

Armed Forces Day observed

The Armed Forces Day was yesterday observed throughout the country with a renewed vow to safeguard the national independence and sovereignty, reports UNB.

The day's programme began with the offering of munajat after Fajr prayers in all cantonment mosques, naval ships and establishments as well as airforce bases across the country.

President Abdur Rahman Biswas, who is also the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, placed floral wreaths at the "Shikha Anirban", the Eternal Flame, in the morning.

He stood in solemn silence to pay homage to the members of the Armed Forces who had embraced martyrdom in the War of Liberation in 1971.

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia, who is also the Defence Minister, placed floral wreaths at the "Shikha Anirban" to pay her respect to the martyrs.

Chiefs of the three services and other senior armed forces officials were present. Smart contingents of Army, Navy and Air Force presented arm salute while the buglers were in tune with the last post on both the occasions.

Chief of Army Staff, Lt General Muhammad Noor Uddin Khan, Chief of the Naval Staff Rear Admiral Mohammad Moinul Islam and Chief of the Air Staff Air Vice Marshal Altaf Hossain Chowdhury also placed floral wreaths at the "Shikha Anirban" separately.

Principal Staff Officers and other senior officers of the three services were present during the wreath-laying by their respective chief of staff.

A reception to the next of kin of those who had received gallantry awards "Bir Sreshtho"

was held at the Prime Minister's Office, Armed Forces Division at Dhaka Cantonment.

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia met the nearest ones of Shaheed Bir Sreshtho Captain Mohiuddin Zahangir, Sepoy Mostafa Kamal, Sepoy Hamidur Rahman, Ruhul Amin ER-1, Flight Lt M Matur Rahman, Lance Naik Nur Mohammad Sheikh and Lance Naik Munshi Abdur Rouf.

Among others, the three Chiefs, Defence Secretary, BDR Director General and PSO of the Armed Forces Division were present on the occasion.

A reception to the next of kin of Bir Sreshtho and Bir Uttam as well as the soldiers who had received the gallantry award Bir Uttam was held at the Army Headquarters.

The three Chiefs hosted separate receptions to the relatives of the Shaheed Bir Sreshtho at respective headquarters. They presented some gifts to each of the Shaheed families. The Principal Staff Officers and other senior officers were also present.

The Chiefs of the three services paid a courtesy call on President Abdur Rahman Biswas at Bangabhaban and stayed with him for some time. Defence Secretary Hasinur Rahman, Secretary to the President Ataul Haq and the Military Secretary to the President Major General Muhammad Ghulam Mowla were present.

The three Chiefs also paid courtesy call on Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia at the Armed Forces Division and stayed with her for some time. Defence Secretary Hasinur Rahman and Principal Staff Officer of the Armed Forces Division Major General MSA Bhuiyan were present.



Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Sheikh Hasina held a meeting with leaders of all opposition parties in Parliament except the Jamaat-e-Islami at her Jatiya Sangsad chamber yesterday. —Star photo

Discussion on PM's remarks

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The brief one-hour, 15-minute session was ended at around 5-15 pm after the question-answer session and Nasim's speech.

This is the 12th session of the fifth Parliament.

Four ordinances, promulgated by the President since the last session, were laid before the House.

Almost all the members attended yesterday's opening sitting. The visitors galleries, too, were full.

Minister for Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Mirza Golam Hafiz tabled one ordinance related to the service conditions of the workers of the nationalised industrial establishments and three others related to the three Hill-Tracts district councils of Rangamati, Khagrachhari and Bandarban.

Earlier, at a meeting in the Chamber of the Leader of the Opposition, the Opposition parties in Parliament agreed to press for four identical demands — fresh elections under a caretaker government, a probe into

alleged corruption in the Ministry of Irrigation, the Opposition parties decided that any national election should be held under an interim government.

The government must resign before the next national elections," one AL source who attended the meeting said, adding that "No election will be fair under this government."

Three separate bills have been submitted by the AL, the JP and Jamaat members proposing mid-term elections under a care-taker government.

Reactions from the ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) were not immediately available.

Meanwhile, the Jatiya Party parliamentary wing chief Moudud Ahmed clarified the JP's position about Opposition unity at a press conference after the adjournment of yesterday's session.

He said that the JP was always in favour of a greater Opposition unity against the "misrule" of the present government.

12 hurt in Sylhet as JCD-Jubodal attack JP office

From Our Correspondent

SYLHET, Nov 21: Twelve persons, including five policemen, were injured today when activists of the pro-BNP Jatiyatbadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) and Jubodal attacked the local Jatiya Party (JP) office in the town after holding a rally in violation of the Section 144.

The district administration had earlier imposed Section 144 forbidding the assembly of more than four persons in the town and its suburbs after the JP and the JCD and Jubodal convened clashing programmes at the same venue.

The JP convened a workers' meeting at the Saroda Hall here at 11 am today, while the JCD and Jubodal also convened a joint meeting at the same venue. The authorities clamped Section 144 from 10 am today till further orders apprehending a deterioration of the law and order situation in the town.

The JCD and Jubodal held a meeting and brought out a procession at about 11 in the morning.

When the procession was passing through the Surma Market area, the offices of the district JP and its youth front Juba Sanghati were attacked with stones and bricks. An Uttara Bank branch located in the same premises also came under the attack in which its doors, windows and furniture were damaged.

The 12 injured persons were given first aid at the Medical College Hospital.

During the attack, at least twenty crackers were exploded. Police had to live rounds of tear-gas shells and two rounds of rubber bullets to disperse the processionists.

The JP workers later held a protest meeting at the residence of MA Mukit Khan MP, president of the district unit, where he blamed the JCD and Jubodal for the attack and demanded punishment of those responsible for the incident.

Dowdeswell assures PM

UNEP to help preserve environment

The visiting Under-Secretary General of the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), Ms Elizabeth Dowdeswell yesterday said her organisation would provide every assistance to help Bangladesh in preserving environment, reports BSS.

Indo-Bangla border confce begins tomorrow

MULNA, Nov 21: A three-day border coordination conference between Bangladesh and India will begin here on November 23, a press release of the Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) said today, reports BSS.

The Bangladesh delegation will be led by Brigadier T U Muhammad Iftakharul Bashar, Deputy Director General of Bangladesh Rifles.

Matters relating to smuggling, law and order situation in border areas, miscreants activities, violation of border guidelines, kidnaping, killing, dacoity, maintenance of border pillars and allied matters will also be discussed among other subjects.

BSF bid to push in 50 foiled

SATKHIRA, Nov 21: Indian Border Security Force made abortive attempts November 19-20 to push about 50 Bengali-speaking Muslims into Bangladesh through the Bhomra frontier, reports UNB.

PM: Armed Forces

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The Prime Minister, who is also the Defence Minister, said democracy had been established in the country after a long drawn struggle. Development and progress were the safeguards for the democracy, we can protect independence and democracy by taking part in nation-building activities, she added.

Begum Zia paid her tributes to the freedom fighters and remembered the martyrs saying their sacrifice and patriotism would remain as a source of our inspiration.

The reception hosted by Prime Minister Begum Zia was attended by Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina, ministers, Deputy Leader of the House Badruddoza Chowdhury, Abdus Samad Azad MP, Matur Rahman, Nizam MP, Rashed Khan Menon MP and other members of Parliament.

On her arrival at the Senakunja, the Prime Minister was received by chiefs of three services and PSO to the Prime Minister.

The assurance came when Ms Dowdeswell who is also Under-Secretary General for the United Nations Centre for Human Settlement (Habitat) met the Prime Minister at her office.

The UNEP official expressed her concern at the ecological imbalance caused at the northern and southern areas of the Bangladesh. The imbalance was caused by shortage of water in the areas during the dry season.

Ms Dowdeswell appreciated the Prime Minister's personal concern for the global environment protection which had been highlighted in Begum Zia's speech in the United Nations General Assembly and on other occasions.

She also praised Begum Zia's personal initiative for human resource development especially in the fields of women's development, population control and childcare.

Discussing the development programme taken by her government Begum Zia said, "We want to strengthen the development infrastructure in the rural areas for ensuring balanced progress of the nation which is a prerequisite for environment protection."

Begum Zia said the country's tree plantation programme had already started to yield multifarious benefits besides protecting environment.

The Prime Minister sought the help of the UNEP in popularising the use of country's jute products which is environmentally friendly than the synthetic fibres and plastic products.

Biman rejoinder

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The technical offers received from eleven firms were evaluated and on the basis of evaluation, four firms were short-listed, as reported. The financial offers of these four firms are now under evaluation. On the basis of results of the evaluation of both the technical and the financial offers, the offers will be examined by the Board of Directors of Biman for consideration by the Ministry of Civil Aviation & Tourism who will in turn take necessary steps to obtain a final decision from the Council Committee on Purchase of the Government.

"It is further mentioned here that as per terms and conditions of the tender, a bid shall only be accepted if the technical offers conform to the tender specifications and financial offers are beneficial and suitable to the organisation.

"It is, therefore, premature at this stage to say 'Doubts cloud Biman's Airbus buying procedure.'"

PM: Nepal

From Page 1 Col 5

Nepalese counterpart. The SAARC Chairperson, will visit the SAARC Secretariat during her stay in the capital of Himalayan Kingdom.

The Prime Minister will also address the concluding session of the three-day SAARC ministerial level conference on women and health on November 23 at Kathmandu. Prime Minister of Nepal Koirala inaugurated the conference there yesterday.

Besides, Begum Zia will address the members of the Nepalese Chambers.

The Prime Minister will also call on the Monarch of the Himalayan Kingdom King Birendra.

During her visit, Leader of the Opposition of Nepalese Parliament Manamohan Adhikari and former Prime Minister and the President of the Nepal Congress Krishnaprasad Bhatta Ray will call on Begum Zia.

The Prime Minister is expected to return home on November 24.

Environment project

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hensive framework to materialise the environment policy. The NEMAP project will lead to drawing up of inventories of natural resources, sensitive ecosystems, chemicals used and their known effects, etc. These are considered to be the basic building blocks for an action plan for management of the environment. All this aside, having a NEMAP is also required to be eligible for continued aid from several donors.

The NEMAP preparatory project is being implemented with financial assistance from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The assistance of 130 thousand dollars was finalised in September 1990. The project was due to be completed in nine months by the Ministry of Environment and Forests.

Delay in implementation of the NEMAP preparatory project started right from Day One. Mobilisation of consultants for the project was delayed until December 1990. The first draft NEMAP was submitted to the Ministry of Environment in September 1991. The ministry took more than one year to complete the process of consultation over the draft.

The consequent time overrun has led to an increase in project cost. The Environment ministry took until April 1993 to request for an increase in the budgeted expenditure. But, it was not until end September 1993 when the ministry submitted full documentation to support its request for budget revision. Sources in the Planning Commission inform that the Ministry of Environment's request is currently at the final stages of processing. The same sources informed that a new deadline of December 31, 1993 has been set for NEMAP finalisation.

JS probe committee

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The meeting also assigned six of the committee members — three each from the treasury and Opposition benches — to prepare two separate documents containing their respective arguments vis-a-vis the terms of reference.

Mohammad Nasim of the AL, Rashed Khan Menon of the Workers' Party and Suranjit Sengupta of the Gonotantri Party will prepare the Opposition's version while Education Minister Jamiruddin Sircar, State Minister for Civil Aviation Abdul Mannan and State Minister for Establishment Barister Aminul Haque have been given the responsibility of putting down on paper the ruling party's views. Both the reports are supposed to be completed by the 30th of this month and a final 'primary report' will be prepared on the basis of these two reports.

The probe, formed following allegations made against the ministry and the minister concerned by Tofael Ahmed of the AL, was originally proposed by the treasury bench as a

challenge to the Opposition claim.

A 423-page minutes of the deliberations by the committee members have so far been compiled without an agreement on the terms of the body's reference.

According to meeting sources, Rashed Khan Menon yesterday proposed that Tofael Ahmed and Majid-ul Haque, the accuser and the accused, be called by the committee for separate hearings. Menon argued that this might help the committee resolve the crisis over terms of reference.

But the proposal was rejected by a treasury bench member who felt it irrelevant before the start of investigations.

Barrister Jamiruddin Sircar, Barrister Rafiqul Islam Miah, Barrister Aminul Haque and Abdul Mannan represented the treasury bench in yesterday's sitting while the Opposition was represented by Mohammad Nasim, Barrister Moudud Ahmed, Matur Rahman Nizami and Rashed Khan Menon.

Owners of sick units condemn BSRS

By Staff Correspondent

The BSRS Entrepreneurs' Forum, at a meeting Sunday, demanded waiving of the conditionalities imposed by the Bangladesh Shilpa Rin Sangstha (BSRS) for the rehabilitation of the sick industries.

The forum alleged that the BSRS was not materialising the decisions of the review committee for the sick industries, and was taking repressive measures against the sick units by using Article 33 and 34 of the BSRS Order.

Presided over by its convenor Habibur Rahman, the meeting was addressed, among others, by Mirza Abu Mansur, Nurul Islam.

The Forum also expressed deep condolences at the deaths of Ashraf Uddin Chowdhury and KM Rahman, owners of Hafiz Ice and Cold Storage and Bandishahi Cold Storage respectively, who reportedly had died recently of heart failure after taking over their projects by the BSRS.

Licences

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M/S Famous International, Bobby Associates, Eastern Business Associates, Al Bayat International, Al Maruf International Company, Gazzali International, Al Amin International Agency, Young Star Syndicate, Sunrise International Ltd, the Khaja Recruiting International Agency Bangladesh, Rajdhani Overseas, Red Rose International, Redios International, Link*Up International, Metropolitan International, Personal Services Bureau, Mahub International, Gulf International Service, Babylon (BD) Ltd, Homeland Trade International and Lucky International.

The meeting also demanded re-organisation of the Board of Directors of the BSRS, saying that the present management had failed to take any appropriate measures regarding the sick industries.

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Ershad's lawyers decline to attend court

Lawyers defending former President Hussain Muhammad Ershad yesterday declined to attend the court trying him on various charges of corruption and misuse of power for alleged harassment meted to them and not allowing them to have exclusive meeting with their client (Ershad), reports BSS.

The former President, who has been convicted and sentenced to twenty years of jail in three cases, was produced before the Special Judge's court headed by District and Sessions Judge Mohammad Ali Khan. Charge hearing of two cases — both relating to corruption and hearing of a prayer by the prosecution demanding further investigation in another case were fixed for the day.

The Midnight File

Indian peacekeeper killed in Somalia

MOGADISHU, Nov 21: An Indian soldier serving in the UN peacekeeping force in Somalia was killed when his gun fired accidentally, a UN spokeswoman said today. The soldier was on exercise with his unit in the town of Baidoa on Saturday, she said. He was the first Indian soldier to die in Somalia. The country contributes a 4,937-strong contingent to the mission, reports Reuter.

Nigerian labour unions call off strike

LAGOS, Nigeria, Nov 21: Labour unions called off their nationwide strike on Sunday after the new military dictatorship, apparently trying to quell public outrage, slashed a new fuel price increase. National Labour Congress officials said that Gen. Sani Abacha, who seized power Wednesday by ousting the civilian government of Ernest Shonekan, agreed to reduce prices imposed two weeks ago for gasoline, kerosene and diesel fuel, reports AP.

US Congress okays \$ 28 b intelligence budget

WASHINGTON, Nov 21: Congress has approved an estimated 28-billion-dollar intelligence budget that includes funding for the CIA and other spy activities. The details of the budget were kept top secret, but published reports estimated the figure being spent on intelligence was 28 billion US dollars. The measure passed the House of representatives and senate with voice votes Saturday, reports AFP.

Bank interest rates

From Page 1 Col 7
'dead organisation'. Its officials are doing nothing for enhancing the use of jute, they only think about their salary and facilities," he added.

Turning on various problems regarding bank interests, the Finance Minister assured the jute traders of holding soon a tripartite meeting of the ministry, the banks and the representatives of the association to thrash the problems.

Emphasising creation of a favourable environment for foreign investment in the country, Saifur Rahman said foreign investors, including the Japanese, were afraid of investing here due to hartals and strikes.

The country has achieved a macro-economic stability and is carrying on different reforms programmes in the economic sector, but the country is deprived of the fruit of these reforms due to social unrest," he said, adding "we have to create a social tension-and-hartal-free society."

He said his election in the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) is the recognition of the country's success in the economic sector.

Economic success or failure depends on the political activities, he said, urging the political parties not to throw political programmes which tarnish the image of the country.

Commerce Minister Shamsul Islam said the current situation of the jute sector is the consequence of wrong policies pursued by the past autocratic government.

He hoped that the lost glory of jute, would be redeemed very soon and the country would be able to earn the highest amount of foreign exchange.

Earlier, in his address of welcome, BJA Chairman Rezaul Karim urged the government to waive 100 per cent of the penal interest and 75 per cent of simple interest on their default loan.

He also urged the government for holding up the cases against the jute traders and finding out a way of refunding the principal to the banks.

Armed youths go on rampage in city

By Staff Correspondent

A group of armed men fired blank shots and exploded crackers in the city's New Elephant Road yesterday afternoon.

Witnesses said at around 4 pm, a group of youngsters, who identified themselves as students, went on a rampage after an altercation with a shop-keeper of a garments shop at the Alpina Plaza over the purchase of a jacket.

The armed men fired four shots and exploded several crackers on the road and damaged the windshield of a passing car.

They fled when police rushed to the scene. No casualties were reported.

UNEP: water talks

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Rafiqul Islam Mia, Environment Minister Akbar Hossain and State Minister for Irrigation Mosharraf Hossain Shahjahan.

She informed newsmen that the environmental issues, including the water-sharing problem, were among the topics she discussed with the Prime Minister.

Appreciating the PM's speech at the United Nations General Assembly last month, which focussed on the Farakka issue, Ms Dowdeswell said, "The Prime Minister is not only very articulate, but she feels very strongly about the issue of environment and the issue of water-sharing in particular."

The UNEP-Habitat chief mentioned that during her talks with Begum Zia, she offered her organisation's assistance to resolve the problem.

She said that the UN and the UNEP can assist the countries of the region to help initiate dialogue on the development and sharing of the common rivers if the countries concerned so desire.

Card-phones in Zinjira

By Staff Correspondent

Post and Telecommunications Minister Tariqul Islam yesterday inaugurated two card-phones at Zinjira under Keraniganj thana. The minister formally opened the phones by making a customary call to the Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia.

After the inauguration, at an informal gathering condemned the minister Awami League (AL) chief Sheikh Hasina's utterances against the Prime Minister in Saturday's public rally which he said was in bad taste.

Islam said Hasina has degraded her own status by making such 'arbitrary' statements. He said Hasina is trying to project herself as the lone literate person in the Awami League after getting rid of the more literate leaders.

Meanwhile, with the installation of the new card-phones, the number of card-phones rose to 248 in the country.

Prime Minister Begum Zia, while talking to the minister, hoped that the phones would serve the common people who do not own personal telephones.

Ctg chamber to set up World Trade Centre

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Nov 21: The Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industry plans to set up a 'World Trade Centre' here at a cost of Taka 15 crore.

The president of Chittagong Chamber S M Abul Kalam made this announcement at a press briefing in connection with the six-day 'Chittagong Industrial Fair-93', beginning November 23 at the Chittagong Stadium Gymnasium.

The Chittagong Chamber will provide the project cost from its own funds to build the centre aimed at promoting the country's trade activities, Kalam said.

The project site has already been selected and its foundation is expected to be laid in January, the chamber chief added.

He also announced that the Chamber had decided to set up a 'Plated Industrial Bloc' here to help install small and medium scale industries, in line with the Singapore and Taiwan models.

At the 'Industrial Fair-93', 75 stalls displaying various local products from across the country will be on show.

He could not be precise to any of the supplementary questions and at one stage expressed his ignorance about the most debated paracetamol.

He asked the questioner Fazeel Rabbi of Jatiya Party to provide information about a company so that the ministry could take action against it.

The Speaker then salvaged the Minister saying that 'the paracetamol case is lying with your ministry. You please check the file.'

Unprepared minister

Deputy Minister for Health Sirajul Haque yesterday replied to most of the health-related questions seemingly in an unprepared manner.

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