

HILSA BAN TURNS A FARCE



The website of the fisheries department proudly announces a number of initiatives to stop fishermen from catching brood-hilsa on October 13-23 in rivers of 19 districts. The experts consider this 10-day window crucial to spawning of our national fish. Yet, the department seems to be failing to protect the brood-hilsa as some fishermen continue to catch the fish. During October 13 to 21, a total of 776 mobile courts seized 22,391 metric tonne hilsa. They also sentenced 399 persons to different terms and imposed a total of Tk 19,557 lakh fines. Our Patuakhali correspondent took the photo yesterday morning from the river Ramnabad in Patuakhali as a group of fishermen was catching hilsa dodging the administration.

True or trick?

FROM PAGE 1
willingness of BNP to keep the militants and terrorists at bay. And in recent times, especially following the Hefajat mayhem, we have not seen any change in BNP's attitude. We have not seen her ever condemning terrorism and when the Hefajat carried out its widespread violence, she had falsely called the police action "genocide".

And when Hefajat came up with its highly reactionary 13-point demand that basically advocated a radicalised society, BNP supported it.

These actions of BNP only cast a serious doubt on how truly Khaleda can deliver on her promise.

In fact, in the face of AL-government's continued oppressive actions against BNP, the party has moved significantly to the ultra right Jamaat and other religion-based parties. It is so much so that once what had been Jamaat's survival tactic to shield behind BNP has turned the other way round. Today BNP has rather adopted the survival tactic of depending on Jamaat, which has a large number of regimented activists.

Much of Khaleda's Monday's postures and remarks, analysts believe, showed how desperate BNP is right now to win over the hearts of the West, which it lost during its last stint in power due to its pandering to various terrorist groups like Huji and JMB.

It is also a clear indication that it has dawned on her that BNP's past stance on India does not suit the present global political situation where India and America are close allies in their common fight against terrorism.

She has also promised a change in political culture, a pledge we had earlier heard from Sheikh Hasina in the last election of 2008 and which was then grossly violated by Hasina herself.

These realities apparently dawned on Khaleda following her advisers' repeated meetings with the western powers. It was clearly indicated to her advisers that the West wants to see a clear distancing between BNP and the militant groups.

Khaleda's attempt to squarely drop the blame of terrorism on AL was ironic. The moment she stated that "people knew fully well that militancy and terrorism took its

CPD worried

FROM PAGE 16
which have forced the business community to take a wait-and-see approach before making any new investments.

"Working out this package of economic safeguards is, in our view, no less important than generating a consensus on electoral modalities," said the CPD in its report.

Bhattacharya said with apparent regret that the chiefs of the two top political parties love to proclaim that they keep apparel sector out of political strikes, but they do not do the same for other sectors.

"What is wrong with a day labourer or a small retailer who suffers the most during a strike?" he questioned.

On the political business cycle (PBC), the report said the governments in low-income countries like Bangladesh tend to increase consumption expenditures during election years, while investments remain unchanged. The overall fiscal defi-

cit ratio increases by about 1 percentage point of GDP during an election year. Revenue collection falls but rises after the election.

CPD's analysis, which found the impacts of PBC in the Bangladesh economy, said the country's real GDP growth slowed down by 0.67 percentage point in this election year. Public investment and tax revenue also went down by 0.21 and 0.16 percentage point respectively, while revenue expenditure increased by 0.17 percentage point in this election year.

Responding to a query on the recent rise in import of capital machinery, Prof Mustafizur Rahman, executive director of CPD, said more capital moves out of Bangladesh during an election year.

"But it needs to be examined whether importers of capital machineries are taking capital out by over-invoicing or not," he said.

Criminals hurl bombs

FROM PAGE 16
Sultan, 45, a member of Kahaloo union parishad (UP) from Kahaloo upazila, Anisur Rahman, 35, from Shajahanpur upazila, and Shablu Mia, 35, from Shibganj upazila in the district, who were visiting the station for different reasons.

The injured received primary treatment.

Kahaloo UP Chairman PM Belal Hossain said UP member Shahidul had gone to the police station for a personal reason and

become the victim of the incident.

On Monday night, crude bombs were also exploded near the official residences of Superintendent of Police and Additional Superintendent of Police in Bogra.

Earlier, pro-hartal activists charged cock-tails in front of the Sadar Police Station during the 18-party called shutdown.

The criminals hurled another bomb on the rooftop of the police station a few days back. None was injured on that occasion.

It can be classed

FROM PAGE 16
settled. People are often terrified of speaking out, fearing retribution from both militants and the state, which is widely suspected of colluding with the CIA-led campaign.

There is also a risk of militants attempting to skew outside research by forcing interviewees into "providing false or inaccurate information", the report said.

But Amnesty mounted a major effort to investigate nine of the many attacks to have struck the region over the last 18 months, including one that killed 18 labourers in North Waziristan as they waited to eat dinner in an area of heavy Taliban influence in July 2012. All those interviewed by Amnesty strongly denied any of the men had been involved in militancy. Even if they were members of a banned group, that would not be enough to justify killing them, the report said.

"Amnesty International has serious concerns that this attack violated the prohibition of the arbitrary deprivation of life and may constitute war crimes or extrajudicial executions," the report said. It called for those responsible to stand trial.

The US has repeatedly claimed very few civilians have been killed by drones. It argues its campaign is conducted "consistent with all applicable domestic and international law".

The Amnesty report supports media accounts from October last year that a 68-year-old woman called Mamana Bibi was killed by a missile fired from a drone while she was picking okra outside her home in North Waziristan with her grandchildren nearby. A second strike minutes later injured family members tending her.

If true, the case is striking failure of a technology much vaunted for its accuracy. It is claimed the remote-controlled planes are able to observe their targets for hours or even days to verify them, and that the explosive force of the missiles is designed to limit collateral damage. As with other controversial drone strikes, the US has refused to acknowledge or explain what happened.

Amnesty said it accepts some US drone strikes may not violate the law, "but it is impossible to reach any firm assessment without a full disclosure of the facts surrounding individual attacks and their legal basis. The USA appears to be exploiting the lawless and remote nature of the region to evade accountability for its violations," it said.

In Yemen, another country where US drones are active, Human Rights Watch highlighted six incidents, two of which were a "clear violation of international humanitarian law". The remaining four may have broken the laws of armed conflict because the targets were illegitimate or because not enough was done to minimise civilian harm, the report said.

It also argued that some of the Yemen attacks breach the guidelines announced by Obama earlier this year in his first major speech on a programme that is officially top secret. For example, the pledge to kill suspects only when it is impossible to capture them appears to have been ignored on 17 April this year when an al-Qaeda leader was blown up in a township in Dhamar province in central Yemen, Human Rights Watch said.

An attack on a truck driving 12 miles south of the capital Sana'a reportedly killed two al-Qaeda suspects but also two civilians who had been hired by the other men. That means the attack could have been illegal because it "may have caused disproportionate harm to civilians".

AL, BNP connect

FROM PAGE 1
Political analysts say the two parties are speaking in favour of talks under tremendous pressures from different quarters, particularly the donor countries.

The latest efforts for talks at the level of second-in-command now remind many of Jilil-Mannan meeting at the end of 2006, they add.

The then BNP secretary general Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan and AL general secretary Abdul Jalil entered a dialogue amid growing political crisis centring on the parliamentary election. The ruling BNP had moved first for the talks.

After several sittings, the two leaders assured people of headway in resolving the political impasse and at the same time confided to foreign diplomats that no substantive progress was made.

Both were sticking to their guns and the talks failed.

This time, it was not the ruling party that made the first move, though the AL general secretary was assigned by the party chief more than a week ago to take steps for talks with the BNP.

Hasina also told her cabinet colleagues on Monday that she would telephone her archrival Khaleda anytime soon.

The BNP-led opposition alliance, however, did not wait for the ruling party. It wrote to the AL calling for talks on Khaleda Zia's proposal for a non-partisan election-time government.

"We have long been urging the government to move for talks. But we took the first step to get some extra mileage from the political situation," a senior BNP leader told The Daily Star yesterday, on condition of

anonymity.

"Now the Awami League has to respond positively. Otherwise, it will have to shoulder the blame for failure to resolve the political crisis."

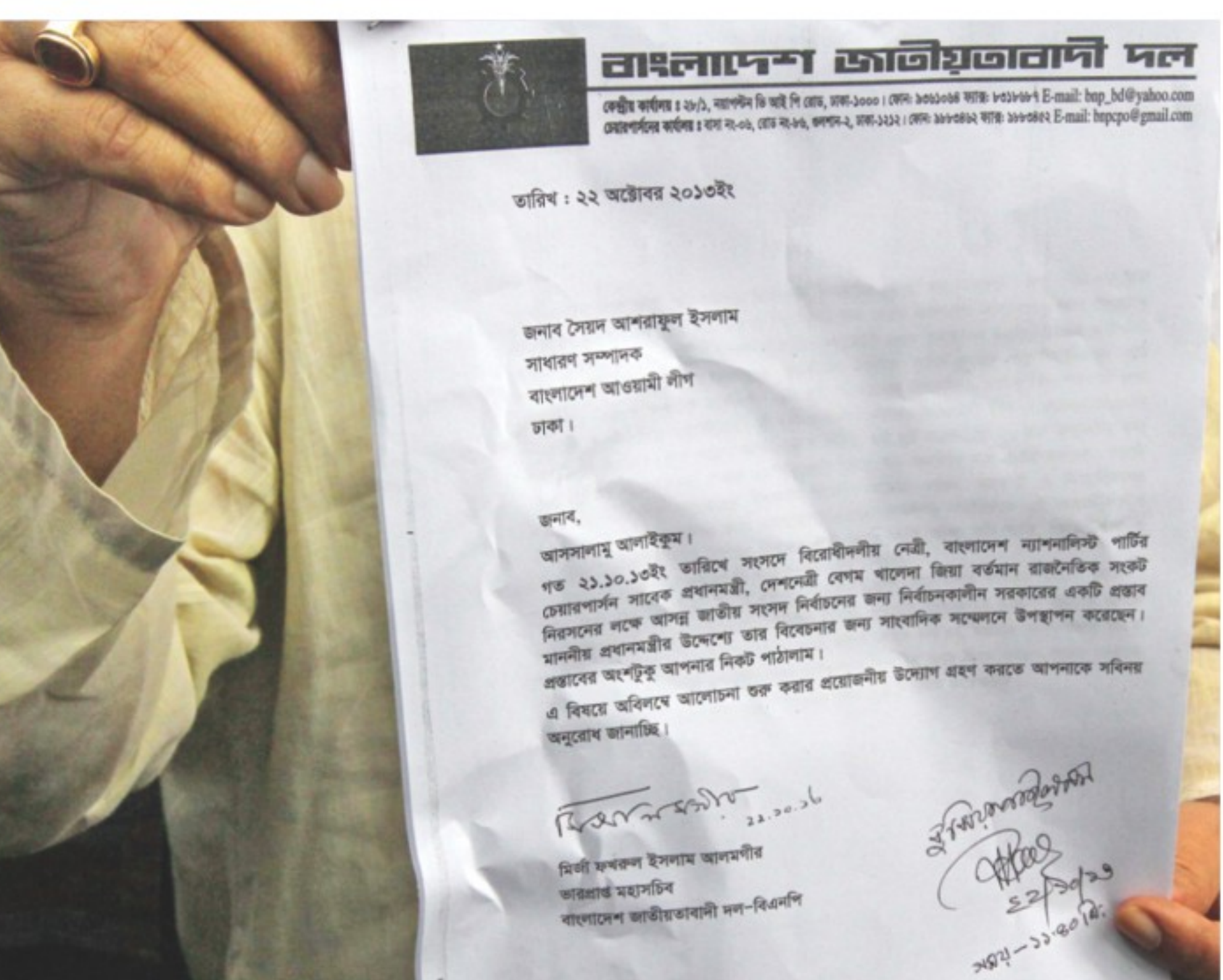
THE LETTER
On behalf of the opposition combine, a three-member BNP delegation went to AL General Secretary Syed Ashraf Islam's Minto Road residence around 11:00am and handed over the letter.

Around 11:30am, Syed Ashraf over the phone thanked BNP acting secretary general Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir and said he would notify Hasina about the letter.

When Ashraf made the phone call, Fakhrul was addressing a press conference at Khaleda's Gulshan office criticising the law enforcers for "attacks" on BNP chief's staff near the party headquarters at Nayapaltan Monday night.

"We have taken a step forward. I hope you will do the same," a smiling Fakhrul said while speaking on the phone. "We hope you will consider the letter with importance and will begin the talks."

Fakhrul sent the letter a day after Khaleda proposed for a non-partisan polls-time government headed by a respected person chosen through consensus between the ruling and opposition parties.



BNP leader Barkatullah Bulu, coming out of Syed Ashraf's Minto Road residence, shows to journalists the receipt copy of the letter the opposition wrote to the Awami League yesterday.

He requested Ashraf to take initiative for talks over the proposal.

"We would be very delighted if they [AL] accept our proposal. We hope it will open the door to dialogues," the BNP leader said at the briefing. "All of us want to resolve the ongoing political impasse through mutual

Unusual rain

FROM PAGE 16
country has already had around 14 rainy days and as per the weather forecast, like yesterday, rainfall may occur today also at places in the country.

"At the moment, the monsoon wind prevails only in the Southwestern part of the country, which will end in a day or two. A low pressure in the Bay is causing the rainfall now," said Sanaul Haque, a meteorologist at Dhaka Met office, yesterday.

Historically, most of the monsoon rain occurs in July and August, which is around 532 millimetre (mm) and 420 mm on an average. This July, the rainfall was 30 percent less than the normal average, according to the monthly weather report of the Met office.

Formation of cyclones in the Bay is very normal in September, but met office bulletin says, no cyclone formed in the Bay in September this year.

This year, there was shortage of rainfall. The late rains are covering the deficit and the average rainfall would be normal by the end of the year, said Sanaul.

Asked about such changes in rainfall patterns, Dr Samarendra Karmakar, former director at the Met office, said sometimes the monsoon could be less active or delayed due to several reasons, which is quite usual.

But the current spell of rainfall occurred due to a cyclone which hit the Orissa coast and also due to a current low formed in the Southwest Bay, he added.

33kg gold bars

FROM PAGE 16
this connection, he added.

Around 150kg of gold was seized at the airport in the last four months.

On July 24, 116-kg gold wrapped in black cloth was recovered from the luggage chamber of a flight from Dubai via Kathmandu. Nobody was arrested in connection with the smuggling.

Iqbal said: "Most of the people who smuggle the gold are not the owners. They just pass it on to the next person in the chain."

Expressway route revised

FROM PAGE 16
project at a slightly higher cost compared to an earlier estimate due to delay in acquiring land.

Thai firm MM Company Ltd, UK's Mott MacDonald Ltd and Euroconsult Mott MacDonald of the Netherlands will jointly work as the independent engineer of the project.

The joint venture will receive around Tk 53 crore for the job, 6.54 percent up from the previous estimate.

Bangladesh Bridges Authority in January 2011 had entered into a concession agreement with the private investor Ital-Thai Development Public Company Ltd to build the 21 km DEE under public-private partnership.

The scheme was delayed due to repeated modification in its route.

The delay has raised the total project cost from Tk 8,703 crore to Tk 8,940 crore. Of the amount, the government will provide Tk 2,414 crore, while the rest will be funded by the concessionaire.

In another meeting today, the cabinet committee on purchase will endorse proposals for appointment of contractors for two components of the Padma bridge project. Abdul Monem Ltd is going to be appointed as the contractor for the service area at a cost of around Tk 209 crore.

The communications ministry has recommended appointment of a Bangladesh-Malaysia joint venture (Abdul Monem Limited and HCM Engineering Sdn Bhd) for construction of 11 km Mawa approach road at a cost of around Tk 1,934 crore.

Mozena, Pankaj meet

FROM PAGE 1
discussed varieties of issues. But Bangladesh's political situation, upcoming election, proposals for election-time government and offer of dialogue on the issues figured prominently at the meeting, sources concerned said.

Talking to The Daily Star, a senior official of one of the embassies said the prevailing political stalemate and the holding of election were discussed elaborately.

Mozena and Pankaj hoped for a political dialogue between the two major parties to resolve the issues of election-time government and free, fair, transparent, credible and inclusive polls, the official added.

Asked, the US ambassador said they

discussed Bangladesh-India cooperation.

Talking to journalists after singing a counter-terrorism deal at the home ministry, Mozena said, "We talked about increasing trade between the two countries... We talked about how US can play role to facilitate expanded trade between Bangladesh and India."

Asked about the meeting, US embassy spokesperson Kelly S McCarthy said Ambassador Mozena regularly meets with counterparts in the diplomatic community, civil society members and officials of Bangladesh government as part of his normal day-to-day activities.

None could be contacted for comments at the Indian high commission.

Petrobangla

FROM PAGE 16
If the cabinet committee approves the bid and a PSC is signed now, the companies may conduct surveys - 1,893 line-kilometres of two-dimensional seismic survey and 300 sqkm of three-dimensional seismic survey -- during the winter.

As per the proposal, Santos and KrisEnergy have committed to drill one well during their five years initial contract period and they may finish the drilling by 2014.

Submitting a bank guarantee of \$15 million, the joint venture has also offered 55 to 80 percent profit share to the government in case of gas or oil discovery.

The Petrobangla wrote to the cabinet committee that the government had floated an offshore block bid in 2008 but did not get much response. During its second offshore block bid last year with nine shallow water blocks and three deep sea blocks, response was again not so warm.

Santos has been efficiently and cost effectively operating the Sangu gas field while KrisEnergy has recently taken over Irish Tullow Oil's operatorship in block 9.