

Frigate torpedoed by mean politics

Navy's Tk 500cr 'Bangabandhu' decommissioned 5 years back by BNP-led govt; now caretaker govt mulls its re-commissioning in June

SHARIER KHAN

The state of the art frigate of the Bangladesh Navy, purchased in 2001 for Tk 500 crore, has remained idle for more than five years now because of sheer 'political meanness' of the immediate past BNP-led alliance government.

Equipped for underwater, surface and air operations, the high-tech frigate, 'Bangabandhu', was decommissioned on February 13, 2002 and removed from the naval fleet, competent defence sources said.

The decommissioning was done on the pretext of corruption in purchasing the frigate. "If there was corruption, let there be legal actions against that. But what is the justification of decommissioning a world class frigate of the navy?" asks a defence high official.

The decommissioning has caused an incalculable loss, as the one-year warranty period of the onboard high-tech equipment elapsed without utilising them.

Meanwhile, at least 300 officers and soldiers, who could have been given a world-class training on the frigate, had to go abroad for the same purpose.

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This file photo shows Bangladesh Navy's only bleeding-edge frigate "Bangabandhu". The ship was purchased from South Korea in 2001 but has remained decommissioned for over five years.

Mid-level AL leaders buck up Hasina

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The mid-level and district-level leaders of Awami League (AL) have assured their party chief of their loyalty, saying that they would always stand beside her like they did in the past.

Sheikh Hasina, on the other hand, advised her party leaders to monitor the present situation carefully and make moves accordingly.

Several mid and district level leaders met Sheikh Hasina in the past few days following the arrest of

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18 eminent citizens for release of Jalil

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Expressing deep concern over the arrest of Awami League General Secretary Abdul Jalil, 18 eminent citizens yesterday in a joint statement urged the government to release him on humanitarian grounds as he is seriously ill.

"We expressed deep concern over the arrest of Abdul Jalil, one of

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ADP's top priority on power sector

Govt okays 31pc more allocation for the sector

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

The government yesterday approved a Tk 26,500-crore outlay, 23 percent higher than the current one, for the next fiscal year's Annual Development Programme (ADP).

Prioritising the power sector development, it has allocated Tk 3,633 crore for setting up 14 new power plants with an electricity-

generating capacity of 2,505 megawatts (MW).

According to the final ADP, the interim government has approved 31 percent more allocation for the development of power sector and of that, 56 percent has been earmarked for power generation.

Besides, it has decided to do away with discrimination in regional allocation. And accordingly, the

allocation for Rajshahi division has been increased by 34 percent and that for Khulna and Barisal by 42 percent.

The development budget for the local government rose by 20 percent. But no funds have been set aside for Gram Sarkar.

As many as 1,333 projects will

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Hasina regularly took money from magnates

Jalil tells joint forces

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The detained high profile political and business leaders continue to divulge startling information to the Task Force for Interrogation (TFI) about their corruption.

According to their confessions political party high-ups and govern-

ment ministers were submerged in rampant nomination trade during elections, shared among them regular monetary contributions from businessmen and foreign companies in exchange for government business contracts, and extorted m o n e y

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Rehearing of Mohiuddin's asylum case likely Tuesday

UNB, Dhaka

San Francisco Circuit Court was learnt to have considered a rehearing of the asylum case of AKM Mohiuddin Ahmed, the condemned killer of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, on Tuesday.

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POWER SHORTAGE

WB pledges urgent budgetary support

REJAUL KARIM BYRON and ASHFAQ WARES KHAN

The World Bank (WB) has committed emergency budgetary support for the power sector development as it believes the interim government needs to be on a war footing to cut down the massive power shortage plaguing the country.

"Yes, we are certainly going to provide the support. We are looking at it as a big crisis and we are going to give it on an emergency basis," Praful C Patel, WB vice-president for South Asia, told The Daily Star yesterday, before leaving Dhaka after a three-day visit.

He said the power sector is a

priority area and the government should go about the problem head-on with support from the WB.

Earlier at a press conference, Patel said, "Reform in the power sector is critical since it will impact on the economy at large."

Urgent reforms are needed particularly for strengthening the sector's financial viability and increasing the electricity-generating capacity, he observed.

It is essential that the government undertake some key reforms like restructuring power companies and ensuring full financial recovery of the Power Development Board (PDB), he added.

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Kamal says sorry for standing by pledge-breaking politicians

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Gono Forum President Dr Kamal Hossain yesterday apologised to the countrymen for standing by the

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ESSENTIALS

Price spiral calls for immediate attention

Study dubs it biggest pressure on economy

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The spiralling price hike of essentials is currently the biggest pressure on the economy. The government should look into the matter immediately and maintain a generous import policy, particularly in food grain import for keeping the price under control.

Debapriya Bhattacharya, executive director of independent think tank Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) observed this while presenting a study on the state of

Bangladesh economy in fiscal 2007 and an outlook of the same for fiscal 2008 at a press briefing held at Cirdap auditorium yesterday.

CPD Research Director Mustafizur Rahman responding to a question said the deployment of paramilitary, BDR, to sell essential commodities would not bring any long-term benefits.

"We see this as a temporary and cautious measure of the government. This is not a solution. Obviously not a permanent

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5 killed in Gazipur road crash

UNB, Gazipur

Five people died and ten others were injured when a minibus plunged into a ditch in Nimtali rail gate area on Tongi-Kaliganj road yesterday morning.

Police and witnesses said the Tongi-bound minibus from Pubail suddenly overturned and fell into the roadside ditch at about 8:00am, killing four passengers and the helper of the bus on the spot and injuring 10 others.

Four of the dead were identified as Akbar, 20, Saddam, 18, and Hasan, 30, workers of Tongi National Fan Factory, and bus helper Zahir, 20. Identity of another victim, aged around 32, could not be known.

The injured were admitted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) and Tongi Hospital.

Police recovered the bodies and sent them to the DMCH morgue for autopsy.