

Armed Forces Division

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months after its formation but another body, the Joint Chief of Secretariat, was formed on July 19, 1976, which worked until November 1978.

After the abolishment of the Joint Chief of Secretariat, the Supreme Command Headquarters Division was formed on July 12, 1989 with some more jurisdictions.

Finally, the BNP government in 1991 formed the AFD, dissolving the division. In the same year the government put the AFD under the Prime Minister's Office. In 1998, the Awami League government approved the organogram of the AFD.

WHAT AFD DOES?

The AFD having four departments and an administration wing works like a ministry and gives work order. A major general acts as the principal staff officer (PSO) in the division who is equivalent to a secretary, according to a government circular.

The AFD is manned by 272 officials and employees, only 41 of them have been drawn from the civil services, sources said quoting a report submitted to the parliamentary standing committee on defence ministry in 2003.

The rules of business formulated in 1996 empower the AFD to perform major activities that include formulation of defence policy, planning and monitoring of different treaties, planning, preparation and coordination of war or national emergency.

It has been entrusted with the tasks of coordination and control in the deployment of the defence forces to assist the civil administration, formulation of procurement policy, planning for training, operation, administration and management of armed forces.

The AFD controls all kinds of factories that manufacture arms and ammunition, coordinate the defence educational institutions, and process the appointment and promotion of the officials equivalent to colonel or upper ranks.

It also has jurisdiction to ensure execution of the convention related to chemical weapons in the country, working as the "Bangladesh National Authorities." It maintains correspondence with the Organisation for Prevention of Chemical Weapons.

THE ROLE OF DEFENCE MINISTRY

The defence ministry had started operation in December 1971 aimed to coordinate the activities of the armed forces and all other defence affairs.

During the restructuring of ministries and divisions in 1982, the government kept 21 wings in the organogram of the defence ministry, two of them were transferred to the Ministry of Liberation War Affairs after its formation.

Official documents show the defence ministry performs all activities to coordinate the armed forces but in reality the AFD does all these, sources said.

The defence ministry has only 144 officials and employees, with a number of key posts dominated by the military officials, sources said.

The ministry allocates budget for the forces in line with the demands of the forces but the AFD determines the requirements. It appoints chiefs of three services and leads the country in signing any military treaty with other country.

The ministry also looks into the legal matters and public relations.

WHAT DEFENCE EXPERTS SAY

Defence experts oppose the existing structure, power and jurisdiction of the AFD. They termed it a duplication

of the defence ministry.

Talking to The Daily Star, the experts said there is no need to maintain such a division under the PMO, as the prime minister holds the defence portfolio. Some of them suggested putting the division under the defence ministry.

Former army chief and chairman of the parliamentary standing committee on defence ministry Mahbubur Rahman expressed his views against the AFD.

"I personally think a joint services headquarters can be formed under the defence ministry for better coordination of the activities of the armed forces," he suggested.

"The Armed Forces Division was established in a shortcut way to work under the Prime Minister's Office," noted Mahbub, also defence advisor to the prime minister.

He said every democratic country has the defence ministry to supervise and coordinate all the activities of the armed forces. But Bangladesh is an exception where the AFD is performing the tasks of the ministry.

Perhaps the ministry lacked required logistic supports to discharge its duties properly, but the ministry could have been equipped with adequate manpower and logistics without forming such a division, Mahbub said.

Former cabinet secretary Mujibul Haque said earlier the defence ministry used to perform all tasks to coordinate the activities of the defence forces. Later some of the tasks were put under the jurisdiction of the AFD.

Former defence secretary ASHK Sadeque told The Daily Star, "I personally believe there is no logic to run the Armed Forces Division when the defence ministry is there."

He said a ministry may have several divisions with separate secretary in charge, but the ministry is the top authority to coordinate their activities. "I don't understand why and how the armed forces division is being run as a parallel body."

"It looks like a queer camel," commented the former defence secretary, also a member of the parliamentary standing committee on defence ministry.

Major General (retd) Syed Mohammad Ibrahim said, "The higher defence organisation in Bangladesh needs to be reorganised in keeping with requirement of higher professionalism of the military and transparent control by an elected government. Present practice has room for duplication and isolation."

DU classes

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said BCL General Secretary Nazrul Islam Babu.

The DU authorities yesterday temporarily expelled Shamim Reza, a student of Sir AP Rahman Hall, and an activist of ruling BNP's student wing Jatilyatabadi Chhatra Dai (JCD), for his involvement in campus violence.

Punitive measures will also be taken against others responsible for the campus violence, DU Acting Proctor Siddiqui Rahman said.

The student combine called the student strike to press home their five-point demands including expulsion, arrest and punishment of JCD activists for attacking students on the campus on May 29 and 31, and compensation for the injured students during the campus violence.

Meanwhile, a number of BCL leaders and activists, who were driven out from residential halls in the wake of the campus violence, yesterday returned to halls with the help of the authorities.

Tk 1,247 crore

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FY 05-06 from Tk 103.65 crore in the last FY for roads, drains and traffic infrastructure development and maintenance.

It also increased budget allocation in constructing public toilets, purchasing bulldozers, dumping trucks, development of graveyards and crematoriums, increasing citizens' recreational facilities and development of parks and children's parks.

It has allocated Tk 17.50 crore for mosquito control activities and purchasing equipment and Tk 7 crore for cleaning activities.

The city corporation targets earning Tk 210 crore in holding tax applying its existing rules of 12 percent tax in the FY 05-06.

"Without increasing taxes the DCC is targeting to earn the revenue of Tk 432 crore through accelerating tax and fees collection activities from the existing sectors," the mayor said in his budget speech at Mahanagar Natya Mancha in the city in presence of ward commissioners, DCC officials and journalists.

The DCC has decreased the revenue target in some sectors that include advertisement and rickshaw licence fees.

Revenue target in bus, truck and launch terminals, public toilets, slaughterhouses, children's parks and graveyards and crematoriums are the same as in the last fiscal.

The DCC has increased the revenue target to Tk 210 crore in holding, conservancy and lighting tax, Tk 62 crore in market toll and rents, and rents in Nagar Bhaban commercial set-ups, Tk 35 crore in trade licence fees, Tk 13 crore from cattle markets, Tk 30 crore in road digging fees, Tk 35 crore in estate handing over tax, Tk 6 crore in renting machinery and Tk 2 crore in renting community centres.

The new budget earmarked a development expenditure of Tk 970.97 crore, which is 78 percent of

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over 30 years.

Lye says the study will end by September this year and his company will submit to the government

its plan that will include details of mine development, and how it could finance and help the government rehabilitate and relocate the affected people of the area.

If the government approves the plan within this year, AEC can start production of 1.5 million tonnes of coal in 2007, six million tonnes in 2008, nine million tonnes in 2009 and finally 15 million tonnes from 2011. It will employ 1,200 to 1,500 people and deploy trucks that can carry up to 350 tonnes of coal each.

Digging machines to be deployed there will pick up 50 tonnes of coal in one go.

"Price of the coal at the mine gate is likely to be around \$13 per tonne," the CEO said talking to The Daily Star at his Dhaka office.

As per the AEC plan, bulk of this coal could be exported through Chalna port, using the railway link to Khulna from the northern region. While India can be one of the prime and easy export markets, AEC sees a broad market for Bangladeshi coal that is high in calorific value, and cause low environmental pollution.

The company also thinks that 20 percent of the production can be utilised by any steel industry, and another part may go for domestic power generation, brick kilns and other consumers.

But to make it all happen, AEC needs a mining area of 6,500 hectares of land because of its open pit mining, which most Bangladeshi energy experts term socially and environmentally hazardous.

Lye and AEC Head of Corporate Affairs Brian Mooney explained the advantages of open pit mining over shaft mining (used at Barapukuria mine), and why relocation of the affected people is worth the venture.

"In shaft mining, optimal extraction of coal is not possible. If you cannot extract even 10 percent of the coal, what is the point in such mining? Whereas in open pit mining, you can extract 90 percent of the reserve," Lye says.

"Again, shaft mining creates land subsidence (as the mining progressively creates vacuum inside), posing a great risk. But in open pit mining, developers fill up the open pit when extraction in one part is over and then move to a new part. This is much safer than shaft mining," says Brian Mooney.

Lye points out that such mining exists in different areas of Australia and Germany. "There is a mine in Australia where 30,000 people had to be relocated. In Germany, there is a bigger mine in operation for a hundred years. The mine developers move ahead from one point to another, filling up the previously excavated land and giving it five to seven years to stabilise and then return that to people for farming," he said.

Mugger

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video footage of the close circuit television installed in the bank and identified one mugger. They have the mugger's criminal records as he came out of jail 15 days ago.

"We've sent ten teams outside Dhaka to arrest him and seize the looted money," Deputy Commissioner (South) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police Mazharul Hoque told The Daily Star yesterday.

He however did not name the mugger.

Garbage-choked

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monsoon only setting in.

The experts say around 20 percent open space of a city should be preserved in order to have a healthy habitat, but Dhaka has less than 8 percent open space.

"For a low-lying city like Dhaka preserving enough wetlands inside the city as rainwater retention places is a must," said Prof Islam.

Recently, an international conference held in Dhaka also suggested preserving floodwater reservoirs -- a technical term for wetlands -- inside the city.

But the city authorities cared little about implementing the Dhaka City Master Plan, the long-term city development guidelines. The real estate firms are filling up the lowlands around the city right under the nose of Rajdhani Unnayan Kartipakkha (Rajuk), the city development authorities, according to sources.

"We have started a detailed area planning and will finish the job within two years," said Md Nasiruddin, member planning of Rajuk, when asked about the master plan.

"But a lot of unplanned structures have already been erected, and it is impossible to knock them down," he added and clarified that development of the storm water drainage system and removal of rainwater from the city are the job of Wasa, not Rajuk.

The city has developed and expanded over the years but not the drainage system, said a Wasa official, wishing anonymity. Top Wasa officials blamed the city dwellers and DCC for filling up most of the drainage channels with solid waste.

"We cannot expand the drainage facilities due to lack of funds. What we need now is to formulate a drainage policy and carry a study on the system," said a high Wasa official on condition that he not be named.

AEC plan requires

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PM's promise

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and employees of the Liberation War Affairs Ministry and the committee members at thana and district levels who were charged with preparing the list.

"The freedom fighters are being forced to bribe to get their names on the list," he said.

Responding to Kader Siddiqui's allegations, State Minister for Liberation War Affairs M Rezaul Karim assured that if any irregularities are found, the ministry would take stern actions.

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Water and Sewerage Authority (Wasa) is responsible for tackling the waterlogging, not the DCC. He also blamed the Wasa for its delays in regular work.

"If the government does not help, it is quite impossible to resolve the waterlogging problem in Dhaka," Khoka told reporters in the budget-placing session at Mohanagar Natyamancha.

FOODADULTERATION
The mayor said the DCC is unable to take necessary actions against adulteration of food items in hotels, restaurants, fast food and fruit shops for want of modern equipment and adequate manpower.

Newspaper reports say massive adulteration of food items, particularly the use of toxic chemicals and colours as preservatives, are causing serious public health hazard.

Khoka however said the DCC is taking actions as per the Pure Food Ordinance 1959, Pure Food Rules 1967 and the DCC regulations.

SEPARATE POLICE FORCE
Khoka strongly felt the need for a separate police force for conducting drives to prevent various transgressions of rules in the capital.

He said the DCC authorities do not get adequate help from the law enforcers in operations against the offenders.

"It is very hard to keep the footpaths free from illegal occupants...adequate police can hardly be available in time," he told the newsmen.

He emphasised necessary police force during drives to reclaim footpaths from illegal occupation and demolish unauthorised hotels and restaurants.

"We need a separate police force to facilitate the drives, and I urge the LGRD ministry and other authorities concerned to take steps in this regard," Khoka said.

He stressed that to undertake a major project that can change socio-economic condition of people, relocation of a community becomes necessary. "Bangladesh had to relocate 50,000 people to build Jamuna Bridge," he mentioned.

Mooney noted that of the 6,500 hectares of Phulbari mining area, AEC will use a maximum of 2,000 hectares as open pit at any given time and move on to developing the next phase once that part is exhausted.

"To do this, eastern part of Phulbari town will have to be relocated, may be to the eastern side of the Jamuna river nearby. This will not be so difficult but it will be more difficult to relocate people from agricultural area, where most part of the mine is located," Mooney said.

On the relocation, the AEC executives say they will follow the high standard set by International Finance Corporation (IFC). The IFC standard dictates that every affected person should be better off when relocated, none will be forcibly relocated, they would be fully compensated, they would be provided with alternative livelihood and housing, and the miners have to inject huge benefits for the community.

"Nearly 300 people are now working on socio-environmental impact assessment of the project. They are talking to people of every village concerned," Lye said.

While producing coal, AEC will also extract white clay used for ceramics, clay for brick fields, gravel, sand and hard rocks as by-products.

Late last month, energy ministry adviser Mahmudur Rahman at a meeting with Petrobangla criticised the AEC agreement for two years for feasibility study. A one-year agreement was good enough for this, he thought.

The adviser also criticised that Petrobangla gave AEC access to a vast area saying if people of the town need to be relocated for exploration, the social cost will be too much for the government to handle. However, he also suggested awarding AEC two new areas for mining exploration.

Mahmud also supports open pit mining over shaft mining, and has advocated a proposal from Tata to allow it open pit method at Barapukuria mine which is already being developed by a Chinese company. The energy adviser suggested Petrobangla to hire an international consultant to see if open pit mining is more profitable than shaft mining.

Most local energy experts oppose open mining on socio-environmental grounds. They also suggest that the six percent royalty under the coal development policy should be immediately revised as it undermines the high value of coal in the present context of high price of petroleum.

131 women

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women ansars to other countries, especially to Middle Eastern nations where demand for female domestic helps is high.

The government decided on June 19 to go for overseas household jobs for ansar and VDP (Village Defence Police) members. "Male ansars will also be sent abroad in the future," a source at the home ministry said.

In the first phase, 161 female ansars aged between 25-35 were initially selected from 64 districts for training.

They received training at Gazipur Ansar Academy in household work--operating television, vacuum cleaner, washing machine, air conditioner, dryer, oven, telephone, ironing, and serving foods and taking care of children and the elderly.

They also received English and Arabic language training.

Four government-approved recruiting agencies -- Enam International, Royal Associates, Akbar Enterprise and Al Baraka International -- will look after the recruitment and their security matters.

Though there is demand for female labourers in Saudi Arabia and other Arab countries, housemaids there alleged harassment by their employers.

Ershad

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Police Station accusing Ershad of threatening her and her family with death.

The court ordered the IO to probe the allegation brought against Ershad on June 30.

The IO in his probe report mentioned he did not find any truth in the allegation.

Meantime, the court has extended the ad-interim bail of Bidisha in the cheating case until August 4 following expiry of her bail yesterday.

ACC agrees

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The ACC chairman asked the ADB on April 30 for immediate appointment of a change management consultant/advisor and an organisation development consultant for the commission.

The ADB in an aide-memoire on Sunday proposed for the appointment of four consultants -- former cabinet secretary M Mujibul Huq as Team Leader/Change Management Advisor-Domestic, Chua Cher Yak as Organisation Development Consultant-International, Sakhawat Hussain as Organisation Development Consultant-Domestic and Abdul Matin as Legal Trainer and Capacity Building Consultant-Domestic.

The ADB said the scope of its assistance in the short run would focus on the development of legal framework for ACC operationalisation, criteria and procedures for screening the staff of now-defunct Bureau of Anti-Corruption and its organogram.

It also informed the ACC about the possibility of a follow-up ADB governance technical assistance in 2006 subject to progress under the current technical assistance.

The ADB said the follow-up assistance for next year may accommodate training of the ACC officials and procurement of some equipment for the commission.

Normal flooding

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that a couple of depressions on the Bay in this month.

In July, the rainfall in Dhaka will be 370-420 millimeter, Chittagong 700-750, Sylhet 560-610, Rajshahi 370-420, Khulna 330-380 and Barisal 500-550, the report said, adding that the capital should experience 16-20 rainy days.

Analysing the weather data, the report stated that the country experienced almost normal rainfall last month although monsoon arrived 15 days after it was expected.

Govt plans

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the gas users on how to save the national resource.

About 17 percent gas is consumed for domestic purposes and the introduction of cylinder system will save huge amount of gas on this front, he observed.

About 50 percent gas is used for power generation and only 15 percent for industrial use, he said, adding that if the coal reserves in the North Bengal could be used for power generation, more gas could be used in industries.

"There will be more foreign direct investment (FDI) in the country if more gas could be provided for the industries," he added.

Blasting the trade unions of Titas Gas, he said there is a nexus between some corrupt employees and some businessmen in the private sector that manipulates gas bills.

Mahmudur, also the executive chairman of Board of Investment (BoI), said the Indian company Tata which has proposed for setting up a coal-based power plant in Bangladesh will not export electricity to India.

"Tata has planned to use 500 MW electricity for itself and the rest 500 MW to sell to the government from its planned 1000 MW plant," he clarified.

The newly appointed energy adviser said Petrobangla's assumption that the reserved gas will exhaust by the next 15 years is not right.

"The reserved gas can be used for the next 25 years if we use coal for power generation and check gas wastage," he said. "I believe, more gas fields will be explored."

Niko will wait

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entire area has become polluted because of smoke continuing for a long time."

Meanwhile, a five member Awami League (AL) parliamentary delegation led by deputy leader of the opposition advocate Abdul Hamid visited the Tengratila gas field yesterday.

"According to our primary observation, the gas field caught fire because of 'inefficiency' of the drilling company Niko," Abdul Hamid told journalists after observing the flame and talking to the Niko officials.

The AL parliamentary delegation demanded immediate stoppage of the fire and proper compensation to the victims. They also demanded disclosure of actual losses of gas caused by the gas field disaster.

"We can not accept that the valuable asset of the country would be burnt out in this way," Hamid said.

"Niko has prepared to dig a relief well only 100 metre from the burning well that may catch fire again. The relief well should be drilled at least 700 metre off the burning well," he added.

"We are doubtful whether there would remain any gas in the field

after the end of this fire," Dewan Farid Gazi MP, a member of the delegation said.

The delegation blamed the government for awarding contract to the inefficient Candian Company Niko in exchange of huge bribe.

The government yesterday distributed Tk 1.08 crore as compensation to 283 fire victims.

Meanwhile, the Tengratila Sangram Parishad yesterday declared a three-day action programme to realise their demands that include dousing the fire and compensating the actual victims.

The people in Sunamganj and Sylhet also brought out processions and demanded cancellation of the contract signed with the inefficient company Niko.

Niko will continue drilling the plant after the fire ends, a source related to Tengratila gas field told this correspondent, adding that Niko experts want to fence off half a kilometre area after evacuating the villagers and shifting the village market adjacent to the gas field.

The gas produced in the field will be supplied to the under-construction Lafarge cement factory in Chhataak.

Experts blame

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government's technical evaluation in 1997, they recalled.

Professor Badrul Imam of geology department at Dhaka University said, "Blowout in a relief well (as at Tengratila) is very rare. I have not heard of such blowouts anywhere in the world."

Niko should have been very careful after the first blowout in January but it was not, he said.

"I do not know what made the government award the gas field to Niko when national petroleum exploration company Bapex itself had the expertise and experience in drilling such gas fields," Badrul said.

With two blowouts, Tengratila gas field has now become very vulnerable as many geological pockets of the field have developed links to the main gas reservoir, making it highly risky for any company to drill a well there, the expert noted.

He urged the government to seriously consider cancelling the deal with Niko.

BNP lawmaker and member of the parliamentary committee on power and energy Shakhawat Hossain pointed out that the joint venture agreement on Tengratila gas field has no provisions for compensation.

"Before awarding any deal to a foreign company, the government should prioritise the interest of Bapex," he added.

Mahmudur Rahman claimed the contract with Niko was made during Awami League rule.

He also said it is easy to get compensation from Niko. "We can block payment for purchase of gas from Niko's Feni field and claim the compensation."

But former Petrobangla chairman and DU geology department Chairman Dr Hossain Monsur pointed said the Niko contract was drafted in February 2003 and signed in October. He however said the process of the deal began during the AL rule.

Ousted state minister for energy AKM Mosharrar Hossain played a key role in making Bapex sign the joint venture agreement through which an unexplored gas field has been awarded to Niko in violation of the government policy that such fields should be awarded through PSC, Monsur said.

He termed the Niko deal a

Nasa projectile

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The reason scientists are so excited is that comets circling the Sun, which are numbered in billions, are seen as leftovers from a massive cloud of gas and dust that condensed to form the Sun and planets about 4.6 billion years ago.

Their geological and chemical structures could thus contain important clues to the nature of the Universe and how it was formed, including Earth.

The projectile was fired from a mothership spacecraft, "Deep Impact," that was itself launched from the Kennedy Space Centre in Florida in January.

It undertook a 173-day, 431-million-kilometer journey to get close to Tempel 1. After launching the projectile, it then recorded data from the impact.

"It's just absolutely stunning," Nasa Associate Administrator Al Diaz told reporters.

"To be in a situation where we are here tracking a comet for this period of time and then precisely positioning a spacecraft in a way that creates that environment that is so bright...I am speechless!"

He said the success was thanks to broad cooperation