

Banana boon

FROM PAGE 16

Wholesalers buy each cluster for Tk 30 to Tk 40 and sell the same for Tk 60 to Tk 80, depending on the size. The perishable bananas are cut a day or two prior to ripening and then put into crates at the orchards and directly transported to Bandarban town, Dhaka or Chittagong in different trucks.

Bananas are cultivated throughout the year, unaffected by the seasons. So, farmers in the district have a steady source of income.

Palash Paul from Chittagong, a tourist at Shailo Propath that is 5km from the district town, said the panoramic views of the banana orchards are a sight to behold. "One can even visit the orchards and buy bananas that ripen on the branches, that are as so sweet."

According to Bandarban's Department of Agricultural Extension, the district produced at least 197,750 tonnes of bananas on 7,910 hectares last year. Farmers have grown 202,500 tonnes on 8,100 hectares this year. Production has already crossed the target for this year, that has encouraged banana growers a lot, added DAE officials.

The department's Deputy Director Altaf Hossain said, "We are trying to encourage the indigenous farmers to adopt modern methods of farming instead of traditional methods to maintain the quality of produce." "The water, soil and environment of the district are suitable for cultivating bananas."

But farmers need to be trained to understand the importance of slope farming and tree spacing, choose high quality seeds, and use high-quality organic fertilisers, added Altaf.

Best farming practices also need to be adopted; for instance, wooden sticks need to be dug into the ground next to the tree to give it support, he said.

After the tree bears fruit, it usually develops tree saplings; all but two have to be cut down and removed to maintain quality, added the deputy director.

WB fund

FROM PAGE 2

The host communities near and around the refugee camps were the worst affected. Rohingya took shelter in the southern upazilas of Cox's Bazar, where extreme poverty rates exceed 40 percent against the national average of 13 percent; and many more locals were vulnerable to changes in prices and wages, said the WB.

It said market studies were under-way to monitor changes in the price of key food stuffs and wage rates, but evidence suggest that the influx led to increases in some commodity prices, as well as distortion in the labour market as Rohingyas seek work wages below existing rate.

The WB said tourism was also being affected from various angles.

The lender said the Bangladesh government would have to prepare an "eligibility paper" outlining its action plan and strategy for the displaced Rohingyas and their host population to get the financial assistance.

About the institutional coordination arrangements, the WB said coordination on the ground should be stepped up as the assistance programme would require an inter-ministerial response. This should include clarifying responsibilities within the government as well as ensuring a strong coordination with the external partners.

Such coordination is critical to ensure effective use of scarce resources, the bank added.

The lender said the government agencies would define specific intervention strategies, including a budgetary estimate, in the areas identified above.

The WB further said its existing projects could be restructured to provide additional finance for service delivery in Cox's Bazar.

Pope to meet

FROM PAGE 2

The meeting with the military chief was organised on the recommendation of the archbishop of Yangon, Charles Bo, who also advised the pope not to use the term "Rohingya" during his visit, for fear of inflaming tensions in the predominantly Buddhist country.

Army and government officials in Myanmar decline to use the term they see as giving the Muslims of Rakhine state the status of an ethnic minority, whereas the official line is that they are illegal immigrants from mainly Muslim Bangladesh.

The Vatican spokesman said the pope was not forbidden from employing the term but added that he planned to follow his archbishop's advice.

"The pope's visit comes at a key moment for these two countries," said Vatican spokesman Greg Burke, adding that he expects a very interesting trip.

The pope will also separately meet Myanmar's de facto civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi -- a Nobel peace laureate -- as previously scheduled during the first part of his November 26-30 trip.

Ex-Jamaat MP, 5

FROM PAGE 16

In last several verdicts, the tribunal said the convicts could be executed "by hanging or shooting."

Syed Sayedul Haque Sumon, conducting prosecutor of the case, expressed satisfaction over the verdict.

Freedom fighters, activists of Awami League and Jubo League brought out processions in Gaibandha Sadar and Sundarganj hailing the verdict, reports Our Gaibandha Correspondent.

On the other side, Khandker Rezaul Alam, defence counsel for Latif, said his client did not get justice and would file an appeal with the Supreme Court.

Gazi MH Tamim, state-appointed defence counsel for the five fugitives, also said they did not get justice and urged them, through media, to surrender by showing respect to the law and the court.

According to the International Crimes (Tribunals) Act, 1973, a war crimes convict can file an appeal with the SC within 30 days from the date of the verdict's pronouncement.

With the latest verdict, the war crimes tribunals have so far delivered 29 judgements against 59 people. Thirty-seven of them have been sentenced to death.

CONVICTS, CHARGES AND PUNISHMENT

Central Sura member of Jamaat, an anti-liberation party, Aziz was elected as lawmaker from Gaibandha-1 (Sundarganj) constituency in 2001. He was also the ameer of the district Jamaat.

Besides the war crimes case, he is an accused of 12 other cases, several of

them filed in connection with vandalism and arson carried out during anti-government movements.

In 1971, he was an active member of Jamaat and formed the Peace Committee and Razakar force in his locality, according to the prosecution.

He is notoriously known as "Ghoramara Aziz", a name that people gave him after he had shot dead a horse in a bush mistaking it to be a freedom fighter in 1971.

In its verdict, the tribunal said, "Abu Saleh Md Abdul Aziz alias Ghoramara Aziz, the commander of locally formed Razakar Bahini, was the 'mastermind' of designing plans of attacks directing pro-liberation civilians with an intent to wipe them out -- his dominating position and influence, as proved lead to this conclusion."

Other accused were members of the Razakar Bahini and took part in the crimes.

The tribunal sentenced jail until death to all six convicts for abducting four people and killing one of them at Moujamali village in Gaibandha Sadar upazila.

They were handed down death penalty for two other charges -- killing of a Chhatra League leader and killing of 13 chairmen and members of five unions in Sundarganj.

During a visit to Aziz's house at Chachia Mirganj in Sundarganj, nobody was found there, writes our correspondent.

Locals said Aziz and his family members went into hiding immediately after investigation of the war crimes case had started. Nobody knows their whereabouts, they added.

Mnangagwa

FROM PAGE 16

unite to rebuild the country.

Mugabe held on for a week with ZANU-PF and others urging him to quit. He finally stepped down on Tuesday as parliament began an impeachment process. People danced in the streets and some brandished posters of Mnangagwa and army chief General Constantino Chiwenga, who led the takeover.

The demise of Mugabe leaves Zimbabwe facing a different situation to other African countries where veteran leaders have been toppled in popular uprisings or through elections.

By contrast, the army has engineered Mnangagwa's path to power and for decades he was a faithful lieutenant of Mugabe and member of his elite. He was also in charge of internal security when rights groups say 20,000 civilians were killed in the 1980s.

"Mugabe has gone but I don't see Mnangagwa doing anything different from that old man. This is not the change I expected but let us give him time," said security guard Edgar Mapuranga, who sat by an bank cash machine that was out of money.

Zimbabwe's next leader faces the task of restoring the country's fortunes. Alleged human rights abuses and flawed elections prompted many Western countries to impose sanctions in the early 2000s that hurt the economy.

Chinese investment softened the blow but the population of 13 million remains mainly poor and faces currency shortages and high unemployment. Staging clean elections next year will be key to winning fresh investment.

Mnangagwa is almost certain to win that election but it would be a victory for the country's "old elites" with the aid of China, said Guenther Nooke, German Chancellor Angela Merkel's

Take steps

FROM PAGE 16

community across the world," read the letter sent to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

Some of the signatories are from Scotland, Australia, New Zealand, the USA, the UK and Bangladesh. They have studied, worked and published papers with Mubashar, Lucy West, PhD Candidate of school of international relations at Griffith University, told The Daily Star in an email.

"In the interest of preserving universal civil liberties and political rights, we call on the Bangladeshi government and Dhaka Metropolitan Police to do all in their power to locate Mubashar Hasan."

Lucy West started the petition jointly with Dr Shannon Brincat and Dr Lee Morgenbesser.

Another petition, titled, "A Call to the Government of Bangladesh: Secure the Release of Mubashar Hasan Immediately" was started on Change.org has been signed by 2,710 supporters so far.

Mubashar, a researcher of political Islam and assistant professor of political science at NSU, disappeared after he had left his workplace around 4:30pm on November 7. Police said he last talked with someone using his phone at 6:41pm when he was near Lions Eye Hospital.

Mubashar's father Motahar Hossain filed a general diary around 1:00am the next day with Khilgaon Police Station.

Mubashar is among a host of individuals who have fallen victims to abduction or enforced disappearance in recent months.

personal representative for Africa.

"He will manage to get elected using fear or many tricks, and then we'll have a succession from one tyrant to the next," Nooke told broadcaster SWR2.

China's foreign ministry said on Wednesday it respected Mugabe's decision to resign.

Former colonial power Britain wants Zimbabwe to rejoin the international community now Mugabe has resigned, Prime Minister Theresa May said. Mnangagwa met South Africa's President Jacob Zuma in the capital Pretoria on Wednesday, the eNCA television channel said.

Mugabe leaves a contradictory legacy. He is among the last of a generation of African leaders who led their countries to independence and then ruled. That group includes Kwame Nkrumah in Ghana, Jomo Kenyatta in Kenya, Felix Houphouet-Boigny in Ivory Coast and Nelson Mandela in South Africa.

He also presided over a steep decline in Zimbabwe's economy and stifled the country's democracy en route to winning a series of elections. His government is accused by the opposition and human rights groups of persecuting and killing opponents.

The forced takeover of white-owned farms from around 2000 aimed to bolster his popular support but crippled foreign exchange earnings from agriculture and led to a period of hyperinflation.

"President Mugabe will be remembered as a fearless pan-Africanist liberation fighter and the father of the independent Zimbabwean nation," the chairperson of the African Union Commission, Moussa Faki Mahamat, said in a statement.

Recover

FROM PAGE 16

authority to properly maintain 13 canals freed earlier from illegal occupants.

In yesterday's meeting speakers said in the late 70s and early 80s the city was blessed with water flowing in over 50 canals. But almost half of them have ceased to exist.

The remaining 26 canals are barely surviving, thanks to unabated encroachments, mindless dumping of solid wastes and sheer negligence of the authorities. They have lost their width and depth.

Wasa currently maintains Kalyanpur, Katasur, Ramchandpur, Abdullahpur, Diyabari, Digun, Gulshan-Banani, Mohakhali, Hazaribagh, Begunbari, Khilgaon-Basabo, Manda, Sutivola, Badda-Shahjadpur, Rupnagar, Baisteki, Kalshi, Bouniya, Ibrahimpur, Mirpur-14 Housing and Jirani canals in the capital.

Shamsur Rahman Sharif, land minister; Anisul Islam Mahmud, water minister; Maj (Retd) Rafiqul Islam Bir Uttam, chairman of the parliamentary standing committee for the shipping ministry, among others were present at the taskforce meeting.

It was also decided that a survey on the foreshore of rivers and placing pillars to demarcate them would continue. Encroachers on old Buriganga river would be evicted following the survey.

Complaints regarding the pillars placed earlier would be addressed. Moreover, action would be taken against those who uproot the pillars.

The taskforce also directed the ministry of industry to establish central effluent treatment plants for tan-

BCL now moves

FROM PAGE 1

had been made quite a long ago, and that many schools and madrasas already have BCL committees.

"But we gave this instruction anew," he told The Daily Star yesterday.

Asked whether such move could cause violence at schools, Sohag said, "It is because of Chhatra League that universities have healthy student politics, and classes and exams are held properly."

The formation of the BCL committees would help establish a healthy environment at schools, he added.

However, educationists are sceptical about the BCL move.

"We need to think whether it is logical to impose student politics on secondary-level students who are burdened with studies and examinations," said child education expert Rasheda K Choudhury.

There are school parliaments to help flourish leadership qualities in school students, she said.

"I don't understand why the issue of student politics is being dragged here. I don't think there is any necessity for this," noted Rasheda, former primary education adviser to a caretaker government.

Rasheda, also executive director of Campaign for Popular Education, said student politics has now lost its glory. In the past, students used to lead all democratic movements.

"Student politics no longer creates hope. What ideologies they [BCL men] would preach among school students," she said.

Some guardians too expressed displeasure at the move.

"On television, we often see bloodshed and violence involving student groups at universities. We don't want it to happen at schools," said the father of two school students in Mohammadpur.

"Academic activities will be hampered due to student politics," he added, seeking anonymity.

Tonu's family

FROM PAGE 16

It has been almost 20 months since my sister's murder but the investigators have failed to arrest anyone," he said, adding that the CID officials claimed to have made progress in the probe.

The investigators also reassured the family of justice.

Apart from Rubel, his mother Anwara Begum, father Yaar Hossain, his cousins Minhaz Hossain and Laizu Jahan were interrogated separately after they arrived at the CID office around 10:00am as asked.

During the interrogation that started around 1:00pm, CID officials first talked to Laizu. Rubel and Minhaz were quizzed in the afternoon while his parents in the evening.

Abdul Kahar Akanda, additional deputy inspector general of CID, told The Daily Star that "we talked to the family members [of Tonu] on different issues. We tried to verify some information that we had gathered during our investigation."

Meanwhile, Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan yesterday said the family of Tonu was called to the CID headquarters for the sake of investigation.

"The investigation is underway and I believe it will reveal the real story."

Tonu, a student of Comilla Victoria College and also a theatre activist, was found murdered inside Comilla Cantonment on March 20 last year.

Two autopsies could not determine the cause of her death though her father Yaar Hossain, who first spotted the body in a bush, saw the back of his daughter's head smashed and injury marks on her nose.

But the police inquest report did not mention any sign of injury.

However, the family members saw a ray of hope for getting justice as CID officials through DNA tests found that Tonu was raped before being murdered.

The officials on May 16 last year said the tests of the specimens collected from her clothes found spermatozoa of three males. But CID has not been able to match the DNA samples with anyone so far.

Party at airport

FROM PAGE 16

The sing-along has been described as an old-fashioned Newfoundland kitchen party. Ms Philpott said she had received emails from locals who are homesick or away from home telling her the videos reminded them of Newfoundland.

Sean Sullivan, playing the guitar, told CBC News that for his friend Sheldon Thornhill, playing the accordion in these kinds of situations is a regular occurrence.

"Anytime we're gathered around airports like that, he's often taking out his accordion just out of the blue and starts playing for people," he said.

The 'Butcher of Bosnia'

FROM PAGE 16

10,000 civilians were killed by shelling and sniper fire over 43 months.

The killings in Srebrenica of men and boys after they were separated from women and taken away in buses or marched off to be shot amounted to Europe's worst atrocity since World War Two.

"The crimes committed rank among the most heinous known to humankind, and include genocide and extermination as a crime against humanity," Presiding Judge Alphons Orie said in reading out a summary of the judgment.

"Many of these men and boys were cursed, insulted, threatened, forced to sing Serb songs and beaten while awaiting their execution," he said.

Mladic had pleaded not guilty to all charges. His legal team said he would appeal against the verdict.

The "Butcher of Bosnia" to his enemies and critics, Mladic was the most notorious of the ICTY's 161 indictees, along with former Bosnian Serb political leader Radovan Karadzic and late Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic.

In its summary, the tribunal found Mladic "significantly contributed" to genocide committed in Srebrenica with the goal of destroying its Muslim population, "personally directed" the long bombardment of Sarajevo and was part of a "joint criminal enterprise" intending to purge Muslims and Croats from Bosnia.

Prosecutors said the ultimate plan pursued by Mladic, Karadzic and Milosevic was to purge Bosnia of non-Serbs - a strategy that came to be known worldwide as ethnic cleansing - and carve out a "Greater Serbia" in the ashes of Yugoslavia.

ICTY Chief Prosecutor Serge Brammertz called the verdict "a milestone" in holding Mladic accountable not just for mass killings but the detention of tens of thousands of non-Serbs in camps where many were beaten and raped, as well as the expulsion of hundreds of thousands to re-make Bosnia's demographic.

In Geneva, UN human rights chief Zeid Ra'ad al-Husseini called Mladic the "epitome of evil" and said his conviction after 16 years of an indicted fugitive and over four years of trial was a "momentous victory for justice".

"Today's verdict is a warning to the perpetrators of such crimes that they will not escape justice, no matter how powerful they may be nor how long it may take," Zeid said in a statement.

Aleksandar Vucic, president of Serbia whose late nationalist strongman

Dist AL refutes

FROM PAGE 2

Akramuzzaman, vice-president of Feni AL; Nur Hossain, general secretary of sadar AL; and upazila unit leaders Kamal Uddin Mazumdar, Abdul Alim Mazumdar, Mejbaul Haidar and Rafiqul Islam.

They said Arzu was working as a BNP-Jamaat agent, adding that the leadership of Alauddin Ahmed Chowdhury Nasim and Nizam Uddin Hazari turned Feni, once notorious for terrorism, into a place of peace.

Arzu's statement was a reflection of the BNP Secretary General Fakrul Islam's claim made at a press conference after the attack on the motorcade, they said.

Govt to buy rice

FROM PAGE 1

importing 1 lakh tonnes of the staple which would reach 38 government silos by traders. The price was set at Tk 43,440 to Tk 44,330 per tonne.

Import of another 1 lakh tonnes of rice is in the pipeline and the government has already opened tenders in this regard, show the ministry website.

In August this year, an initiative was taken for the import of 2.5 lakh tonnes of rice from Cambodia. A Reuters report on November 14, however, said Bangladesh cancelled the deal over a delay in shipments.

"We had to terminate the deal as they failed to supply the rice on time," Badrul Hasan, the head of Bangladesh's state grain buyer, told Reuters.

The government is desperately trying to replenish its depleted stock through imports after production was hit by flash floods and fungal attacks.

Despite deals with several rice exporting countries, including Vietnam, India, Thailand and Myanmar, Bangladesh is still battling to increase its reserves, with rice imports set to hit their highest levels in a decade.

The import of rice at both government and private levels have picked up lately. From July 1 to November 14, a total of 17.24 lakh tonnes of rice was imported. Of the quantity, 4.05 lakh tonnes was brought in by the government.

It did not have to import any rice last fiscal year. However, 13.32 lakh tonnes of the staple came through the private sector.

Till now, the cabinet committee has approved proposals for import of around 12 lakh tonnes of rice through state-to-state arrangement and international bidder via open tender.

The government has also decided to import 20 lakh tonnes of food grains --

Milosevic was Mladic's patron but died in a tribunal prison before the end of his trial, said Serbia "respects the victims" and called for a focus on the future.

"I would like to call on everyone (in the region) to start looking into the future and not to drown in tears of the past... We need to look to the future... so we finally have a stable country," Vucic told reporters when asked about the verdict.

Serbia, once the most powerful Yugoslav republic, is now democratic and seeking ties to the European Union.

Srebrenica, near Bosnia's eastern border with Serbia, had been designated a "safe area" by the United Nations and was defended by lightly armed U.N. peacekeepers. But they quickly surrendered when Mladic's forces stormed in on July 11, 1995.

The Dutch peacekeepers looked on helplessly as Serb forces separated men and boys from women, then sent them out of sight on buses or marched them away to be shot.

"(This conviction) is an important reminder that more than 20 years after the Bosnian war, thousands of cases of enforced disappearances remain unresolved, and victims and their families continue to be denied access to justice, truth and reparation," said John Dalhuisen of rights group Amnesty International.

Mladic is still seen as a national hero by some Serbs for presiding over the swift capture of 70 percent of Bosnia after its Serbs rose up against a Muslim-Croat referendum vote for independence from Serbian-dominated federal Yugoslavia.

Popularity

FROM PAGE 1

She pointed out that there will be several contenders in every constituency, but all party men must work for the candidate nominated by the party.

Hasina warned that she would not forgive if any of the AL activists goes against the party's decision.

She further said she does not want to see any more conflict within the party over nomination.

The AL president said she was aware of the track records and activities of the MPs, as surveys on them are carried out every six months.

Meeting sources said some AL lawmakers accused ministers of maintaining their "own circles" and ignoring other party men.

Hasina said there had been conspiracies against the AL in the past and plots are still being hatched. But the party must move forward and overcome all hurdles.

She also asked the MPs to work sincerely for the party ahead of the next polls so that it can form government for the third consecutive time.

The AL chief told the MPs not to make any "negative remarks" that invite criticism and not to do anything for which they would have to leave the country if the party fails to retain power, according to the meeting sources.

She also advised them to visit their constituencies frequently and go door-to-door to tell people about the government's development activities as well as "the destructive politics" of the BNP-Jamaat alliance, added the sources.