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Major reshuffle in army command

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

There has been a major reshuffle at the command level in three out of seven divisions of Bangladesh Army.

According to sources, a new Special Security Force (SSF) chief, entrusted with the security of the president and the prime minister, has also been appointed.

Brigadier General Shikder Muhammad Shahabuddin, formerly commander of the Mirpur Artillery Brigade and officer of the now-defunct Rakshi Bahini, takes over the SSF helm from Major General N A Rafiqul Islam.

General Rafiq takes charge as the area commander of Mymensingh to replace Major General Abu Tayeb M Zahirul Alam, becoming the first Rakshi Bahini officer to command a division. General Alam has been assigned as the Rangpur area commander, in place of Major General Abdul Matin who proceeds to the Chittagong Division.

General Matin, in command of the Rangpur division since his return from New Delhi where he had served as the country's defence adviser, replaces Major General Fazlur Kabir.

General Kabir has earlier been made commandant of the National Defence College.

JS session may be prorogued today

UNB, Dhaka

The winter session of parliament is likely to be prorogued today.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is expected to deliver her winding-up speech in the House on the thanks motion on the President's New Year address to the parliament on the concluding day, sources said.

INSIDE TODAY

ARTICLE

Religiously Unreligious

Kuldp Nayar writes from New Delhi

FOCUS

Beyond international development assistance

	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
Jan 31		5.44 pm
Feb 1	6-40 am	

Prayer Timings		
January 31		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fazr	5-30	6-10
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-015	4-30
Maghrib	5-40	5-45
Esha	7-15	7-45
Source: Islamic Foundation		

Quake toll may hit 100000

Food riot in Gujarat, thousands flee Ahmedabad

AP, Anjar

The chances of pulling more survivors from beneath the wreckage of India's killer earthquake dwindled to near zero yesterday.

The country's defense minister estimated 100,000 people may have died in the disaster.

Aid from around the world poured into western India. Pakistan also sent an air force plane loaded with tents and blankets.

Thousands of people have fled Ahmedabad, the biggest city in Gujarat, following widespread fears of fresh tremors.

"Yes, there are confirmed reports that people are leaving. We cannot stop people from going," Ahmedabad Police Commissioner PC Panday told Reuters.

Meanwhile food riots have broken out and gangs were on looting sprees in Gujarat.

The Times of India newspaper reported that survivors of the quake in the worst-hit district of Kutch had begun looting truck carrying food and other relief supplies.

The victims were waylaying relief vehicles on the roads to the worst-affected areas of Bhuj, Bachchau, Rapar and Anjar in Kutch, the newspaper said.

Armed gangs had also begun attacking quake survivors in many areas to steal jewellery and cash, eyewitnesses said. In one incident the robbers stole jewellery worth about 7.5 million rupees, reports said.

Friday's magnitude-7.9 quake flattened two towns in India's western Gujarat state, and government officials have counted 6,444 bodies so far, SEE PAGE 11 COL 3



One-year-old boy Kayoor (C) receives treatment at a hospital in Ahmedabad after he and his mother Niliniben Kumbhare were freed from the debris of their flat yesterday, more than 100 hours after the massive earthquake.

Assault on newsman

Feni police yet to register case filed by victim

UNB, Dhaka

Feni police are yet to register the case filed by Tipu Sultan who was mercilessly beaten up allegedly by the cadres of Jaynal Hazari MP on January 25.

Tipu filed the case with Feni thana through Tejgaon police station in Dhaka as he is now undergoing treatment at Orthopaedic (Pangu) Hospital.

Meanwhile, hospital sources said Tipu is to undergo another operation tomorrow as the condition of his left hand is critical.

After the incident, Bidhan Majumdar Suman, a journalist working in Hazari's local weekly, filed a case with Feni Sadar thana on behalf of the victim.

In the case, he accused some local BNP activists and former followers of Hazari.

Raising the plea of the previous case, police are yet to register the case by Tipu who narrated the incident of the torture by Hazari's cadres. In his complaint, Tipu said it was Bidhan Majumdar who identified him to the armed terrorists.

DCC's mockery of mosquito control

RAZIUR RAHMAN

Mosquito menace is increasing gradually in the city, making a mockery of Dhaka City Corporation's (DCC) 'accelerated' mosquito control drive.

The menace started with the advent of dry season and has now reached an intolerable level, residents in different areas complained.

Alongside, sale of mosquito coil, mat, sprayer and mosquito net has shot up as the city dwellers find themselves under the threat of dengue fever, market sources said.

According to official estimate, 98 people died from dengue in the city since mid-July last year.

Unofficial estimate put the figure at 200.

Many residents at Sobhanbagh, Kalyanpur, Kathalbagh, Mogbazar, Kalabagan, Green Road, Khilgaon, Nakhapara, Baily Road, Jatrabari, Mirpur while talking to The Daily Star expressed their concern and anguish over the increasing mos

SEE PAGE 11 COL 7



STAR PHOTO

Promise to give documents on Magurchhara blow-out

STAR REPORT

The parliamentary sub-committee probing the Magurchhara blow-out and compensation was assured yesterday that it would be provided with necessary documents, including the original probe committee report which is "missing" for long.

The assurance came from Energy Secretary Akmal Hossain at a meeting of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources.

The Energy Secretary also told the meeting that the original probe committee report on the 1997 blow-out at Magurchhara gas filed was "shelved carefully" by some high officials.

Even the Prime Minister who holds the charge of the energy ministry has never seen the report, he said.

Members of the sub-committee at an earlier meeting requested the Standing Committee to disband the sub-committee as it was not getting any cooperation from the ministry.

The Sub-Committee members took the decision following their last meeting on January 3 in which they came to know that officials of US oil

3 Bangladeshis to die in Kuwait for rape, murder

AFP, Kuwait city

Kuwait's court of appeals has sentenced to death three Bangladeshi men for the rape and murder of a Sri Lankan woman, overturning a life sentence, a newspaper reported yesterday.

The court reached its verdict on Monday after convicting the defendants of "premeditated murder", Al-Qabas reported, without giving their names or saying when the crimes took place.

Under Kuwaiti law, death penalties must be confirmed by the cassation court and ratified by Emir Sheikh Jaber al-Ahmad al-Sabah, who has the power to commute sentences.

company Unocal (previously Occidental) were not attending its meeting with permission from the Prime Minister and that the ministry was deliberately delaying hand-over of the original probe committee report.

At yesterday's meeting, one member said the Prime Minister was not properly informed about the issue. That's why there has been some "misunderstanding".

The misunderstanding will be over, the member told The Daily Star.

The meeting was presided over by Committee Chairman Chief Whip Abul Hasnat Abdullah. The meeting was of short duration and did not take up other issues on the agenda.

Earlier, Unocal puzzled the sub-committee members as well as the Petrobangla by claiming in an official document in October last year that the company had paid Tk 332.32 crore as compensation following the blow-out.

This prompted arguments between Unocal and Petrobangla.



Bomb hoax yet again...

Anxious students wait outside the Dhaka Medical College after a bomb scare led to suspension of classes and examinations yesterday. Upon being informed, police carried out a thorough search but couldn't find any explosive.

Red-tapism thwarts thrust sector

Fate of Dutch grant for IT education hangs in balance

NAZRUL ISLAM

Although the government has identified Information Technology (IT) as a thrust sector, introduction of computer courses at secondary and higher secondary levels in the country has become uncertain due to bureaucratic tangles, especially in the Ministry of Education.

The fate of a Tk 49.95 crore Dutch grant for "Computer Education Programme" is hanging in the balance as the education ministry raised questions on the 'price offer' by a Dutch company designated to implement the projects under the ORET programme of The Netherlands government, sources in the ministry said.

The grant is for five projects for introducing computer education in schools and colleges. Dutch computer manufacturer Tulip Computer International BV was supposed to supply 10,388 sets of personal computer to 3382 educational institutions by March this year.

The sources pointed out that while the government projects failed to achieve target within the stipulated time, the Dutch grant for computer education may also be withdrawn due to 'bureaucratic attitude' of education ministry officials. "As result, about 1,00,000 students

may be deprived of the opportunity of having computer education per year," one source added.

Meanwhile, a Task Force headed by the Prime Minister was formed and import duty on computer was lifted to speed up spread of IT education and build a IT-based job market in the country. But the government steps are yet to bring desired results.

About five years back, the education ministry had taken up the five projects involving Tk 125 crore for introduction of computer course both in government and private schools and colleges. No computer has been given to any school or college till now although Tk 25 crore was already spent, sources said.

Following a proposal from the Economic Relations Division (ERD), the Netherlands government agreed to provide the grant of Tk 49.95 crore for supply of one computer, one printer and an Uninterrupted Power Supply (UPS) device to each educational institution under the project.

After a series of discussions with Bangladesh government, the Dutch government selected Tulip Computer

SEE PAGE 11 COL 7

Report on Ershad's pre-takeover activities not submitted

JS body also to probe Nasim's coup bid

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A sub-committee of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on the Ministry of Defence will probe the activities of General H M Ershad before his takeover of state power in 1982 and the coup bid by General Nasim in 1996.

This was decided at a meeting of the Standing Committee on Monday with Lt. Gen. (Retd) K M Shafiqullah in the chair.

Earlier, the committee asked the Ministry of Defence to submit detailed reports on the two issues at its January 2 meeting.

But the defence ministry did not submit detailed reports on Ershad's pre-takeover activities, as required by the committee.

A single-page letter from the Army Headquarters sent to the Committee meeting said most of the

then officers are now on retirement. There is no document available with the Army Headquarters regarding violation of the Army Act by the then Army Chief H M Ershad, it said.

A report was submitted on the 1996 coup attempt by the then Army Chief Abu Saleh Mohammad Nasim, who was subsequently sacked by the then President.

The report said some eight officers were sacked and later seven others were given forced retirement as a result of "contradiction between then President Abdur Rahman Biswas and Chief of Staff Nasim".

Headed by Col. (Retd) Shawkot Ali, the sub-committee will go for separate investigations into the two issues.

The sub-committee would look into the pre-takeover activities of Ershad between May 30, 1981 and March 23, 1982, when he was Chief

of Army Staff.

Committee member Golam Mohammad Qader, younger brother of Ershad, protested the decision.

At Monday's meeting, members from the ruling and the opposition parties were locked in a debate over some defence purchases, including the purchase of Mig-29 aircraft.

The members belonging to the Opposition wanted to see the copy of the purchase contract. But the Defence Secretary termed it "confidential" and said none but the Committee chairman is allowed to see the copy right now. The copy would be available later, he said.

The meeting was attended by, among others, Chief Whip Abul Hasnat Abdullah, Col. (Retd) Shawkot Ali, Lt. Col. (Retd) Faruk Khan of Awami League, Prof. Rezaul Karim of BNP and G M Qader of Jatiya Party.