

High-ups

FROM PAGE 1
group of reporters, Prime Minister's Defence Adviser Tarique Ahmed Siddique claimed that both Limon, whose left leg was amputated after a Rab team shot him on March 23, and his father are members of a criminal gang.

Home Minister Sahara Khatun on Sunday defended Tarique Ahmed, saying his remark on Limon is a government statement. Rab yesterday echoed the statement of Tarique Ahmed that Limon has "criminal link".

However, on April 11, Rab Director General Mokhesur Rahman admitted that Limon Hossain is not a notorious criminal.

The JSD leaders said while a government probe into the incident is going on, the remarks of the prime minister's defence adviser did not only influenced the investigation process, but also it will inspire the perpetrators.

They also condemned the diatribe against the media by the government high-ups. Tarique Ahmed in the press conference criticised some newspapers' role on the issue.

"When all the people of the country want investigation and punishment for incidents of extra-judicial killings and torture by law enforcement agencies, the statements of the prime minister's adviser has created frustration and anger among the people," the JSD leaders said in the statement.

They said the government should remove the persons who are using administrative power to impede the investigation process.

On Saturday another component of the grand-alliance, Workers Party, condemned the statement of the prime minister's defence adviser terming his statement as unfortunate.

Lightning

FROM PAGE 20
Upazila Nirbahi Officers of Gomostapur and Shibganj and officer-in-charge of Nachole Police Station confirmed the other deaths.

Our Pabna correspondent adds, two people died and 17 others were injured by lightning when they were working at a paddy field around 10:00am yesterday at Paspungali village of Faridpur upazila.

The dead were identified as Md Babu Mollah, 18, and Md Khairul Islam, 26.

Of the injured, 15 were admitted to Faridpur Upazila Health Complex.

In another incident, lightning killed two more people and injured two in Singra and Sadar upazilas of Natore yesterday, reports our local correspondent.

The deceased are Marzina Begum, 28, and Manik Ali, 24.

Marzina was electrocuted at the veranda of her house during a thunderstorm while Manik was working in a field near his house around 10:00am, police said.

The storm also damaged hundreds of houses, uprooted a large number of trees and electric poles in the locality. Besides, standing crops across a vast land area were damaged.

In Noakhali, two children of Noyapara village in Subarnachar upazila were killed by lightning around 12:30pm while they were collecting peanuts in a field.

The dead were identified as Shabana, 13, and Farhana, 10.

Another thunderstorm in Hajiganj upazila of Chandpur killed Shah Alam, 35, and Mamun, 12.

Witnesses said lightning hit Shah Alam while he was harvesting paddy in a field at Sripur village.

Mamun of Doaganda village became a victim while he was playing in a field near his house.

A farmer died and three others were injured by lightning at Gopinathpur of sadar upazila, adds our Gopalganj correspondent.

Lightning struck them while they were taking rest beside a paddy field around 10:30am.

Thunderstorm took the life of housewife Julekha Begum in Akkelpur upazila of Joypurhat, reports our correspondent in Dinajpur.

Lightning struck Julekha when she went out to bring back her cattle from a grazing field.

Take action

FROM PAGE 1
into criminal cases.

"We may know the persons who were involved in the share market scams. But we need evidence to try them. Therefore, we started further investigation of 14 cases," Muhith said.

Citing the cases filed against persons involved in the share market scam in 1996, he said the government wanted to revive those cases, but there were only allegations, no witness or evidence.

"We don't want to face the same situation this time," the finance minister said.

He also said the government did not take any decision to introduce tax identification numbers (TIN) for share market investors, neither did the government take any decision to impose tax on share market transactions.

"But a vested quarter is propagating that the government is going to introduce TIN for share market investors and impose tax on share trade. This quarter benefits from spreading such rumours, and they made the market unstable in the last two days," Muhith said.

He said the government is providing legal assistance to Ibrahim Khaled. "We are very much sorry that he is being harassed."

Earlier, taking the floor on a point of order, ruling Awami League lawmaker Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim raised the issue of the share market.

AL lawmaker Suranjit Sengupta, Jatiya Party MP Mujib-ul Haq, and independent lawmaker Fazlul Azim also participated in the unscheduled brief discussion on the stock market crash.

Sheikh Selim, also ruling AL presidium member, blasted the finance minister for not taking actions against the "gamblers".

"Everybody knows the persons and companies behind the stock market scams. But actions are not being taken against those who took away hundreds of crores of taka," Selim said.

Amid support of treasury bench lawmakers, Sheikh Selim, also chief of a parliamentary body, said the "gamblers" involved in the stock market scams are speaking loudly on TV talk shows.

He urged the finance minister to take stern actions against the persons behind the scams, even if those persons are involved in the ruling party.

"The government's image can't be tarnished for only one or two people. The government should not shoulder their liabilities, even if they are party men," Selim said.

He also criticised filing of the case against Khondkar Ibrahim Khaled.

He criticised the home ministry's move to install close circuit cameras at

Probe ordered

FROM PAGE 20
ministry on Sunday sent letters to Mastermind School in Dhaka and PWD High School in Khulna asking the heads of the institutions to inform the ministry about what measures they are taking regarding the incidents.

The ministry's action is the first after it issued a circular on August 10 last year announcing the ban on corporal punishment in public and private educational institutions.

"We have sent letters to the two schools asking them to inform us about what steps they are taking regarding the matter," a top ministry official, wishing anonymity, said yesterday.

The ministry's next step depends on the response from the schools, he said.

On May 5, The Daily Star ran a story under the headline "Student left in critical state" about how a teacher of PWD High School in Khulna city beat a female student with a cane for not enrolling in a coaching centre that the teacher ran. The girl was critically injured.

In another incident, published on April 26 in The Daily Star, the administrator of an English medium school hit a female student along with six others when they tried to protest the expulsion of two classmates.

share market areas to keep vigilance on investors.

"They will protest since they got hurt by losing money," Selim said. He said the finance minister, the chairman of the parliamentary standing committee on finance ministry, and the central bank governor are saying different things on the same issue, there is no consistency in their speeches.

Taking the floor, AL lawmaker Suranjit Sengupta expressed astonishment about how a defamatory case could be filed against Ibrahim Khaled for the probe report.

"All parliamentarians and the people of the country believe that Ibrahim Khaled is an honest man. But that man is not being protected. They are threatening him," Suranjit said.

Jatiya Party lawmaker Mujib-ul Haq urged the government to send the matter to the Anti-Corruption Commission for taking actions.

Independent lawmaker Fazlul Azim also decried filing of the case against Ibrahim Khaled, and said Khaled is one of the most honest men in the country's banking sector. "No honest man in future will be found to form any committee if Ibarhim Khaled is harassed this way," he said.

CID grills

FROM PAGE 20
Muniruzzaman Chowdhury, also a senior assistant superintendent of Criminal Investigation Department, quizzed Brig Gen (ret'd) Rezzakul Haider Chowdhury and Brig Gen (ret'd) Abdur Rahim. Two other CID officials assisted him in the three-hour long interrogation that began around 12:30pm.

The IO declined to make any comment on the outcome of the grilling.

Muniruzzaman moved a petition on April 12 before a Chittagong court for quizzing the duo.

Former Directorate General of Forces' Intelligence DG Maj Gen (ret'd) Sadik Hasan Rumi on April 13 stated to the court that Rezzakul was involved in smuggling of the arms cache.

The court on April 17 directed the authorities concerned to interrogate them at jail gate.

Police seized 10 truckloads of weapons and ammunition from the jetty of Chittagong Urea Fertiliser Ltd on the night of April 1 in 2004.

Later they filed two cases -- one under the arms act and another for smuggling.

Muhit leaves

FROM PAGE 20
advance base camp which he is expected to leave today.

"I talked to Muhit over satellite phone today [yesterday] and he informed me that he was fine," said Enam Ul Haque, president of Bangla Mountaineering and Tracking Club (BMTC).

Details of the expedition could not be known immediately as the connection of the satellite phone was poor.

Muhit climbed Mount Everest (8,848 metres) with a seven-member team and only he, from the entire team, managed to reach the summit, the BMTC president quoted the mountaineer as saying.

Muhit, a member of the BMTC, was staying at the advance base camp (6,400 metres) of Mount Everest yesterday, said Enam. It is expected that he will leave for Chinese village Zhangmu today and reach Tingri the day after tomorrow, he added.

Enam said it is still unknown when Muhit will return to Kathmandu and then home.

Muhit left Dhaka on April 8 and started his Everest expedition on April 12 from the Tibet side of Mount Everest.

Meanwhile, North Alpine Club Bangladesh (NACB) congratulated Muhit for his feat. NACB President Anisul Haque and General Secretary Musa Ibrahim in a press release said conquering of Mount Everest by Muhit after Musa Ibrahim will encourage youths of Bangladesh.

As the first Bangladeshi, NACB leader Musa reached the summit of Mount Everest on May 23 last year.

Jubo League

FROM PAGE 1
Kanaikhali area yesterday morning and shot him in the head around 10:00pm, claimed Shariful Islam Ramzan, president of district unit JL.

Hearing his scream people rushed him to Natore Sadar Hospital where the doctors declared him dead, headed.

Shafikul Islam Shimul, secretary of Natore district JL and also the chairman of Sadar Upazila Parishad, said assailants shot secretary of the town JL unit Afzal Hossain on Thursday.

Rasu is one of the accused in a case filed in connection with the shooting incident.

Denying the allegation against Afzal, Shimul insisted Afzal was at Rajshahi Medical College Hospital for collecting a medical certificate of his treatment when Rasu was killed.

Police arrested Sabbir Hossain, Ripon Ali, Goutam, Shohrab and Subash for interrogation.

Nasirul Islam, additional superintendent of Natore police, said they suspect internal feud of JL led to the killing.

Additional police have been deployed in the town to maintain peace, added Nasirul.

No case was filed regarding the murder till filing of this report at 11:30pm.

Hasina

FROM PAGE 20
democracy.

It is also for her achievement in empowering women of Bangladesh.

She will receive the award at a ceremony at Daphne University in Paris tomorrow, foreign ministry sources said.

Hasina, who is now on a visit to Canada, will pay a two-day visit to France on May 25-26 to receive the award and will also deliver a keynote speech on May 26 at the High Level Panel on Women Empowerment and Gender Equality to be organised by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) at its headquarters in Paris.

During her France visit, she is expected to call on UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, UNESCO Director General Ms Irina Bokova. The premier will also attend an African Exhibition at the UNESCO headquarters.

Other participants at the Panel may include prime ministers of Mali and Iceland, presidents of Liberia and Finland, Nobel laureate Dr Amartya Sen and former UN secretary general Kofi Annan.

Hasina is expected to return home on May 27.

\$140m loan

FROM PAGE 1
Minister AMA Muhith and visiting IDB President Dr Ahmad Mohamed Ali, who arrived here yesterday.

The two sides will sign another \$14.84m deal to implement a water supply and sanitation project in cyclone-prone coastal areas.

The country's longest 6.15 kilometre bridge, including the 3.68km land-based approach viaducts on both sides of the river, will connect 19 south-western districts with the capital.

The dual carriageway bridge will have road traffic on the upper level and rail on the lower level.

It will also have provisions for future installation of a broad gauge railway track, gas and telecommunication lines.

The Bridges Division of the communications ministry is implementing the project.

Of the 20,500 crore estimated cost for the bridge project, the government has already signed a \$1.12b credit agreement with the World Bank on April 28 and another \$415m loan contract with Japan International Cooperation Agency on May 18. The government itself will provide Tk 4,257 crore.

The IDB was the first organisation among the co-financiers (Abu Dhabi Fund, ADB, JICA and World Bank) to approve the project's financing.

Stop collection

FROM PAGE 1
the Bangladesh Road Transport Authority chairman to make sure that the chart of the government-fixed fares is hung inside all buses and minibuses as well as counters.

The court ordered the joint commissioner (Traffic) and all deputy commissioners (Traffic) in Dhaka to form a vigilance team in every thana, and asked the inspector general of police and the Dhaka Metropolitan Police commissioner to instruct all police stations to monitor bus and minibuses counters regularly to prevent collection of additional fares.

It also directed them to take action against transport operators for taking extra fares from passengers.

The HC bench issued a ruling upon the respondents to explain in three weeks why their inaction to stop collection of extra fares from passengers should not be declared illegal and why they should not be directed to enforce the government-fixed fares to save people from financial loss.

Petitioner's counsel Manzill Murshid told the court that the government

re-fixed transport fares in consultation with transport owners following its decision to increase fuel price.

But there have been reports that some corrupt businessmen are not following the government-fixed fares. They continue to collect extra fares from passengers much to the sufferings of people with fixed income.

Collection of extra fares from passengers is a violation of the government decision, he said.

Communications and home secretaries, Bangladesh Road Transport Corporation and BRTA chairmen, president and secretary of bus owners' association, IGP, DMP commissioner, joint commissioner (traffic), superintendents of police of Dhaka, Narayanganj, Gazipur and Manikganj, and deputy commissioners (traffic) of Dhaka have been made respondents to the ruling.

Deputy Attorney General ABM Altaf Hossain stood for the government.

BRTA CIRCULATES FAIR CHART

Bus operators yesterday started charging passengers

according to a fare chart given by the Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA).

The BRTA Sunday afternoon circulated a comprehensive fare chart among the bus operators directing them to put up the chart on the buses and stoppages.

One of the two BRTA mobile courts yesterday continued conducting drives at the city's Azimpur. During the drive, the mobile court filed cases against 13 bus services, fined them a total of Tk 10,200 and seized four buses for overcharging passengers and not having valid documents.

"The trend of overcharging passengers has declined after the circulation of the fare chart," BRTA Magistrate SM Rezaul Karim told The Daily Star.

He said most of the buses were following the fare chart. Only a few operators were charging Tk 10 as the lowest fare in place of Tk 7 fixed by the government.

The drive would be continued to check that the government decision is implemented fully, he added.

Limon, his family

FROM PAGE 1
The reports found that Limon was a member of Morshed Bahini, a local gang of criminals, and he suffered the bullet wound in an encounter between the miscreants and Rab personnel.

The reports confirmed that there was no incident of any Rab personnel shooting Limon in the leg at close range, he said.

Rab's statement came four days after a similar claim by Prime Minister's Defence Adviser Maj Gen (ret'd) Tarique Ahmed Siddique, which was later endorsed by Home Minister Sahara Khatun.

"His [Tarique's] comment must be a government statement as it was made surely following a government decision," the home minister told reporters in her office.

Commenting on the adviser's statement, Sohail said Tarique's remark on Limon was on the basis of the reports submitted to the prime minister.

Rab has consistently said Limon was involved with Morshed-led crime gang, and he was wounded during an exchange of fire between Rab and the criminals.

The versions about Limon's alleged involvement with criminal gang widely differed from what the head of Rab said weeks after the shooting.

In remarks on April 11,

Rab Director General Mokhesur Rahman said Limon was not a notorious criminal.

He said the college student was rather a victim of a "shootout" between Rab and criminals.

Mokhesur Rahman was present at the press briefing yesterday.

Several human rights groups rallied behind Limon and his family. Media reports, based on interviews of local villagers and school and college teachers, described Limon as a gentle boy striving to get higher education to support his struggling family.

He missed his first year college examinations due to the incident that shattered his dream.

Limon is now being treated at NITOR, popularly known as Pangu Hospital, for his amputated left leg. He was transferred to this hospital after being released from Jhalakathi jail on a six-month bail granted by the High Court. He got the bail as a human rights group sought his release claiming him innocent.

Rab filed two cases against Limon accusing him of possessing illegal firearms, and of obstructing law enforcers from carrying out their duties and attempted murder.

Limon's mother also filed a case against the Rab personnel who went to

Limon's village to hunt the notorious crime gang led by Morshed.

At yesterday's press briefing, Rab media wing also accused the Jhalakathi correspondent of a national daily of writing false and exaggerated reports on the shooting incident at Chhaturia village in Rajapur.

"From the very beginning this correspondent has been trying to overplay the incident, and he persuaded Limon's family to file the case. He also organised some protest programmes, misguiding human rights organisations, in a bid to instigate an anti-government movement", Sohail said.

Sohail also alleged that Limon's family members persuaded the correspondent to write fabricated news over the issue.

Meanwhile, another one-man committee formed by the home ministry to probe Limon's case was given more time to investigate.

The sole member of the committee, Mohammad Shawkat Akbar who is also the additional divisional commissioner of Barisal, said the home ministry earlier had asked him to submit a report within 15 working days after the probe began on April 29, and he applied for the extension on May 19.

Govt eyes 27pc more

FROM PAGE 20
initiatives and by limiting the scope of tax evasion.

Besides, the present upward trend of inflation will also contribute to higher revenue collection.

The NBR at a meeting with the prime minister last month presented its plan for increased revenue earning.

In its plan, the NBR said direct or income tax in the next budget will be increased to 29.81 percent of the total NBR earning compared to 27.47 percent in FY 2009-10.

Moreover, Value Added Tax (Vat) will be increased by about 0.70 percentage point to 35.77 percent of the total revenue. But import tax will be lowered to 33.72 percent of the total revenue after slashing it by 3.11 percentage point.

NBR officials said they are also going to lower the cost of collecting revenue. In FY 2009-10, Tk 0.74 was spent for collecting Tk 100 in revenue on an average but in the next FY, the cost will be lowered to Tk 0.70.

Revenue earning was more than the target in the first nine months of the current FY, said the NBR officials.

The finance minister has

said the target may be increased by Tk 1,000 crore in the revised budget.

The officials said one of the main causes for the increase in revenue earning in this FY is high prices of commodities both in the domestic and international markets, and for this Vat, import tax and supplementary duty shot up.

Besides, a number of measures were taken to increase revenue earning. In some cases, tax rate was enhanced, sources said.

NBR officials said high inflation will continue in the next FY, which will normally increase revenue income. Alongside NBR is going to be automated, and new Vat and income tax laws introduced. All this will contribute to higher revenue collection.

They mentioned that there will be no change in import duty structure in the next FY. Possibility of imposing new tax except on cigarette and tobacco is very slim.

In the current FY, a survey has been conducted in some areas to find new tax payers, and in the next FY, more areas will be covered.

The central intelligence cell (CIC) will be strengthened to check tax evasion.

In the next budget, special focus will be given on raising non-tax revenue, the finance minister said.

Interest rate

FROM PAGE 20
Ziaul Hasan Siddiqui, the meeting agreed in principle on the matter, and it will be finalised later this week, meeting sources said.

The interest rate of different savings instruments was cut by 1 to 1.5 percent in the current fiscal year.

Following the slash, the net sale fell by about 65 percent in the first eight months of the current financial year.

At present four types of savings instruments are in the market -- Paribar Sanchaypatra, Pensioner Sanchaypatra, five-year term Sanchaypatra and three-year term Sanchaypatra.

In the current budget, the interest rate on Paribar Sanchaypatra was fixed at 11.04 percent while 10 percent on three-year term Sanchaypatra.

In addition, 10 percent tax was imposed on their profit. The tax may be brought down to five percent.

Exploration

FROM PAGE 1
done and the PSC is expected to be signed in about a month.

ConocoPhillips has been awarded deep-sea blocks DS-08-10 and 11, Finance Minister AMA Muhith said after the meeting at the cabinet division of the secretariat.

He added the company will work excluding the disputed maritime areas.

The company had initially offered to invest \$442.63 million under four Production Sharing Contracts for eight blocks. As per a government policy, it was awarded the two blocks which, however, have some areas claimed by the neighbouring countries as their own.

When the cabinet committee approved the conditional deal in 2009, it accommodated a demand of the company. Conoco demanded that when the maritime boundary issue is internationally resolved and Bangladesh's claim to the areas is established, the company will be allowed to explore those areas under a Side Letter Agreement (SLA).

Afterwards, the legislative and parliamentary affairs division vetted a draft SLA which would be signed along with the PSC.

In the PSC, the government added an article stating, "If the discovery or exploration of oil or gas remains suspended due to any dispute during the period of discovery or exploration, neither the contractor nor his agent shall claim any compensation for the period of suspension".

The Petrobangla chairman described the ConocoPhillips' venture as the country's first effort to be made in the deep sea.

"We do not know anything about the prospects of the deep sea and don't have the technology to explore it if there is anything. This company has been pursuing the deal with interest for a long time," he noted.

3 lakh workers

FROM PAGE 20
the home ministry.

Chaired by Home Secretary Abdus Sobhan Sikder, the meeting was attended by officials of various ministries, Bangladesh High Commissioner to Malaysia and the Department of Immigration and Passport.

Malaysia's decision has not been officially announced yet, but diplomatic missions of countries of foreign workers were notified of it last week.

"We will take a crash programme to issue the MRPs which is the best way to enhance our image abroad," Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment Secretary Dr Zafar Ahmed Khan told The Daily Star.

"We shall send additional staff to Malaysia by June 15, to do the job," Zafar said.

Other ministries including the expatriates' welfare and foreign affairs and home minister will extend all required assistance, the secretary said.

Director-General of the Department of Passports Abdul Mabud said there are