

Steps taken to build skilled, professional armed forces: PM

UNB, Rajshahi

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday said the armed forces are a national asset and the government was always active in the reconstruction, modernisation and raising of its strength.

All necessary measures have been taken to build up skilled, well-disciplined and professional armed forces, she said reassuring of continued efforts for building it up to as a time-befitting modern force.

Khaleda said the government steps have helped the armed forces to make its presence felt in a strong way in the international arena. "They have brought laurels for the country through their contributions in different peacekeeping missions of the United Nations."

The prime minister was speaking during the presentation of National Standard to the 1st Battalion of the

Bangladesh Infantry Regiment at Rajshahi Cantonment yesterday afternoon.

On arrival at the venue, the prime minister was received by the Chief of Army Staff Lt. Gen. Hasan Mashhud Chowdhury, Bogra Area Commander Major Gen Monjurul Alam and BIRC Commandant Brig GenANM Shawkat Jamal.

Khaleda said she was proud to recall the silent preparation within the Bengal Regiment along with the political, cultural, economic and social movement waged for freedom during the Pakistani period.

This preparation, she said, helped keep alive the aspirations for the nation's freedom despite the sudden military attack in 1971. "Later, we attained overall military victory."

She termed the infantry as the main pillar of the army and lauded their role in the War of Liberation and in safeguarding the independence and sovereignty and in containing insurgency in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT).

Justice Ibrahim's anniversary of death today

Today is the 38th death anniversary of Justice Mohammad Ibrahim, says a press release.

In observance of the day, wreaths will be placed at his grave in the morning followed by a milad and the distribution of tabaruk among the destitute.

Mukundalal Sraker

Today is the 25th death anniversary of Mukundalal Sraker, a prominent leader of anti-British movement, says a press release.

On the occasion, prayers will be offered for the salvation of his departed soul at 600pm today at the residence of his second son at Flat 6A, 51-52 Green Road in the city.

Care, Bata sign memorandum

Bata Shoe will now be accessible to villagers in remote areas through Care-supported Self-Help Organisations of Women (SHOW) groups in Lalpur Upazila of Natore where Bata stores, agencies and dealers are not available, says a press release.

Care Bangladesh and Bata Shoe Company signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in this regard recently for a period of six months.

This pilot scheme involves women of seven groups, who will sell Bata products from door-to-door and at local markets in selected unions.

This will help increase the income generation capacity of the women's organisations.

Bata will provide marketing training while Care will provide organisational support to facilitate business training.



German Ambassador Dietrich Andreas called on Leader of the Opposition in Parliament and Awami League President Sheikh Hasina at her Sudha Sadan Residence in the city yesterday.

Save haor to preserve bio-diversity

Environmentalists tell meet

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bio-diversity and enormous resources of haor and baor (vast low-lying wet land) are on the verge of extinction in the absence of effective government control, said the environmentalists at a meeting yesterday.

They said unplanned crop cultivation and excessive extraction of aquatic resources year after year have virtually denuded the uniqueness of these wetlands.

The meeting was organised by Haor Bachao Andolon (movement for saving the haor) at the National Press Club.

There is no effective government control and management in protecting the water bodies, said a wildlife activist Shahjahan Sardar of Nature Conservation Committee.

Haors like Tangua, Pashua, Hakaluki, Kawadighi, Hail and Balai in northeastern region of the country are ideal places for wildlife sanctuary and to maintain ecological balance, said Water Development Board Chief Engineer M Enamul Haque in his keynote paper.

But excessive drainage of water for cultivation of high yielding variety of Boro and Aman has rendered the haor and baor devoid of aquatic bio-resources, he added.

Enamul said a total of 44 thousand square kilometre wet land comprising haor, baor, lake, floodplain and river confluence constitutes three percent of the country's total area.

He recommended that haor and baor be declared wildlife sanctuaries to conserve bio-diversity and aquatic herbs.

Enamul said excessive drainage and illegal occupation in the name of leasing have to be stopped.

Former teacher of Chittagong University Dr Ansarul Karim said temporary submergible embankment is a suitable solution to protect crops in the haor from floods.

He called for a national policy to protect the low-lying wet lands including preventive measures against silt deposition in haor and baor.

A number of inhabitants from haor aras in Sylhet, Sunamganj and Kishoreganj, while speaking at

the meeting, demanded cancellation of the lease of haors, adequate afforestation there and involvement of locals in protecting the wet land.

Moderated by former advisor to caretaker government Prof A S M Shahjahan, the meeting was attended by Convenor of Haor Bachao Andolon Abu Naser Khan and Mercantile Bank Advisor Taher Uddin.

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1,274 more held

UNB, Dhaka

Police arrested some 1,274 people on various charges during their countrywide drive in the last 24 hours ending at 6.00am yesterday.

During the period, the law enforcers recovered 36 firearms, 15 other weapons, 363 bullets and filed 17 cases against 57 people under the Arms Act, says a police headquarters press release.



PHOTO: STAR

Awami League leader and former mayor Mohammad Hanif speaks at a rally protesting the 'misrule' of the alliance government at the Central Shaheed Minar in the city yesterday.

Mass dialogue in Dinajpur Oct 18

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bikalpa Dhara Bangladesh (BDB) and Jatiya Oikyamancha (JO) will jointly launch their Gono Sanglap (mass dialogue) programme in Dinajpur on October 18 to prepare Gono Ishtehar (People's Agenda).

BDB President Prof Badruddoza Chowdhury and JO Convenor Dr Kamal Hossain will attend the programme, said a press release yesterday.

During the programme, people from all segments of society will share their concerns, aspirations, opinions and suggestions with them.

Similar programme will be held in Rangpur on October 19.

An advance team of Gono Ishtehar Karjyokrom with a programme Coordinator Feroz M Hassan has already left for two northern districts.

Earlier, the BDB and the JO imparted a special training to 20 of their selected organisers to provide all sorts of assistance during the programme.

Such programmes will also be held gradually across the country where the leaders will listen to the people from all walks of life.



Dry weather likely

UNB, Dhaka

Weather is likely to remain mainly dry over the country with chances of rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty wind at a few places over Rajshahi, Dhaka, and Sylhet divisions and the regions of Jessore and Kushtia due to advancing westerly disturbance till 6.00pm today.

Day temperature may remain nearly unchanged over the country during the period, Met Office said.

Highest temperature 33.8 degree Celsius was recorded yesterday at Sitakundi and lowest 21.8 degree Celsius at Srimangal.

The sun sets in the capital at 5:34pm today and rises at 5:56am tomorrow.

Highest and lowest temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

City/Town	Temperature in Celsius	Humidity in percentage		
	Max	Min	Morning	Evening
Dhaka	33.0	24.8	80	72
Chittagong	33.5	24.2	68	71
Rajshahi	33.5	24.5	81	82
Khulna	32.8	25.6	82	82
Barisal	32.8	24.4	83	89
Sylhet	32.0	23.4	75	81
Cox's Bazar	32.6	25.5	80	82

Newspaper staffs submit memo

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leaders of the Bangladesh Newspaper Workers' Federation and Bangladesh Federal Union of Newspapers Press Workers met Deputy Minister for Land Ruhul Kuddus Talukdar Dulu at his office yesterday and discussed the allocation of land for their office building.

They also discussed the housing problems of the employees and workers and handed over a memorandum to the minister.

The minister assured them of necessary steps to allocate land and solve their housing problem.

Federation leaders Fazle Imam, Abul Hashem, Matiur Rahman Talukdar and Khairul Islam spoke at the meeting.

UZ system not cancelled, polls after cabinet approval

Bhuiyan tells journalists

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Upazila system is not cancelled and election to upazila parishads will be held after getting the approval of the government, LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan said categorically yesterday.

"The government had formed a committee to review the matter and it has already submitted the report. Now, we are waiting for the approval of the cabinet," he said responding to a query from the journalists at a press conference at his ministry.

Pressed further, the minister said, "There was no decision that the upazila parishad election would not be held, rather the issue was that when and how the elec-

tions would be held."

Mannan said the government reintroduced the Gram Sarkar to expedite the rural development and a total of Tk 20 crore was spent in last fiscal.

He said steps were also taken to empower the women members at union parishads so that they can participate in development process.

Replying to another query, he claimed that all roads, bridges and other infrastructures under his ministry, which were damaged by recent flooding, have been mad operatives on emergency basis.

Mannan also detailed about various development programmes of his ministry and the steps taken in last three years for improving the local government bodies.

He said the government is quite aware of arsenic problem which will be resolved with the implementation of various projects that have been taken.

Mannan said his ministry has recovered 225 acres of lands from illegal occupants.

He claimed that cases of corruption and misappropriation of money in his ministry have declined following punitive actions against the corrupt people.

He said a plant will be set up soon to supply bottled water at cheaper price.

State Minister for LGRD Ziaul Haque Zia was present at the conference.

Businessman shot

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A gang of extortionists shot and injured a businessman at East Rampura for his refusal to pay tolls and a mugger blew off his fingers when a bomb he was carrying went off at Gandaria in Sutrapur in the city yesterday.

A gang of eight stormed the Sundrban Printing and Packaging Factory at Rampura and demanded money from its owner Nurul Islam, 60.

But Nurul Islam drove them out of his factory, prompting the gang to spray bullets on him.

With bullet wound in his left leg, the factory owner was rushed to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

Police could not arrest anybody in this connection till 7:00pm.

In the other incident, Manu, 25, suffered serious injuries when the home-made bomb exploded in his hand near at Gendaria at around 8:00am.

Police took him to Mitford Hospital. Later, he was shifted to Pangu Hospital.

CU JCD begins fast-unto-death

CU CORRESPONDENT

Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) began a fast-unto-death programme on the Chittagong University campus yesterday to press its demand for immediate removal of Vice Chancellor AJM Nuruddin Chowdhury.

JCD leaders and activists started their programme on the premises of the VC office at 12.00 noon. They alleged that the VC was involved in anomalies in appointment of teachers and staffs. He also patronises the Jamaat-Shibir activists, they said.

To settle the issue, the university authorities sat in a meeting with the striking leaders in the evening. The meeting was going on till filing of this report at 7:35pm yesterday.



Humayun Kabir made director in UN mission in Afghanistan

The secretary general of the United Nations has appointed M Humayun Kabir of Bangladesh as director, Security Management, in the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), says a press release.

The Mission is assisting in the democratisation process in Afghanistan in addition to other supporting UN activities in the country.

Humayun Kabir, who completed his BA (Hons.) and MA in economics at Dhaka University, has previously served the United Nations in Bhutan, Afghanistan, Iran, Austria and the UN Headquarters in New York, USA.

DHAKA TODAY

Photo exhibition

The inaugural ceremony of a three-day photo exhibition, organised by Bangladesh Photojournalists Association and the Unicef, will be held with Information Minister M Shamsul Islam as chief guest. Venue: National Press Club Auditorium. Time: 10.30am.

Belgian Film session

Zahir Raihan Film Society, in association with the Alliance Francaise, will screen two recent French-speaking Belgian films titled 'Rosetta' (1999) and 'The Son' (2002), both directed by Luc and Jean-Pierre Dardenne. Venue: Alliance Francaise, Road-3, Dhanmondi. Time: 5.00pm and 7.00pm.

Indian film show

The High Commission of India will screen a film titled 'Mohabbatein'. Venue: Indian Cultural Centre, House-25, Road-96, Gulshan-2. Time: 6.30pm.

Publication ceremony

The publication ceremony of a book titled 'Chattagramer Tin Dashaker Natok' written by Khorshedul Alam will be held. Venue: Seminar Room of Bangladesh Mahila Samity. Time: 6.00pm.

Discussion

Bangladesh China People's Friendship Association organises a discussion to mark the 55th founding anniversary of the People's Republic of China with Fisheries and Livestock Minister Abdullah Al Noman as chief guest. Venue: Lake Shore Hotel, Gulshan. Time: 6.00pm.

Inauguration

The inauguration of a cardiac centre will be held with Health and Family Welfare Minister Dr Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain as

chief guest. Venue: BSMMU, Shahbagh. Time: 3.00pm.

BDF Award

The award giving ceremony of Bangladesh Debate Federation will be held. Venue: British Council Auditorium. Time: 3.30pm.

Seminar

Iranian Cultural Centre organises a seminar and cultural function to observe the international day on Poet Hafiz. Venue: House-54, Road-8/A, Dhanmondi. Time: 3.30pm.

Rally

Dhaka Metropolitan unit of Jatiya Oikyamancha organises a rally. Venue: Muktangan. Time: 4.00pm.

Blood donation

Quantum Foundation organises a voluntary blood donation camp. Venue: North South University Social Services Club, Banani. Time: 9.00am to 4.30pm.

DHAKA TOMORROW

Roundtable

Law, justice and parliamentary affairs ministry organises a roundtable on 'Good governance and Judicial system with Minister Moudud Ahmed in the chair. Venue: Old High Court Bhaban. Time: 2.15pm.

Launching ceremony

The Internet Learning Centre of Cyber Schools Bangladesh will be launched with Ola Ree, managing director of Grameen Phone as chief guest. Venue: Ucep Technical School, Mirpur. Time: 3.00pm.



PHOTO: STAR

11 Party alliance stages a demonstration at Muktangan in the city yesterday to protest price spiral of essentials and repression on opposition workers.