

Bush orders more troops to Kabul

REUTERS, Washington

President George W Bush said yesterday 3,200 more US troops being deployed to Afghanistan will help NATO forces launch a spring offensive against the Taliban.

The Pentagon announced on Wednesday that a US Army brigade of 3,200 troops will now go to Afghanistan instead of Iraq in order to maintain higher troop levels against the Taliban.

In a speech before the American Enterprise Institute, Bush said he was asking the US Congress for \$11.8 billion over the next two years to help the Afghan government of President Hamid Karzai.

"I've ordered an increase in US forces in Afghanistan. We've extended the stay of 3,200 troops now in the country for four months and will deploy a replacement force that will sustain this force for the foreseeable future," Bush said.

"These forces and funds are going to help President Karzai defeat common enemies," Bush said.

Nato, US and Taliban commanders have warned of an increase of fighting in the spring

when the snow melts, after the bloodiest year since the hard-line Islamists were ousted by a US-led coalition in 2001.

"This spring there's going to be a new offensive in Afghanistan, it's going to be a Nato offensive, and that's part of our strategy -- relentless in our pressure," Bush said.

For Nato to succeed in Afghanistan, Bush said member nations "must provide commanders on the ground with the troops and the equipment they need."

He said Nato allies must help fill security gaps and lift restrictions on the forces they supply "so Nato commanders have the flexibility they need to defeat the enemy wherever the enemy may make a stand."

Bush is bolstering the anti-Taliban forces in Afghanistan at the same time when he is sending 21,500 more US troops to Iraq, a decision for which he has drawn sharp criticism from Democratic lawmakers in the US Congress as well as many of his Republican allies.

Murder accused Dicon remanded

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday placed Shobh Saif Dicon, shown arrested in the Dr Aftab Ahmed murder case, on a two-day remand.

Dicon is also accused in the Indian rice trader Majid Alam murder case and the case of grenade attacks on Awami League rally at Bangabandhu Avenue on August 21, 2004. He is a close associate of top listed criminal Tanvir Ahmed Joy.

Earlier, the joint forces arrested Dicon and detained him in jail. He was produced before the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's (CMM) court yesterday for hearing on a 10-day remand paper submitted by the investigation officer.

Metropolitan Magistrate Shafiq Anwar placed Dicon on remand when the Detective Branch (DB) Inspector Mohammad Hasan Ali produced him before the magistrate's court.

On September 23 last year, former vice-chancellor of National University Dr Aftab was shot by a group of assailants at his Fuller Road residence on Dhaka University campus. Dr Aftab succumbed to his injuries on September 26.

Later, his wife Noorjahan Akhter filed a case with Shahbagh Police Station without mentioning any name of suspects involved in the murder.

Consumer

FROM PAGE 20

the sake of economic growth they will have to take some policymaking decisions.

He suggested the government to start work for some long-term projects in the sector like power.

The leading economist warned the government about adverse effects of eviction drives against small, poor and medium entrepreneurs in the rural areas.

Mahbubur Rahman said the wholesale drives against hoarding will hamper revenue collection and jeopardise the market situation.

"Genuine businessmen will be discouraged in importing goods in fear of hoarding drives that will result in low import revenue," he said, adding that it will also hamper supply of essentials in the market.

ERF President Zakaria Kajol welcomed the guests at the discussion and General Secretary Nazmul Ahsan gave vote of thanks.

Tata

FROM PAGE 1

Husain said he apprised him of the Tata projects.

Asked if he got positive response to the project from the adviser, he said, "We just apprised him, and I think, we should give him time to assess the situation."

He, however, said: "Since the benefits of the project are so good, obviously, we hope that they will also be looking at how to take it forward, if possible."

Husain was asked if he feels encouraged about their project after the current caretaker government recently signed a Tk 1033-crore deal with an Indian company for setting up 240MW power plants in Bangladesh. "I think, the best thing is to wait for some time," he said.

The official ruled out the possibility of any delegation of Tata visiting Bangladesh in the near future.

Asked if he thinks the current situation is favourable for foreign investment, Husain said, "Well, every situation is favourable for foreign investment... Only thing, intention should be there. And I think, every well-meaning Bangladeshi will have the good intention of getting foreign investment."

Honest communication is important here and the problems should be shared with children considering their level of understanding, he said, adding, "Oral liquid morphine, one of the gold standard drugs for intractable pain in many of the children, is not available in this country."

The actual number of cancer patients is yet to be determined, as there is no population-based data in the country, he said.

Jan Stjernsward, former Chief of Cancer, World Health Organisation (WHO), said, "Probably Palliative Care of the patients particularly with a community oriented approach is what a developing country needs."

According to the International Union against Childhood Cancer (UICC) report, every year more than 160,000 children are diagnosed with cancer, 90,000 of whom are expected to die of the disease.

Eighty per cent of the affected children live in the developing countries. In the developed countries three out of four cancer-afflicted children survive but in developing countries more than half of the cancer-afflicted children die of the disease.

Exposure to radiation, genetic factor and smoking in front of children increase the risk of childhood cancer, experts said.

"Intake of chemicals in food and polluted air are also contributing factors to childhood cancer," said Prof MA Mannan, chairman of Paediatric department of BSMMU.

ACC secretary

FROM PAGE 1

that the answer would be given after a new chairman and two commissioners are appointed.

Delwar's statement of assets of his and his family members shows that he heads a five-member family and has served the government for 28 years.

He has in his possession a TV, a refrigerator, a computer, an air-conditioner, a washing machine, three beds, 10 chairs and tables and three cupboards. His immovable properties include a 7.5 katha plot allotted to him in Purbachal residential area and a small abandoned village home in Katchua of Chandpur. His earnings constitute government salary, honorarium for professional lectures at various training programmes, savings from travel allowances when visiting foreign countries etc. He holds a credit card with a limit of Tk 2 lakh. He resides in government quarters in Azimpur and does not own any house or car.

The ACC secretary has a savings account with the City Bank Ltd where salary and other cheque transactions worth Tk 30,000 to 40,000 are made every month.

Delwar said that he has taken huge loans from friends and relatives for the education of his three children who study in private universities and college. He hopes to pay back these loans upon his retirement.

"My statement may not be fully flawless -- but I welcome you (the press) to cross-check it and meet me at my Azimpur quarters," he said.

The ACC secretary said that he made this statement of his own volition because he believes this would uphold transparency and accountability in the ACC.

"Whether the new chairman and commissioners would do the same would be their own choice to make," he added.

The chairman and two commissioners appointed by the previous alliance government in late 2004, resigned recently following the president's request. The posts are still vacant.

Among the 746 ACC employees, there are many bureaucrats on deputation.

Asked whether these bureaucrats would be able to behave

Illegal market

FROM PAGE 1

A number of them moved to other places but most of them stayed where they were.

Earlier, parliamentary standing committee on defence decided to demolish the slum but law enforcers failed to recover the land allegedly due to political intervention.

In the 1980s, the slum was allegedly built under the supervision of Nasim Osman, who was a Jatiya Party lawmaker then. Awami League lawmaker and Nasim Osman's brother Shamim Osman allegedly patronised the extension of the slum after the Ershad regime.

During the BNP-Jamaat alliance government, a number of BNP leaders allegedly took control of the slum and collected rent from the residents.

Rajdhani Unnayan Kartripakha (Rajuk) and Bangladesh Railway did not conduct any eviction drive in the Dhaka city yesterday. However, Bangladesh Railway recovered eight acres of land in Mymensingh and Netrakona, sources said.

EC readies

FROM PAGE 1

civil society members and election watchdogs, the sources said.

If the proposals are enacted, unregistered political parties will not be allowed to take part in the election. Besides, one intending to register with the EC will have to show a minimum popular acceptability. In that case, the EC will use a yardstick to measure the support a political party enjoys among the populace. The measures aim to keep the name-only parties from the political scene.

A registered party will have to follow its constitution strictly in its functioning. It will have to have its accounts audited. The registration might be cancelled on violation of any provision of the laws.

Currently, the registration is optional. None of the major political parties has applied for enrolment since introduction of the relevant law in 2001.

The EC also plans to devise a mechanism to prevent use of unauthorised money by the political parties and candidates, the sources added.

Before the 2001 election, the commission's initiative to ban utility service bill defaulters from the polls failed in the face of opposition from the major political parties. This time, it is determined to have the necessary provisions in effect as the caretaker government has already hinted at massive reforms in the electoral system.

Many of the former lawmakers will have to pay their outstanding bills if they are to contest the election with the proposed law coming in force. Some 183 members of the last parliament owe the government Tk 1.25 crore in telephone bills.

Japan's JBIC is also providing an investment loan for the 'Dhaka-Chittagong Corridor'. The DFID is providing technical assistance to the Planning Commission on wider sector governance issues, including the preparation of a 20-year Railway Development Master Plan.

The multi-year, multi-donor railway-sector reform programme will help restructure Bangladesh railway into a "lines of business" organization to improve its commercial and customer focus.

It will also help adopting a modern and transparent financial management system, and better human resource planning and incentives.

The Manila-based Asian development-financing institution's total commitment for the comprehensive RSIP scheme amounts to \$ 430 million under the Multi-Financing Facility. The balance of the loan will be made available later, in line with the agreement between the ADB and the government.

The World Bank's \$ 40 million will be used to support the government effort to make institutional and governance improvements in Bangladesh Railway, as well as to improve financial management and

professionally or would be able to override any form of fellow feeling while dealing with corruption of a senior bureaucrat, he said. "It's not true that the ACC will not be able to take action against a secretary for his corruption. We will try to prove our neutrality."

If there are corrupt people in the ACC itself, they will not be spared, Delwar added.

Out of the 746 staffs, about 10 percent actually came from the administration on deputation, so that the ACC can utilise their experience, the ACC secretary added.

Asked whether the ACC would investigate the allegation of corruption against the newly appointed election commissioner (EC) retired brigadier general Shakhwat Hossain, Delwar said that it is a sensitive issue as the EC is a constitutional body.

"But if there are explicit evidence of his corruption, we will surely look into the matter," he said.

Prof Yunus' plan

FROM PAGE 20

Besides, a special number is available for sending SMS. To send message, type 'dy' followed by space at the beginning of a message and send to 2233.

Prof Yunus has already received a huge response through letters, fax, emails and phone calls on his proposal to float a new political party, according to his secretariat.

The secretariat is looking for volunteers in the city as well as in the districts, willing to contribute their time to develop databases of letters, phone calls, emails and fax messages. Experienced IT experts are especially being sought for the purpose.

Those interested to become volunteers have been requested to send email to Prof Yunus (prof.yunus@gmail.com)

Many non-resident Bangladeshis (NRBs) have been contacting Prof Yunus and his secretariat. NRBs may also give their email addresses and phone numbers to receive messages on Yunus' political initiative, said a press release.

Verdict deferred

FROM PAGE 20

appear before the court yesterday due to illness. Therefore, he prayed for adjournment of the verdict in the case.

Earlier, the prosecution and the defence had completed their arguments and the court recorded statements of eight prosecution witnesses including the complainant and investigation officer (IO) of the case.

Around 16 years back, a team of customs officials held four people including two foreign nationals from Zia International Airport on July 17, 1990 during their attempt to smuggle around 3.6 kg of gold worth around Tk 2.5 crore into Bangladesh.

A smuggling case was filed with the Cantonment Police Station the same day against the four -- Bernhard Rudiger of Germany, David Anthony Chalmar Chaker of England, then manager of the Zia International Airport Major (retd) Ashraf Uddin Sekender and Abu Taher, an airport security guard.

During the investigation, the IO found evidence of Ershad's involvement in the smuggling and his name was included in the charge sheet on August 31, 1991.

Oli expressed his opinion for a total shake-up of the Anti-corruption Commission so that it could take action against all corrupt people, even the top people of the country.

About a provision that bars any appointment in the armed forces if the person was involved with student politics, he said similar system should also be introduced in recruiting civil servants.

Responding to a question about Noble laureate Prof Muhammad Yunus' plan to launch a political party, Oli said anybody in the country can join politics.

"But those who win a prestigious award like the Nobel Prize should not switch over to political platform, leaving their own domain of work," he observed, but hastened to add that he would welcome Prof Yunus if he joins politics or launches a political party.

"Now it is for him to decide how he will enter politics and when," said Oli.

22 cop aspirants

FROM PAGE 20

They alleged that they searched for Haider to get their money back in all possible places in the district but they could not find him. The Daily Star repeatedly tried to reach Haider on his mobile phone but failed apparently due to his phone being switched off.

Local sources alleged the two Shibir men were selected on their party's recommendations.

Of the 24 sub-inspectors and sergeants who had been selected for recruitment from Netrakona, 14 were selected from the former state minister's home upazila Madan, sources in the Special Branch of Netrakona police said. The rest 10 were from the nine other upazilas of the district.

A highly placed official of an intelligence agency wishing not to be named said many of the 24 aspirants were married and engaged in different cases, but Haider managed to collect their verification certificates from Netrakona District Special Branch office.

The APSs are political appointees to work under the ministers.

CA asks

FROM PAGE 1

prevented Bangladesh from moving forward. The administration and law enforcement agencies have now got an opportunity to play a vital role in this situation.

He however warned that in the ongoing drives, the poor, vulnerable and honest people must not be harassed or harmed.

The CG is committed to rejuvenating the economy and keeping the prices of essentials at a tolerable level, the CA said. He asked both administration and police officials to play their role in ensuring a stable supply of goods in the market. "Divisional commissioners and deputy commissioners have been given orders in this regard," he added.

"Continue your drive against the business syndicates and ill-motivated wholesalers to maintain reasonable prices of essentials. Be proactive in taking legal action against smugglers, loan defaulters and people who adulterate food products. Especially, take initiatives to expedite the legal processes," said Fakhruddin.

The CA also asked the officials to help ensure proper transport and distribution of fertilisers among farmers to prevent any future crisis of it.

A number of corrupt officials assisted land grabbers to take advantage of unbridled corruption, anarchy and unplanned urbanisation. Stern action against them is being taken, and all out efforts to recover the already grabbed land will continue, he said.

Cabinet Secretary Ali Imam Mazumdar advised the officials to follow the motto of "Protecting the weak and attacking the evil."

Hearing both the sides, the court ordered to send Pintu to Dhaka Central Jail.

</