

Sales low

FROM PAGE 20
to the simple economics of demand and supply.
"I came to buy a panjabi but the prices were so high... I'll have to return home empty-handed," said a disappointed Rahman.

Mohammad Masum, manager of Ornima City, a store for both men's and women's wear, said sales at the store would have been much better had the holidays not started early this year.

Most shop owners said they were doubtful whether there would be any jump in sales in the next couple of days as many city people had already left for their village homes.

Masudur Rahman, owner of Maliha Fancy Sari at Gausia market, said the prices of some items had gone up this year, which may have frustrated customers.

Zamir Uddin, a security guard at Gausia, said the crowd of shoppers was much thinner than in the last few years.

"In the past, we had always struggled to handle the crowd, but it has been easy this year."

The makeshift shops on footpaths were also hit hard.

"Our sales have gone down as our main customers have left the city. Overall, sales are lower compared to last year," said Mohammad Jubaer, who was selling shirts at Karwan Bazar.

Shop owners said people staying in the capital during Eid are their last hope for decent Eid sales.

"The locals always shop in the last couple of days of Ramadan. We hope they do the same this year," said Samiullah, manager of Lamiha Saris.

However, business has not been dull for many brand shops.

"The early departure of city people has not affected our sales. In fact, our sales have been good from the very beginning of Ramadan," said Mominul Islam Ripon, in-charge of Lubnan, a popular panjabi store at Bashundhara Shopping Mall.

Gallerie Apex also saw good sales, said Sohanur Rahman, an assistant manager of the chain footwear store.

Tapan Das, manager of Menz Klub at Bashundhara Shopping Mall, said sales had picked up substantially after the first week of Ramadan.

"Our sales have been good throughout Ramadan. We hope it will be even better in the next couple of days," said Salam Kabir, area sales manager of Jenny's, a popular footwear brand.

Cops

FROM PAGE 20
An unidentified person of murdering his sister and her niece at Amina Manjil of Paikpara area in Narayanganj.

Police recovered the bodies on Wednesday from their flat.

Officer-in-charge Manzur Quader of the police station said they presumed the killers were known to the victims.

The bodies were sent to Munshiganj General Hospital for autopsy.

Govt goes

FROM PAGE 1
their demand, and directed the primary and mass education ministry to draft a policy to this end.

The ministry then formed a committee that prepared the draft policy and submitted it recently.

A summary of the draft will be sent to the prime minister soon for her opinion.
In 1973, the government first nationalised 36,165 primary schools. Later, 1,507 more schools were nationalised at different times.

At present, there are over 85,000 government and non-government primary schools in the country.

Contacted, Abul Kalam Azad, additional secretary, who headed the government-formed committee, said, "After getting the prime minister's opinion, the draft policy will be finalised. And she will announce the nationalisation plan at a teacher's rally."

Limon, mother

FROM PAGE 1
and justice. It shows how the law enforcement agencies operate with impunity," she said.

Limon said, "Police submitted charge sheets in two false cases Rab filed against me. On the other hand, in the case filed by my mother, police submitted a false investigation report by concealing the truth to prove Rab innocent."

He demanded judicial probe in the case to ensure justice.

"My normal life has been completely ruined by the Rab. My hope for a free and fair investigation to bring the liable to book also ends now," said a disappointed Limon.

Henoara lodged the case with Rajapur Police Station on April 10 last year against six Rab personnel for attempted murder of her son.

In the case statement, Henoara said the accused, without caring to verify Limon's identity, shot him in the leg on March 23 last year while he was bringing cattle back home in Chhaturia village under Rajapur upazila of Jhalakathi.

The Rab team later arrested him.

Limon, who used to work at a brick kiln to pay for his education, had to have his leg amputated from the thigh on March 27.

He secured a six-month bail from the High Court on May 5.

Though the attempted-murder case against the Rab men is having difficulties making any headway, the two cases filed against Limon by the elite force are progressing faster in comparison, say rights bodies.

It proves the bias of the law enforcers to save themselves from the hand of the law, they observe.

The rights groups Ain o Salish Kendra and Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust have demanded a judicial probe, and said they would continue their legal battle until the truth was uncovered.

Influenced by Rab, police had submitted a false investigation report to the court, they added.

Abdul Halim Talukder, sub-inspector of Rajapur

Police Station and investigation officer of the case, claimed that the allegations brought against the Rab had not been proved in the investigation as "the complainant failed to provide enough information, witnesses and evidence to substantiate the allegations made in the case".

He said the victim's father and uncle were made witnesses in the case. But Limon's father was then in Dhaka, uncle in another area and the complainant was at their home during the incident of the shooting.

Limon's mother in the case claimed the Rab personnel intentionally took her son to a place near their home and shot him in the leg, the SI added.

"But the two charge sheets [pressed by the police in the two cases lodged by Rab] and the two other investigation reports [submitted by the police and the administration] mentioned that Limon was injured in a gunfight during an anti-crime operation of Rab," he said.

Maruti fires 500 workers over riot in India

AFP, New Delhi

India's top carmaker Maruti Suzuki yesterday said that more than 500 workers had been sacked after staff rioted at a plant near New Delhi last month in violence that left one manager dead.

"Of the 1,500-odd regular workers, we have issued notices dispensing with their services to 500-odd so far," company chairman R.C. Bhargava told reporters.

During the riot on July 18, workers chased managers with iron rods and car parts, attacking them and torching equipment in unrest triggered by a row between an employee and a supervisor, according to witnesses.

A personnel manager, whose legs were broken, was unable to flee and burned to death in an office area. Nearly 100 other supervisors were injured in unrest that shocked India's corporate sector.

Probe credibility

FROM PAGE 1
day before the Eid vacation is motivated ... so that people forget it and do not raise questions," said Dr Iftekharuzzaman, executive director of Transparency International Bangladesh (TI), yesterday.

Henoara Begum, mother of Limon Hossain, a college student maimed by Rab personnel, filed the attempted-murder case against six Rab men with Rajapur Police Station in Jhalakathi on April 10 last year.

Police in the report said they had found no evidence and witnesses in favour of the case.

In the case statement, Henoara said the accused shot Limon in the leg on March 23 while he was bringing cattle back home at Chhaturia village. Limon had to have his leg amputated from the thigh on March 27.

Police at first refused to record the case. But they eventually registered it following court orders on April 26 that year.

Iftekharuzzaman told The Daily Star the police were basically a party in the case, and that it was difficult for them to be neutral.

"Therefore, we earlier demanded a judicial probe, but that went unheard. We can assume that the intention of the authorities was to protect those who had taken the law in their own hands," he said.

Such abuse by the police force will further lead to a loss of public trust in the institution, he mentioned.

Supreme Court lawyer Shahdeen Malik says that in all civilised countries, there have been separate and independent bodies to investigate allegations against the law-enforcing agencies.

"In the absence of such a body, it is not at all surprising that police did not find any evidence or wrongdoing by their own men and Rab," the jurist told The Daily Star yesterday.

The international community also perceives Bangladesh as an increasingly lawless society, he observed.

had long enjoyed impunity and immunity, and was virtually operating outside the purview of the law. "Therefore, they are not being made accountable and we are at the mercy of the force."

Former inspector general of police ASM Shahjahan observed that the authorities should have gone for a higher level of inquiry as Limon's case was very "sensitive".

"The DB or the CID [intelligence agencies] could have investigated the case," he told The Daily Star yesterday.

However, as police had stated that they did not find evidence in favour of the case, there could be further investigation into the allegations, he said. "Limon's mother can demand further investigation."

"More transparency should be maintained in such cases. The complainant should have been informed of the issues," said Shahjahan, also a former adviser to a caretaker government.

Meanwhile, Gonotantrik Bam Morcha, an alliance of the left parties, in a statement yesterday demanded a judicial probe into the incident.

It said the police report had proved that the government was not capable of protecting minimum human rights. The police, through this act, had lost its acceptability, and also proved that it was not possible for it to conduct any "objective investigation".

"Limon's getting injured in shooting by Rab is a fact. But the report has been submitted in such a manner that its target was to ensure relief for the Rab members from the case," the statement said.

Meanwhile, Ain o Salish Kendra Director Noor Khan Liton told BBC Bangla there were three cases over the incident -- two filed by Rab, and the other by Limon's mother.

As the police had earlier accepted Rab's cases and had submitted charge sheets in those cases, there was apprehension that the police probe would not be transparent, and it would be one-sided. "That

Biman

FROM PAGE 20
authority does not give us the permission to fly there during the Hajj season," an official said.

The General Authority of Civil Aviation of Saudi Arabia had around 20 days ago informed that a two-year clearance was a prerequisite for Biman to operate flights there, said a top Biman official.

In no time, Biman had requested Caab to renew its AOC for two years, but the aviation authority issued the clearance for six months, until February next year, the official added.

He said had the Caab renewed the certificate for at least a year, Biman would be able to approach the Saudi aviation authority since it was their scheduled operator. But the aviation regulator was unwilling to do so unless Biman paid the debt, he added.

"This is a mere non-cooperation from the Caab," said a top Biman official hoping that government high-ups concerned would look into the matter.

He said the Jeddah airport authorities in July had frozen the Biman account for a few days over the same issue, but Biman managed to have it withdrawn.

The Biman high-up said the Saudi authorities introduced the rule as a means to realise the dues accruing from parking, landing and other aeronautic charges, a process that takes around a year to complete.

Caab sources said Biman had been accumulating debts since it was turned into a public limited company in 2007, when the government exempted it from Tk 1,194 crore debt to Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation and over Tk 573 crore to the Caab.

Taliban attack

FROM PAGE 1
heavily guarded base, but the audacious assault raised further questions in the West about the dangers of Pakistan's atomic weapons falling into extremists' hands.

The Pakistan Air Force said nine attackers dressed in military uniforms and armed with rocket propelled grenades and suicide vests targeted the base and adjacent Pakistan Aeronautical Complex at 2:00am.

PAF Minhas, in the town of Kamra in Punjab province 60 kilometres north-west of Islamabad, has been attacked twice before.

The adjacent complex assembles Mirage and, with Chinese help, JF-17 fighter jets.

"Eight miscreants were killed inside the Minhas base boundary wall and one miscreant exploded himself outside the perimeter where he was hiding," the air force announced.

It said there had been a shootout "for more than two hours" and 10 hours after the assault began, spokesman Tariq Mahmood confirmed the base was "totally safe".

The Pakistani Taliban said planes at the base were being used to kill its fighters.

Spokesman Ehsanullah Ehsan dedicated the attack to late al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden and claimed four Taliban fighters were killed after destroying three aircraft and killed a dozen soldiers.

Witnesses said the attackers came round the back, scaling the wall and exploiting the holiest night of the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan to remain undetected as long as possible.

Air force spokesman Mahmood said one security official had been killed, and the base commander wounded in the shoulder. Previous Taliban assaults on Pakistani military bases have exacted far higher casualty tolls.

In May 2011, it took 17 hours to quell an attack on an air base in Karachi claimed by the Taliban, piling embarrassment on the armed forces just three weeks after US troops killed bin Laden in Pakistan.

Suspected militant leader

FROM PAGE 20
group and have them carry out JeM's activities in Bangladesh.

Monirul said Yunus, son of Ula Miah, hailed from Highschoolpara of Ramu upazila in Cox's Bazar. He was a teacher of Moulavir Kata Al-Givari Adarsha Dakhil Madrasa in Cox's Bazar, Monirul said.

Yunus had come to Dhaka to meet a man, claimed the policeman refusing to disclose the identity of the man.

"The detained JeM leader had been carrying out his activity on the instruction of Sa ber Ahmed, ex-principal of the madrasa, who has been living in Pakistan for the last few

years," he said, adding, "Financial support for his activities came from Pakistan and Sa ber is technically the boss of Yunus."

The DB official claimed that Sa ber was previously involved in Jamaat-e-Islami and that he had paid a visit to Bangladesh in July last.

However, Lt Col Ziaul Ahsan, director of the intelligence wing of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab), told The Daily Star that a Pakistani national and four of his Bangladeshi aides were arrested in the capital on February 28, 2010.

He said according to the information gleaned from those JeM operatives, there were no other JeM operatives in the country.

"As far as we know, there are no JeM operatives left in the country," Ziaul said.

One of the JeM operatives had told law enforcers then that he was involved in the hijacking of an Indian Airlines plane.

JeM has been blamed for the attack on Indian parliament in New Delhi in December, 2001, along with another militant group.

JeM is also suspected to have a role in the abduction and murder of American journalist Daniel Pearl in Karachi.

Sources in the law enforcement agencies claimed that at least 14 other foreign militant groups have been active in Bangladesh since 1991.

Contempt rule

FROM PAGE 1
many judgements were delivered for money.

Mamata made the remark on Tuesday at the platinum jubilee celebration of the state legislature in Calcutta.

The statement intended to question the integrity, reputation and authority of the judiciary and would have an inevitable impact on undermining public confidence in it, said petitioner Bhim Singh, founder of the Jammu and Kashmir Panthers Party.

In the petition he sought a directive on the government to produce the recording of the speech delivered by Mamata at the programme, adding that people tend to take the words of a popular chief minister seriously.

Referring to Article 129 of the constitution, the petitioner said the chief minister's comment amounted to undermining the authority

of the judiciary as a whole.

Citing a number of apex court rulings, Bhim Singh also said that under Article 129 the Supreme Court had the power to punish the person for contempt of court and under Article 143(2) it could investigate any such matter.

Meanwhile, a section of lawyers moved the Calcutta High Court, seeking a suo moto contempt of court rule against the chief minister for the same reason.

The HC bench of Chief Justice J N Patel and Justice Joymalyo Bagchi refused to issue a suo moto rule and said a contempt petition could be filed.

The chief justice's bench also observed that the chief minister had given her personal opinion and the court was not disturbed by such comments.

On another plea by senior

counsel Bikash Bhattacharya, a former mayor of Calcutta and a leader of Communist Party of India-Marxist [CPI(M)], a divisional bench of the High Court comprising Justice K J Sengupta and Justice A K Mondal directed two national English dailies and two news channels to file affidavits within three weeks on the authenticity of their reports on the speech.

After examining the affidavits, the court will decide whether to initiate any contempt proceedings against Mamata, lawyers said. The matter will come up for hearing after four weeks.

Earlier, Bikash Bhattacharya submitted two CDs containing the recordings of television reports and also copies of the two newspaper reports and prayed for suo motu contempt pro-

Riot fears spark panic

FROM PAGE 20
Karnataka, the state that is home to Bangalore, both appealed for calm and said there was no reason for the exodus, as police took to Twitter and the local airwaves to knock down the rumours.

"If rumours are spread, strict action will be taken against those who indulge in such activities," Home Minister Sushilkumar Shinde told reporters outside the Indian Parliament House.

He said Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and he had spoken to Karnataka Chief Minister Jagadish Shettar, requesting him to ask the people to share information on rumour-mongers.

Police in the south said there were rumours that northeastern people, who look more East Asian or

Tibetan than most Indians, would be attacked after the end of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan around August 20.

Muslims across India have been alarmed by clashes in recent weeks between indigenous people in the northeastern state of Assam. About 75 people have been killed and more than 400,000 displaced.

Separately, at least 80 people were killed and tens of thousands were displaced in the western Myanmar state of Rakhine in days of clashes between members of the majority Buddhist community and minority Muslims that erupted in June.

The violence has angered Muslims around the world and raised tension in India where religious and ethnic

divisions have simmered for decades, occasionally erupting into communal blood-letting.

There have been reports of isolated assaults in the southern cities of Pune and Mysore targeting people of northeastern appearance. And a violent rally by Muslims in Mumbai on Saturday protesting against the Assam unrest added to the confusion.

"We are investigating the source of these rumours and who is behind them," Bangalore deputy commissioner of police Vincent S D'Souza told AFP.

"Mischief-mongers and vested interests are misusing social media, mobile and the Internet to spread these rumours and create panic in the people of the northeastern

Home rush

FROM PAGE 1
private service holder from Rajshahi.

Nahid Hasan, an HSC student, was lying on a bench as he got tired after waiting for around three hours.

"Have been waiting for the Parbatipur-bound Eid special train, but it is yet to be on the platform," he told The Daily Star. The departure of the train was scheduled at 3:00pm.

JOURNEY BY ROAD
Hundreds of vehicles got stranded for several hours on the Dhaka-Chittagong highway due to the huge rush of vehicles.

An 80 kilometre-long tailback was created from Daudkandi toll plaza to Chouddagram, reports our Chittagong correspondent.

An accident at Chouddagram in Comilla early yesterday intensified the gridlock.

Mohammad Ashfiquzzaman Akhter, additional superintendent of highway police (Comilla-East), claimed that the tailback was 10-kilometre-long and the movement of vehicles eased by noon.

Visiting different bus terminals in the city, these correspondents found that buses arrived at Gabtoli and Mohakhali on due time. But the Chittagong-bound buses were delayed for several hours.

"Apart from the Dhaka-Chittagong route, buses are running smoothly on all the other highways today [Thurs-

day]," said Samad Mandal, manager of Hanif Paribahan.

Traffic on the Dhaka-Mymensingh highway slowed in the morning due to a long tailback from Tongi to Gazipur Chowrastra (intersection of four roads).

The gridlock started easing from midday, said Abul Kalam, president of Mohakhali Bus Terminal Sarak Paribahan Malik Samity.

Many passengers at the Gabtoli Bus Terminal alleged that transport operators were charging extra fares for the trips.

"I bought a ticket for Tk 300, which costs Tk 200 in usual circumstances," said Kamrul Hasan, a Faridpur-bound passenger who bought the ticket from Ajmiri Paribahan.

SADARGHAT TERMINAL
Over 80 launches have left the Sadarghat launch terminal since dawn yesterday with jampacked passengers.

Passengers complained that the vessels did not depart on time as the operators were keen to have more passengers onboard.

Rafiqul Islam, senior deputy director of Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA), said they maintained sharp vigil to check overloading.

Stampede kills

FROM PAGE 1
in front of Malek Market near Fakirapool bazaar to collect zakat from the market owner's family.

As they tried to rush through a gate of the market, some of them fell down on the floor and were trampled.

Clearing the crowd, security guards of the market rescued around 20 victims.

Reaching the scene, police sent four critically injured women to Dhaka Medical College Hospital, where the doctors declared the three dead.

Talking to The Daily Star, Saj'u's aunt Kohinoor Begum said four of their family members had been waiting there since noon to collect zakat.

Around 4:30pm, the security guards opened the gate and allowed a group of women in. But as more women tried to rush in, the guards beat them up to have them out of the eight-story market building.

Saju was injured at that time.

Family members of the market owner said they had arranged iftar for the poor women and planned to distribute 1,000 pieces of sarees among them.

The injured received treatment at local clinics.

Law enforcers last night arrested Akhtar Hossain, manager of the market, for alleged mismanagement in zakat distribution.

Jamaat leader

Azharul freed on bail

UNB, Dhaka

Jamaat-e-Islami acting secretary general ATM Azharul Islam was released on bail yesterday evening.

Azharul who was arrested on September 19 last year was released from Dhaka Central Jail around 5:00pm, said Fakhruddin Manik, former central president of Islami Chhatra Shibir, a pro-Jamaat student body.

Azhar and six others were arrested and sued in five cases filed with Ramna and Paltan police stations.

The High Court granted them bail in all the cases. But they were shown arrested on March 21 this year in eight cases filed on different dates in 2010 and 2011.

The cases were lodged with Ramna, Paltan and Motijheel police stations in connection with torching and vandalising vehicles, assault on policemen and preventing them from discharging their duties.

Peru rebels kill 5 army officers

REUTERS, Lima

Rebels killed five army officers and injured five soldiers, the armed forces said on Thursday - the latest setback in President Ollanta Humala's push to regain control of restive regions rife with cocaine trafficking.

The armed forces said it did not know if rebels suffered any casualties during the shootout in the knotty bundle of jungle valleys known as the VRAE, which is the most productive growing area in the world's top coca producer.

Rebels often catch soldiers in ambushes when they venture outside their fortified bases. Counterinsurgency experts have criticized the government's security strategy as flawed, saying it is too predictable. Humala has cycled through at least three defence ministers since taking office a year ago.

So far this year, 17 soldiers and police have died in shootouts with rebels. More than 50 soldiers and police died in ambushes during the term of Humala's predecessor, Alan Garcia.

Remnant groups of Maoist Shining Path rebels have mocked Humala's goal of stamping out the 30-year-old insurgency.

In April, they captured 36 natural gas workers in their first large-scale kidnapping since 2003 and later said it was a ruse to lure soldiers into ambushes.

Though Shining Path's Maoist founders were captured in the early 1990s, when Humala fought against them as an army officer in a conflict that killed 70,000 people, small rebel units remain active and smuggle drugs in lawless jungle areas.

Politics absurd

FROM PAGE 20

residence.
"If anyone thinks politics can exist without them he/she either lives in a fool's paradise or is daydreaming," he said when asked about a possible emergence of a third force in politics.

Ilias, an organising secretary of BNP