the elevated expressway will be completed within the tenure improving the overall traffic movement in the capital.

Dhaka's role

FROM PAGE 20
stories of successful adaptation to the changing climate, they also observed.

International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) and Bangladesh Centre for Advanced Studies (BCAS) jointly organised the meeting -- 5th Annual Community Based Adaptation to Climate Change Conference -- in a city hotel.

Rajendra Kumar Pachauri, chairman of Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), said the recommendations of this conference might be included in the next IPCC report. He was speaking as the chief guest at the concluding session.

The developed countries are emitting highest amount of carbon, noted Pachauri adding, they should pick a way of development without causing harm to other nations.

BCAS Executive Director Atiq Rahman said cyclones Sidr and Aila have affected the Sundarbans and coastal population of Bangladesh severely. But the locals have survived facing this difficulty.

He suggested making progress by using scientific innovations and local knowledge in a coordinated way.

Some 300 participants visited eight environmentally fragile areas of Bangladesh. After talking with locals, they have prepared a report, said Saleemul Huq, senior research fellow of IIED.

The suggestions will be presented to IPCC, the participating countries and the development partner organisations, he added.

Representatives of 65 countries, development partners and climate experts participated in 22 technical sessions of the conference.

Nod for free MPs at JS

FROM PAGE 1
proposals placed by some of its members and agreed in principle that article 70 should be amended. They will examine the issue further at the next meeting to find a way on consensus, they said.

"We are examining whether changes should be brought to the existing article 70 or the original one should be restored," Suranjit Sengupta, co-chair and spokesperson of the special committee, told The Daily Star on Wednesday.

The original article 70 of the constitution imposes restriction on MPs to cast votes in parliament against the party that nominated them during elections. If any MP violated it, the MP would lose parliament membership.

He or she would also lose membership if he or she resigned from the party that nominated him or her during elections.

It means no MPs were allowed to cast votes against their own party in parliament even if the decision was wrong.

However, instead of relaxing this provision to give the MPs some room to function independently, the article was later amended tightening the restriction by including an explanation in it.

The explanation says if any MP being present in parliament abstains from voting or remains absent in any sitting ignoring the direction of his/her own party, he/she will be deemed to have voted against own party.

With incorporation of this explanation, the MPs' freedom was absolutely curtailed giving them no alternative to following party decisions.

"[Original] Article 70 puts a reasonable restriction on the function of a member of parliament but the amended article 70

makes him a prisoner of his party. The party may still voluntarily allow him such freedom," observed incumbent Chief Justice ABM Khairul Haque in a verdict on April 27, 2006.

At that time of delivering the verdict in the Anwar Hossain Manju versus the Government of Bangladesh case, he was a judge to the High Court division.

Talking to some members of the committee, it was learnt that they are against restoration of the original article 70 as they believe this article also restricted the MPs' freedom to perform their due role independently.

They rather favoured the other option for allowing MPs with unfettered freedom to perform except on some specific issues.

"It cannot be accepted that an MP will vacate his seat in parliament only for casting vote in parliament against the party that nominated him in the elections," a member of the committee said referring to the restriction stipulated in the original article 70.

"Therefore, we want to provide MPs with adequate freedom to perform their role independently without hampering stability of the cabinet," added the committee member asking not to be named.

However, members of the committee are not sure how far they would be allowed to proceed with the amendment issue as they have yet to know Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's stance in this regard although her party's electoral manifesto promised more freedom for the MPs.

In the run-up to the December 29 parliamentary elections in 2008, the ruling AL pledged that MPs will be allowed to differ with their party decisions except for some specific subjects related to security of the state.

Another member of the committee, who also favoured unfettered freedom for the MPs with some specific restrictions, however said they would not do anything that may trigger controversy.

"In that case, we may prefer on consensus to restore the original article 70 of the constitution," he said.

He said only amendment to the article 70 is not enough to encourage MPs to perform independently as the long political culture also needs to be changed.

The article 70 is largely blamed for making parliament unable to ensure accountability and transparency of the cabinet because of these restrictions although, as per the constitution, the cabinet is collectively responsible to the House.

The restriction gave birth to a culture of flunkeyism in politics in which MPs are very often found to blindly appreciate the all-powerful executive's performance instead of discharging their oversight functions.

Almost all of the treasury bench lawmakers usually confine their roles only to saying "yes" or "no" in the process of passage of bills in parliament to enact laws.

The article 70 has also been used as a major weapon of the opposition political parties to continue with the House boycott. If a party decides not to join the parliament proceedings, all of its lawmakers must honour the decision to retain their membership.

In the seventh parliament, BNP lawmaker Maj (ret'd) Akhtaruzzaman protested at the then main opposition BNP's decision to boycott the parliament proceedings and joined the House.

His membership was ultimately vacated following a complaint from the BNP.

Criminals kill

FROM PAGE 20
around 9:30pm.

Critically injured Ali was rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital where he later died.

In Polashi, armed criminals posing as plain-clothes policemen shot dead a fabric trader in a bid to hijack his motorbike.

Victim Sohel, 35, of Kamrangirchar died on the spot after four goons riding two motorbikes shot in his chest around 9:00pm.

He was going home by his motorbike with his friend Mahub.

Mahub said the criminals, identifying themselves as policemen, stopped them and asked for the licence of the motorbike.

Refused, they shot Sohel and tried to hijack the bike. They, however, fled when the locals came forward hearing the gunshot.

Labagh police are investigating the incident.

PM for local govt

FROM PAGE 20
Hasina made the remark while addressing a public rally at Gafurgaoon Government College in the afternoon.

"We will look into who among the public representatives are doing good," the prime minister said.

The government is determined to further strengthen the local government for expediting development in the rural areas, she said.

Hasina asked the public representatives to come up with development proposals and thus help the government to chalk out effective programmes for rural areas.

The premier also renewed her vow to make a prosperous Bangladesh rooting out terrorism and eliminating poverty.

She urged Awami League workers and people from all walks of life to work in unison to turn Bangladesh into a modern digital one by 2021.

Hasina further requested people not to leave even an inch of land uncultivated.

"We must attain food security for every person in the country," she said.

Referring to the newly adopted National Education Policy, the premier said apart from emphasising science and technology, religious studies have also been made compulsory in the policy.

She reiterated the government plan to create a trust fund to provide free education up to degree level for poor students.

Hasina said the government is also relentlessly working to ensure quality but cheap health services for the rural people.

Already some 13,000 community health clinics have been set up while the government wants to set up one clinic for every 6,000 people, she said.

The PM lamented that the previous BNP-Jamaat government had closed the community health clinic project just on political ground.

She was highly critical of last BNP-Jamaat government for severe corruption and public looting during its regime.

"They did nothing for the country's development," Hasina said.

She also criticised the past caretaker government for failing to add electricity to the national grid.

Hasina said after taking office, the government so far has added some 1,400 MW to the grid.

"BNP has to answer for why they could not add even a single megawatt to the grid in their five year tenure," she said.

SCBA polls

FROM PAGE 1
Secretary Md Bodruddoza Badal of Bangladesh Jatiyatabadi Ainjibi Forum (BJAF) were set to be reelected. The count was going on at the time of filing this report at 2:30am today.

Counting showed Mahub ahead of Abul Baset Majumder of Awami League-backed Bangladesh Sammilita Ainjibi Samannay Parishad (BSASP) while Badal prevailed over SM Abul Hossain of BSASP.

The pro-AL panel was set to win three posts including the post of vice-president and assistant secretary.

Counting also suggested the post of the treasure was secured by Fahima Nasrin Munni of the pro-BNP panel.

Elections were held on Wednesday and Thursday.