

Modernisation of army to continue in future: PM

Khaleda thanks armed forces for support in last 5 yrs

UNB, Rangpur

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday thanked members of the armed forces for their support and cooperation in last five years to the government's efforts for improving the socio-economic condition of the people as well as forming an efficient and modern armed force.

"The modernisation process and capacity building of the armed forces will continue in the future with your cooperation," Khaleda, who also holds the Defence portfolio, told a darbar function of the army at Rangpur Cantonment.

On her arrival at the cantonment, Army Chief Lieutenant General Moyeen U Ahmed and Area Commander Major General Md Tajul Islam received the Prime Minister.

Khaleda hoped that the army would be able to earn the appreciation of all both at home and

abroad by properly and efficiently performing their responsibilities to be entrusted on them.

She said the people of Bangladesh would always remember with respect the glorious role and sacrifice of the armed forces in the liberation war.

She said late president Ziaur Rahman restored discipline and infused dynamism and professionalism in the army, which had been neglected after the country's independence.

She said: "After forming the government this time, we have implemented various programmes for modernising the army and raising its capacity. It's our aim to develop a patriotic, disciplined, well-trained, professional and multidimensional armed forces for safeguarding the independence and sovereignty and the state unity."

She listed her government's programmes and efforts in this regard and mentioned that the

manpower and capacity of the armed forces have been increased, and modern equipment included by forming new units.

Additional 9,000 manpower has been recruited creating opportunities of employment and promotion, she told the Darbar.

Khaleda said new production line for producing automatic weapons has been opened in the Bangladesh Ordnance Factory at Gazipur to strengthen the infantry battalion, the main fighting force.

She said the modernisation process of all corps of the armed forces has been continuing and as part of that a good quantity of arms and equipment has been procured.

After independence, she said, the brave members of the armed forces played an important role in protecting the interests of the country and ensuring welfare of the nation during calamities and the time of distress.

She said members of the Bangladesh Armed Forces have been acclaimed everywhere in the world for successfully performing their duties in UN peace-keeping missions and hoped that they would be able to keep the reputation in the future.

The PM said the up-trend in sending military members to UN peacekeeping missions would continue in the future.

She recalled the role of the armed forces' members in checking terrorism by conducting the 'Operation Clean Heart'.

Khaleda also appreciated the elite force Rapid Action Battalion (Rab), consisting of army and police, for their role in improving the law and order situation.

Ministers and distinguished personalities also attended the darbar.



Participants of a roundtable on 'Reduction in election expenditure and quick disposal of election disputes: Essential Prerequisites for representative democracy' held at the conference room of The Daily Star in the city yesterday. Shushashoner Jonno Nagorik (Shujan) in association with the Prothom Alo and The Daily Star organised the roundtable. (Story on page 16)

9 killed in road accidents

STAR REPORT

At least nine people were killed and 48 injured in separate road accidents in six districts yesterday.

UNB adds: The general manager (GM) of a garment factory was killed in a road accident on the DIT road at Malibagh in the city yesterday.

Police and hospital sources said a speeding private car ran over Fazlur Rahman, 54, GM of Venice Garments, in front of Abul Hotel while he was crossing the road at about 9.30am.

Critically injured Fazlur was rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital where he succumbed to his injuries at noon.

Two people were killed on Dhaka-Mymensingh highway when a speeding bus rammed a rickshaw van at Habirbari area of Valuka Upazil in Mymensingh yesterday.

Police said the accident occurred when the Mymensingh-bound bus from Dhaka hit the rickshaw van at about 9.30am, leaving van driver Nurul Islam, 25, and its passenger Abul Kashem, 45, dead on the spot.

Police recovered the bodies and seized the bus. But the driver and helper of the bus managed to flee.

In Bogra, a schoolteacher was killed and six people were injured when an oil tanker lorry hit an auto-rickshaw and rickshaw van at Majhira on Dhaka-Bogra highway yesterday.

The deceased was identified as Abdul Aziz, 40, teacher of Bogra Police Line School and College.

The injured were admitted to Bogra CMH, Mohammad Ali Hospital and a local clinic. Of the injured, condition of one was stated to be critical.

Another report from Pabna adds: An ansar member was crushed under the wheels of a truck at Dashuria on Pabna-Ishwardi highway yesterday.

Our Manikganj Correspondent adds: Two people were killed and two others injured in a road accident on Dhaka-Aricha highway in Manikganj yesterday.

The dead were identified as Mosharaf Hossain, 45 and Humayun Kabir, 25, timber traders and residence of Kotwali Police Station in Jessore.

Police sources said the accident took place at around 3:00am when a Jessore-bound timber loaded pickup van hit a truck from behind on Tora Bridge under Ghior Police Station in Manikganj. Critically injured pickup van driver Litu, 30, and its helper Maruf, 20, were taken to the Manikganj Sadar Hospital and later shifted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital as their condition deteriorated.

The dead were going to Jessore from Dhaka after buying timber.

The bodies were taken to the Manikganj Sadar Hospital for autopsy.

Our correspondent from Cox's Bazar adds: A collage student was killed in a road accident yesterday when a truck hit him on Cox's Bazar Motel road in front of the Hotel Sea

Palace in the sea beach town Cox's Bazar.

The victim was identified as Shah Alam, 22, son of Munir Ahmed of village Sonarpara of Ukiya upazila.

Police said the truck hit Alam, a student of Cox's Bazar Government College, while he was crossing the road, leaving him dead on the spot.

A Correspondent from Comilla reports: One minor madrasa student was killed and 40 others were injured in a road accident on Dhaka-Shylet Highway at Vinglabari area in Debidwer upazila yesterday.

The dead was identified as Md Sakib Hossain, 9, a student of local madrasa and son of Abdul Jalil of Vinglabari village.

Local and police said, the accident occurred when a Comilla-bound passenger bus from Brahmanbaria fell into a ditch while trying to give passage to a private car near a bridge at Vinglabari, leaving Sakib dead on the spot and 40 others injured.

The critically injured were sent to different clinics and hospitals in Comilla.

Police sent the body to Comilla Medical College Hospital morgue for autopsy.

Police seized the bus while its driver managed to flee. A case was filed with the Dabidwer Police Station.

Rajshahi journo receives death threat

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Jahangir Alam Aakash, general secretary of Rajshahi Union of Journalists, has received a death threat from an unknown caller on Monday night.

The caller, identifying himself to be a follower of Dada Tapan of outlawed Purbo Banglar Communist Party, threatened to kill all his family members if he does not pay Tk 50,000.

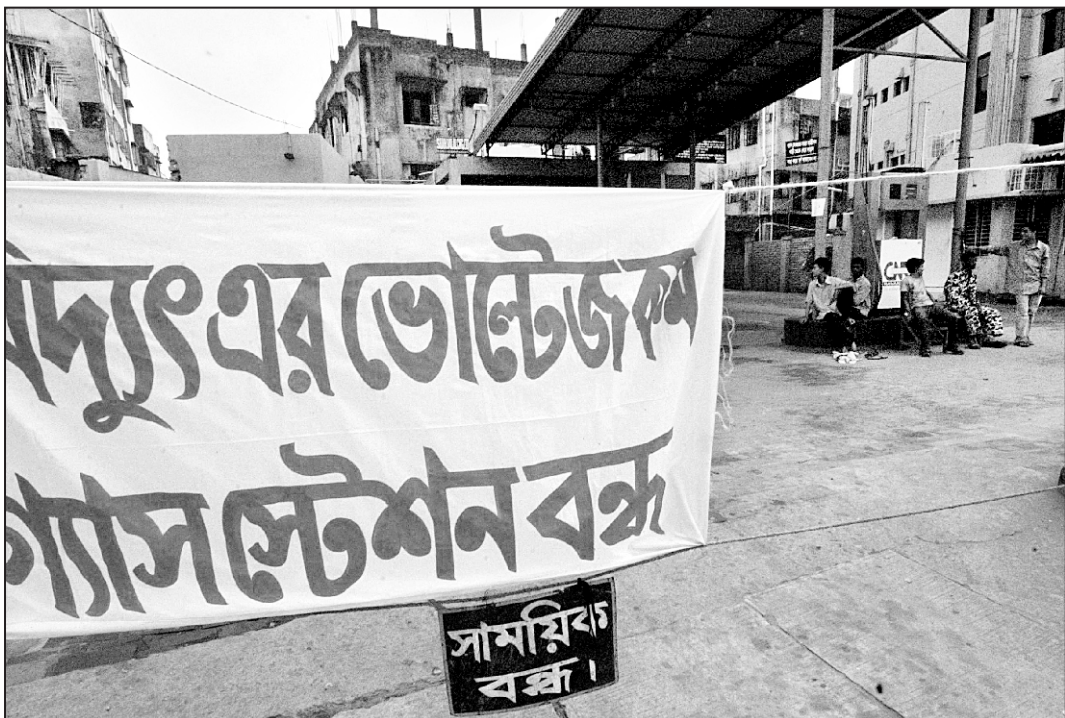
Aakash lodged a general diary with Boalia Police Station yesterday in this connection.

"We have learnt that you made a huge money. Our men from Madaripur are waiting near your home in Rajshahi. We don't shoot, we will slaughter you and all of your family members if you refuse to pay," he quoted the caller as saying over mobile phone.

The caller also told him that they need Tk 20 lakh for treatment of some of their fellow comrades and have collected Tk 18 lakh so far, said Aakash, a staff reporter of the daily Sangbad.

Aakash also works as a freelance correspondent of German Radio Deutsche Welle.

Aslam Iqbal, officer-in-charge of Boalia Police Station, said security measures were taken for the journalist after he had informed the police of the threat.



Workers of a CNG filling station at Kazi Para in Mirpur while away the time chatting yesterday as low voltage of electricity in the area forced the station to close for the time being.

HC stays eviction of sex workers for five days

UNB, Dhaka

A vacation bench of the High Court yesterday stayed until its reopening on October 15 the operation of the eviction of sex workers from Kandarpura brothel in Tangail.

Responding to a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) writ petition, jointly filed by Bangladesh Women Lawyers' Association and Nari Mukti Sangha, Justice Syed AB Mahmudul Haq passed the interim stay order upon the authorities concerned who launched the eviction drive without taking steps for the rehabilitation of the sex workers.

On October 7, at least 14 people were injured in clashes over eviction of the sex workers from the 150-year-old Kandarpura brothel in Tangail town.

The clashes took place between a section of local people and clerics and members of Nagorik Mancha (citizens' committee) who opposed the eviction without making any arrangements for rehabilitation of the sex workers.

The chairman of Tangail Pourashava led the local people under the banner of 'Brothel Eviction committee'.

Advocate Fowzia Karim with Sheema Zahur and Farida Khanam appeared before the court for the petitioners.

Distortion of history protested

RU CORRESPONDENT

'Awami Teachers, Officials and Employees Welfare Association' of Rajshahi University yesterday took out a protest procession on the campus protesting distortion of history of liberation war.

At the rally in front of Senate Building, speakers strongly protested and condemned the telecast of a documentary in the state-run Bangladesh Television distorting history of the liberation war and Bangabandhu.

The rally was addressed by the association's President Prof Muzaffar Hossain, Prof Abdul Latif, Muklesur Rahman and Chitta Ranjan Misra.

Power Cell DG removed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government yesterday cancelled the lien contract of Director General of the Power Cell BD Rahmatullah and replaced him with the cell's Commercial Director Abdul Mannan.

Being a temporary unit of the power ministry, the Power Cell is run by officials on lien from various government bodies.

Sources said the present officials and staffs of the cell were all set to serve their posts up to 2009.

However, BD Rahmatullah was served with a letter yesterday evening asking him to return to the Rural Electrification Board (REB) where he was working before coming to the power cell.

Sources said the director general's contract was extended to current month back in June, as he was leading tenders for a couple of large power projects.

In addition, the Special Project Evaluation Committee (SPEC) of

the government was scrutinising a proposal to extend the contracts of the current team till 2009.

Sources said the SPEC is set to okay the proposal next week.

Under pressure from the Prime Minister's Office (PMO), the power ministry last year removed the previous DG and elevated Rahmatullah to his place.

The past DG had angered the 'alternative powerhouse' of the government as he was following government rules and regulations in pursuing an unsolicited proposal on the Meghnaghat 3 power project.

The alternative powerhouse was asking the Power Cell to clear the project as it is.

However Rahmatullah also could not by-pass the rules and regulations of the government in dealing with the unsolicited proposal.

As a result, he too angered the alternative powerhouse, the sources added.

Natore BNP cadres snatch copies of Prothom Alo

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

BNP cadres yesterday burned a copy of the Prothom Alo and snatched all the copies from the local agents in Natore.

The incident occurred as the daily published a report headlined "All are dumb in the reign of Dulu."

The report depicts alleged patronisation of terrorism by Ruhul Kuddus Talukdar Dulu, deputy minister for land, who hails from Natore.

The BNP cadres have also threatened the district correspondent to 'teach him a lesson in time' for his help in preparing the report.

Mukhtar Hossain, Natore correspondent of the Prothom Alo, told The Daily Star that he is almost confined to his house following repeated threats over phone for the report.

When the Prothom Alo reached Natore at dawn, the BNP cadres swooped on all newspaper agents and snatched away all its copies.

Most of the agents shut down their shops as these were vandalised by BNP cadres.

The blackout of the newspaper in Natore increased its demand in Rajshahi where all copies were sold out by 11:00am.

However, the news item was copied in thousands from print and Internet editions in Rajshahi for distribution in Natore.

Bomb-like object panics RU campus

RU CORRESPONDENT

Panic gripped Rajshahi University (RU) campus following the recovery of a bomb-like object from Shahidullah Arts Building yesterday, a day after the hurling of a patrol bomb at the residence of former president of RU Teachers' Association.

Campus sources said some students noticed the object on a sunshade when they were entering the building from the dean's complex.

They informed Proctor Enamul Haque of the matter who accompanied by officer-in-charge of Mother police Ramzan Ali rushed to the spot.

They found the object wrapped with black tape and kept in a can with two wires coming out of it.

A bomb expert from the detective branch of police was called in for defusing the bomb.

He however said it was neither bomb nor cocktail.

The proctor told newsmen that a vested group might have kept it to create panic among the teachers and students.

No progress in probe: Meanwhile, police could not make any headway in the investigation of causes behind the throwing of the patrol bomb at the residence of Prof Nazrul Islam.

Unidentified assailants on Sunday midnight hurled petrol bomb at the residence of former president of Rajshahi University Teachers' Association (Ruta), a pro-Jamaat teacher of Accounting department.

RMG workers rampage again

FROM PAGE 1

workers attacked the ambulance and beat up the policemen again.

Roads in Uttara were opened for traffic around 1:00pm.

Mirpur

In Mirpur, security personnel employed by Mollah Market at Mirpur-12 fired four or five blank shots from their licensed shotguns when the protesters tried to attack the market that housed several garments factories.

Police clashed with the agitating workers at Shewrapara from 10:30am to 12:00 noon as the workers tried to attack some garment factories after the staff of a factory beat up two workers.

Police lobbed several teargas shells to disperse the workers.

Thousands of workers damaged barbed wires and uprooted fences of the city's road divider beautification scheme and went wild on the streets with truncheons in their hands," said witnesses.

A group of striking workers also attacked the double-decker bus

depot at Mirpur 12 at about 9:30am following information that the depot employees injured one of their fellow workers.

The government-appointed tripartite National Minimum Wage Board last Thursday formulated a proposal unanimously fixing the minimum wage for the workers of the export-oriented garment industry at Tk 1662.50 per month, widening the difference between the negotiating owners and workers.

However, some workers' organisations demanding Tk 3,000 per month as minimum wage called the strike in a delayed sequel to an unprecedented labour revolt in the export oriented industry that flared up from Dhaka Export Processing Zone and engulfed the industrial belts in and around the capital in May-June this year.

A number of garment factory owners said yesterday's violence is a conspiracy by a vested quarter to destroy the export-oriented garments industries of Bangladesh.

Meanwhile, different political and

workers' organisations condemned police atrocities on garment workers in different areas in the capital yesterday during the strike called by Garments Sramik Sangram Parishad.

The organisations that observed yesterday's strike are Garment Workers Unity Forum, Sramik Karmachari Sangram Parishad, Garments Sramik Sangram Parishad, Bangladesh National Garments Workers Employees League, Jago Bangladesh Garments Sramik Federation, Bangladesh Workers Party and five left leaning parties.

Savar

At least 50 garment workers were injured yesterday and 20 arrested as law enforcers and the agitating garment workers clashed at Savar and Ashulia, reports our JU correspondent.

The workers were demonstrating to enforce a strike called to protest the newly fixed minimum wage for RMG workers. Their demand includes Tk 3,000 as minimum wage.

More than 1,500 workers from different garment factories blockaded the Dhaka-Aricha and Nabinagar-Kaliakoir highways in the morning as part of the strike and vandalised about 30 to 35 vehicles.

Both highways remained snapped for about two hours while around a dozen of garment factories in the area came under attack of the protesters.

As the police intercepted the procession and clubbed the demonstrators, the workers vandalised numbers of factories nearby including Han Apparels Ltd and Cannon Apparels Ltd. They also vandalised a microbus belonging to the law enforcers.

It took around two hours for the law enforcers to have the situation under control. The clash left at least 30 workers injured.

"The workers have been arrested for blockading the highway, vandalising vehicles and creating disorder in normal life. Preparation is underway to file a case," said Akhtaruzzaman, officer in charge of Savar Police Station.

No incidence of violence was reported yesterday in Dhaka Export Processing Zone area.

Meanwhile, criminals vandalised a sweater factory at Durgapur in Ashulia and injured five people yesterday as the factory owner refused to pay Tk 5 lakh as toll.

WEATHER TODAY. Dry weather likely. Light to moderate rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty wind is likely at one or two places over Barisal, Chittagong and Sylhet divisions in the next 12 hours until 6:00pm today. Weather may remain mainly dry elsewhere over the country, Met Office said, predicting that day temperature may remain nearly unchanged over the country. Highest temperature 34.7 degree Celsius was recorded yesterday at Faridpur and lowest 23.4 degree Celsius at Srimongal. The sun sets in the capital at 5:36pm today and rises at 5:54am tomorrow. Highest and lowest temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were: City/Town Temperature in Celsius Humidity in percentage Morning Evening Dhaka 34.1 25.8 73 71 Chittagong 32.5 24.9 77 80 Rajshahi 34.0 24.8 83 82 Khulna 33.7 26.7 82 87 Barisal 34.0 25.4 76 81 Sylhet 34.2 25.4 76 75 Cox's Bazar 32.4 25.0 77 77

DHAKA TODAY. Interactive session: An interactive session for media professionals on 'Role of media in mainstreaming trade related issues' will be held. Venue: Dhaka Sheraton Hotel. Time: 10:30am. Workshop: Oxfam organises a workshop on 'System of rice intensification'. Venue: Department of Agriculture Extension, Khamarbari. Time: 10:00am. Seminar: Disaster Research Training and Management Centre, University of Dhaka, organises a seminar on 'Community and school: An essential development link for risk reduction'. Venue: Department of Geography and Environment. Time: 9:30am. Eid mela: The inaugural of ceremony of a two-day Eid Ananda Mela organised by The Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry (DCCI) will be held. Venue: DCCI Business Lounge. Time: 11:00am. View exchange: Sammita Sangskritik Jole organises a view exchange meeting on 'Neutral national election under caretaker government: role of the electronic media'. Venue: National Press Club. Time: 10:30am. View exchange: Samata will hold a view exchange meeting on 'Problems of marginalised sugarcane farmers and our duty'. Venue: YWCA. Time: 10:30am. Seminar: Bangladesh Forest Development Corporation will hold a seminar on 'Rubber in Bangladesh: A potential resource'. Venue: Cirdap. Time: 10:30am.

Facilities for non-immigrant visa seekers for Canada

UNB, Dhaka

The Canadian High Commission in Dhaka has announced that in Bangladesh, all applications for non-immigrant visas can now be submitted in Chittagong, Sylhet and Dhaka at the Visa Application Centres operated by VFS Bangladesh Pvt Ltd.

The one stop application centre will provide improved client services with a number of facilities, said a press release yesterday.

The facilities include fast track submission of completed application forms; pick up of passports after assessment by the High Commission of Canada; on site purchase of bank draft for processing fee; and on site client service to assist on reviewing application documents.

The release also mentioned that there would not be any change in Canadian Immigration rules, and the decision-making process for granting visas will remain with the High Commission.

Information regarding requirements of the immigration programme to Canada is available at the High Commission web: www.bangladesh.gc.ca.

The visa applications may be submitted at any of the three Visa Application Centres in Dhaka, Chittagong and Sylhet. The applications will then be forwarded by VFS daily to the High Commission for assessment.

An interview, if required, will be scheduled by VFS to be held at the High Commission in Dhaka. A fee of Tk 550 per passport or application will be charged by the VFS as processing charges.

Visa application centres: Chittagong - Chamber House (4th floor), 38 Agrabad C/A.

Sylhet - Garden Towers (1st floor), Shahjalil Bridge Link Road.

Dhaka - 'Taj Casalina', Apt 3C (2nd floor), House SW (1), 25 Gulshan Avenue, Gulshan I.