

'74 Bangladeshi peacekeepers killed so far'

UNB, Dhaka

Some 74 members of the country's armed forces, including 21 officers, were killed so far in different countries while working as United Nations peacekeepers, parliament was informed yesterday.

Replying to a written question from Awami League member Faruk Khan, Water Resources Minister Hafiz Uddin Ahmed, who is also in charge of the Defence Ministry in parliament, said that since the UN peace mission began, a total of 58,054 members of armed forces participated in different countries.

He said currently 9,797 Bangladeshi peacekeepers are on duty in UN peace missions of whom 9,293 personnel are from Army, 240 from Navy and 260 personnel from Air Force.

A total of 48,257 personnel, mostly from the Army, have already completed their assignments, he added.

The Minister said of those killed, 71 belonged to Army, two were from Air Force and one from Navy.

Golden Rice in 3 yrs: MK Anwar

BSS, Dhaka

Agriculture Minister MK Anwar yesterday said the Golden Rice, a genetically modified crop enriched by Vitamin-A, is expected to be released in the country within the next two or three years.

"The Bangladesh Rice Research Institute (BRRI) is conducting a research on this genetically modified (GM) crop, which would hopefully be released within the next two or three years," he said at the Jatiya Sangsad while replying to two supplementary questions.

On the first supplementary question from treasury bench member GM Fazlul Hoque, he said although there is a controversy and debate worldwide on the GM crop, "we hope that the golden rice would help reduce vitamin-A deficiency of the people."

Responding to another supplementary question from Awami League lawmaker Farruk Khan, the agriculture minister said after successful release of the Golden Rice, steps would be undertaken to develop iron and zinc enriched rice varieties in the country.

MK Anwar, however, told the house that all types of local rice varieties are being preserved in the BRRI laboratory.



Workers Party stages a demonstration in the city yesterday protesting price hike of essentials and demanding uninterrupted power and water supply. PHOTO: STAR

'No more new brick fields with traditional method'

BSS, Dhaka

The government has decided not to permit any new brick field using traditional method to encourage production of environment-friendly compressed block bricks, Minister for Environment and Forest Tariqul Islam told the Jatiya Sangsad yesterday.

In a written reply to a question from Begum Rasheda Begum Hira (Women seat-340), he said existing brick fields are getting their permission renewed on condition that they would use compressed block brick methods for production.

The minister said since the present government came to power it had taken initiatives for introduction of production of compressed block bricks as they are environment-friendly.

A workshop on this subject was held in 2002 with the participation of the brick field owners, deputy commissioners and government and non-government organisations. After this, the Department of Environment had been encouraging all to introduce the block brick methods, he added.

Govt distorts history for fear of losing power

Speakers tell discussion

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League (AL) Presidium Member Amir Hossain Amu yesterday said the alliance government is politicising every sphere of administration.

He was speaking as chief guest at a discussion titled 'Reform proposal on caretaker government and Election Commission turns into public demand' organised by Sadharon Nagorik Samaj at

Reporters' Unity auditorium in the city.

Amu said the conspiracy of the four-party alliance to make Justice KM Hasan as chief advisor of the next caretaker government has compelled AL to put forward the reform proposal.

He said they do not want a pro-AL caretaker government, rather it should be formed on the basis of public consensus.

Terming the present government

anti-independence, another AL Presidium Member Abdur Razzak said the documentary on liberation war broadcast by BTV lately has proved that they do not want Bangladesh.

"Those who do not obey the declaration of independence, surely they want Pakistan and ultimately they would make the country into a province of Pakistan," he added.

Criticising the documentary, AL leader Colonel (Retd) Abu Osman

Chowdhury said the government cannot make the declaration of the independence 'null and void' ignoring the constitution.

He also criticised the government for posting their own men at divisional, district and upazila levels including the polling officers ahead of the election to ensure their victory.

Former president of Dhaka University Teachers' Association (Duta) Prof AAMS Arefin Siddique said the government is distorting the

history of independence for fear of losing power.

He stressed the need for enlightening new generation with the true history of the liberation war.

Chairman of Mukti Joddha Kendrio Command Prof Abdul Ahad Chowdhury, Organising Secretary of Krishak League MA Karim, and leaders of Sadharon Nagorik Samaj also addressed the discussion presided over by Mokaddes Hossain, convenor of the organisation.