

Army drive to go on as long as required

Home minister tells JS
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Home Minister Altaf Hossain Chowdhury yesterday said that the ongoing joint drive against crime is being conducted neutrally and would continue as long as it is required.

The joint operation by the army, the paramilitary Bangladesh Rifles, the police and the ansars has resulted in substantial improvement of law and order across the country, he told the Jatiya Sangsad while making a statement under section 300 of the Rules of Procedure.

He also claimed that people from all walks of life have appreciated the ongoing anti-crime. It has also won acclaim abroad, the home minister added.

Altaf informed the House that some 1,000 illegal weapons and 30,000 rounds of ammunition have been recovered and as many as 5,500 people, including many wanted criminals, arrested during the drive.

8 'sportsmen' held at ZIA as suspected criminals

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Eight youths who claimed to be sportsmen were arrested at the Zia International Airport yesterday minutes before they were to fly to Slovenia to join a judo-karate competition on suspicion that two of them are close associates of Kala Jahangir, a top criminal.

The arrestees are Hasan Ahmed of Sylhet, Kawzar Ahmed of Barigram, Jewel Rana of Durgapur, Mehedi Hasan of Bonadhar, Sujjan Islam of Rajshahi, Shipar Ahmed Moulavibazar, Mustafizur Rahman of Comilla and Ruhul Amin of Galatikor.

"They were arrested for failing to show any valid documents," an immi-

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Army to act on 7 types of complaints

UNB, Dhaka

The army has set seven criteria for people to drop allegations into information boxes.

The troops, now on a country-wide joint-drive to nab criminals and recover illegal arms, have requested the people not to submit any allegation out of personal rivalry.

"To make the drive effective, all concerned are requested to drop information only about criminals, holders of illegal arms, acid attackers, extortionists, musclemen, killers and rapists into the information boxes set up at army camps,"

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Desperate reliance on Sangu

Any hitch in gas supply may cripple Ctg

SHARIER KHAN

The government's failure to undertake minor gas projects in time has left Chittagong dangerously dependent on the Sangu gas field.

Should the Sangu field suspend output, industrial activities, fertiliser production and gas-fired power generation in the entire region would come to a screeching halt.

Sangu's operator Shell Oil has already sought a ten-day production reprieve in February next to repair its offshore pipeline.

During that period, top Petrobangla sources fear, the bulk gas-based operation would have to remain suspended as there would only be skeleton alternative arrangement for gas supply.

Besides, the Sangu field, which has increased production by at least 40 million cubic feet a day over the last two months, runs the risk of sudden malfunction.

The offshore field's 45-kilometre pipeline in the Bay of Bengal faces the danger of a breakdown.

Gas reserve experts at Petrobangla fear the increased production since September could tell on Sangu's gas field structure.

However, Shell Oil claims there is nothing to worry about.

"Sangu has successfully undergone a seven-day test run before it started producing up to 180mmcfcd gas for Chittagong," a Shell official said.

Since 1998, production from the Sangu field has been interrupted more than 40 times for technical reasons.

Some Petrobangla experts fear similar technical failure may occur again.

The Shell official, however, begs to differ. "Those interruptions were during the initial period of operations. Now, the system is functioning

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Dhaka was once a city of green and gaiety. Well, no more. It has become more a city of chaotic concrete and blistering billboards, with every available open space swallowed. There is neither a guideline nor any monitoring as to who is erecting what. The Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) is happy as long as it gets revenues.

Blinding billboards

SABRINA KARIM

You may look out for the azure in the expanse of the heavens or the lush green of the trees in this choking city of concrete. You might be craving to see the twinkling stars at night.

You'd better forget about that. All that your eyes can home in on is nothing but billboards, banners, festoons or the razzmatazz of neon signs. The capital that was once known as the city of mosque has turned into a city of advertisement that gives a feeling that the whole city is up for sale.

However commercial or residential the area may be, the advertisers are grabbing every nook and cranny to blaze their products or business. Multinational companies, corporate houses, social organisations and even schools and colleges are eager to keep consumers abreast of their services and product line.

No less than 6,949 of different types of billboards in the city have been erected with the approval of the Dhaka City Corporation (DCC). However, unauthorised billboards outnumber them by far.

The major city thoroughfares are crammed with a variety of advertisements. Take a look at such places as Farm Gate, Gulistan, Mouchak-Shantinagar crossing or in front of Hotel Sonargaon, and billboards, neon signs, tin or bell signs galore to dazzle your vision.

And then there are colourful advertisements on the overhead signposts and the footbridges. Even

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'Nosey' World Bank gets the flak

Saifur doubts aid efficacy over three decades, warns against rash liberalisation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A city roundtable yesterday came down heavily on donors for excessive interference in policy matters and looked at aid-induced development effort with a grain of salt.

It also said taxpayers contribute three times more than the donors to the GDP, but they have little or no role in decision making.

The speakers at the roundtable also felt that the role of the World Bank, as the coordinator of the donors, has been too interfering. But the fact remains that donor assistance has decreased to three per cent of GDP from nine per cent 10 years back.

Finance and Planning Minister M Saifur Rahman attended the roundtable on 'Foreign Aid Dependence and Self-reliance' as chief guest. It was organised by the Economic Relations Division at the National Economic Council building at the Planning Commission.

Speaking at the roundtable, the

finance minister said he is against seeking aid from donors and said it cannot be vouched for sure that the assistance received in the past 30 years did good to the country.

He said donors talk tall, while aid flow is gradually declining. The country has to spend around TK 8 lakh a day for a delegation to attend the Paris Club meeting to seek aid. "We could easily have made three schools with the daily expenditure on our delegation," he said.

Saifur said there is no dearth of local resource, but what is lacking is governance. "Our everyday behaviour is affecting governance. The conflict among the political parties is taking on a new edge and for the first time, the opposition party walked out of the Business Advisory Committee of the parliament."

Referring to the impact of globalisation, Saifur said: "We had to face the shock and could not develop important institutions to spur investment."

"Before strengthening important regulatory bodies, liberalisation of

the financial and capital markets is highly dangerous.

Dr Debapriya Bhattacharya, executive director of the Centre for Policy Dialogue, said the taxpayers' contribution to GDP is now 12 per cent while the donors have shrunk their share to around three per cent from nine per cent 10 years back.

"But the taxpayers have no role in policy decisions. As a citizen, I resent this situation," he said.

Debapriya said there is no instance that poverty alleviation programme supported by foreign aid had been successful.

At the end of the day, foreign aid boils down to politics and so, Israel gets the highest per capital aid, he mentioned.

Chairman of the Public Expenditure Review Commission Hafizuddin Ahmed questioned the planning process of development projects and said schemes are not properly evaluated.



Hu Jintao ... heir apparent

Change of guard in China

AFP, Beijing

Jiang Zemin retired yesterday as the head of China's Communist Party amid all the trappings of traditional Soviet-style pomp, a sharp contrast to his lasting legacy of allowing capitalists inside the organisation's ranks.

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"Keep left, please," signs admonished visitors to Beijing's Great Hall of the People, but in the heart of that same building Jiang completed 13 years at the helm by engineering the party's largest turn ever.

"Comrades," Jiang exclaimed, addressing the more than 2,000

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Stormy walkout marks start of JS session

Two ordinances tabled

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The first day of the fifth session of the eighth Jatiya Sangsad saw a stormy but brief walkout by the main opposition Awami League (AL) and an abrupt end to the day's sitting keeping most of the scheduled lawmaking agenda in abeyance.

Awami League lawmakers led by the Leader of the Opposition in the Parliament Sheikh Hasina staged the walkout at around 12:50pm following the chair's refusal to entertain points of order raised by many front-ranking opposition lawmakers and the switching off the microphone of the opposition leader.

Two ordinances were tabled - Speedy Trial Tribunal Ordinance, 2002 and Court Fees (Amendment) Ordinance 2002.

Yesterday's session began a little after 11:00 am with Speaker Jamiruddin Sircar in the chair. After the rituals of selecting a panel of chairmen for the fifth session and taking up an obituary reference at the deaths of nine former parliamentarians and ministers, the House witnessed an hour-long question-answer session.

Immediately afterwards, the speaker promptly gave Agriculture Minister Motiur Rahman Nizami the floor to make a statement on current seed crisis. This prompted over half a dozen opposition lawmakers sitting in the front

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Hasina rattles JS boycott threat

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Opposition leader Sheikh Hasina yesterday said her party would be forced to take a 'final decision' on whether to continue in the parliament or to boycott it if the opposition lawmakers were not allowed to speak on important national issues in the House.

"If this is the way the government wants to run the parliament and insult us every day, we would be forced to take a final decision. Resignation letters of our all MPs are already with me," Hasina said at an impromptu press briefing at the Sangsad Bhavan yesterday.

Earlier, her party staged a brief walkout from the House on the very first day of the fifth session of the Jatiya Sangsad after the Speaker switched off Hasina's microphone.

"They (the government) don't want parliamentary democracy to function. I want to ask them under what law they called out the army and why they are not allowing the army to perform neutrally now"

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'Insurgent bases' in Bangladesh Dhaka to probe Delhi's charges

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka will look into the renewed allegation by India that insurgents from its north-eastern states are getting shelter and support in Bangladesh territory, Foreign Secretary Shamsheer Mobin Chowdhury told a press briefing yesterday.

A press release issued by the

Indian High Commission in Dhaka on Sunday claimed that some 99 training camps of Indian insurgents were operating from Bangladesh.

"We also investigated similar allegations by India in the past and found those unfounded. We'll also investigate the fresh allegation and inform the Indian authorities of the findings." However, the foreign secretary said Bangladesh has categorically rejected India's Deputy Prime Minister and Home Minister LK Advani's recent remarks about the activities of the Inter Services Intelligence (ISI) of Pakistan and Al-Qaida network in Bangladesh.

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Sehri, Iftar timing			
Ramadan	Nov	Sehri	Iftar
9	15		5-17
10	16	4-51	5-16
11	17	4-51	5-16