

Army chief seeks president's support in discharging duties

UNB, Dhaka

Chief of Army Staff General Moeen U Ahmed made a courtesy call on President Iajuddin Ahmed at Bangabhaban yesterday and discussed various matters of the force, including the ongoing relief activities for the cyclone-stricken people.

A release from the president house said the army chief apprised the president, also the Supreme Commander of Armed Forces, of the ongoing relief operations and rehabilitation activities in the cyclone-hit areas by the Bangladesh Army.

General Moeen also informed the president about various issues relating to the army.

"He sought continuous support and cooperation from the president and supreme commander of the Armed Forces in discharging his duties," said the release.

Iajuddin gave General Moeen assured him of full cooperation.

The president thanked army for their wholehearted and sincere cooperation and active participation in helping and rescuing the cyclone-hit people in the coastal belt.

He also thanked the Bangladesh Navy, Bangladesh Air Force, civil administration and all concerned who are engaged in rehabilitation and relief activities in the cyclone-affected areas.

Military Secretary to the President Major General M Aminul Karim and Press Secretary Abdul Awal Howlader were present on the occasion.

St Gregory's High School to celebrate 125th anniversary

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

St. Gregory's High School, one of the oldest and renowned schools in the country, will celebrate its 125th founding anniversary with a two-day programme beginning December 13.

The new building of the school will also be inaugurated on the occasion, the organisers said at a press conference at the National Press Club.

The school authorities will also take out a colourful procession at 8:00am tomorrow from the school premises at Luxmibazar in the city to mark the founding anniversary. The procession will end at the National Press Club.

Eminent lawyer Dr Kamal Hossain, an alumnus of the institution, will inaugurate the two-day celebrations on the school premises in the city on December 13.

Foreign Adviser Dr Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury, former president AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury, Vice-Chancellor of Brac University Dr Jamilur Reza Chowdhury, Editor and Publisher of The Daily Star Mahfuz Anam, National Press Club President Shawkat Mahmud and writer and journalist Shahriar Kabir -- all former students of the school -- are expected to attend the anniversary programmes.

Sports and games, cultural functions and a fair will also be held on the first day.

AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury will inaugurate the new building of the school at 5:30pm on the day.

Foreign Adviser Dr Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury will address the closing session on December 14 as the chief guest.

The Daily Star, Channel i and Radio Today are the media partners of the event.

Brother Robi Purification, headmaster of the school, and AKM Shamsul Azam, co-chairman of the anniversary organising committee, were present at the press briefing.

Sherpur health complex doctor held in rape case

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

Sherpur police arrested a medical officer of Sherpur Upazila Health Complex on Tuesday evening for his alleged involvement in a rape case.

Police said Dr Shahadat Hossain Arun, 28, son of Ebarat Ali, raped a nine-year-old girl who used to work as a domestic help at his residence on November 28.

When the girl fell sick following the incident, Arun sent the girl back to her residence after providing some treatment at the hospital.

But when the condition of the girl deteriorated on Tuesday afternoon, she told her parents about the incident. Her parents rushed her to Dhanat Upazila Health Complex.

On information, Officer-in-Charge (OC) of Dhanat Police Station (PS) informed the matter to Sherpur PS.

Arun was arrested that evening and was sent to jail yesterday morning.

However, Arun denied the allegation and said that the case is ill-motivated.

Meanwhile, there is a rumour that the case could be settled down in exchange for money.



Bangladesh Mahila Parishad General Secretary Ayesha Khanam addresses a workshop at the Cirdap auditorium in the city yesterday. On her right is Justice KM Sobhan and her left is Bela Nabi.

TECHNICAL GLITCHES

Hajj pilgrims suffer as Biman flight delayed for 21 hrs

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

About 200 Hajj pilgrims finally left for Jeddah by a Biman flight last night after remaining stranded at Chittagong Shah Amanat International Airport for about 21 hours, sources said.

Biman sources said technical glitches in its aircraft are responsible for the delay of the flight, causing suffering to the Hajj pilgrims and other passengers bound for Jeddah.

Biman Bangladesh Airlines, the national flag carrier, was also forced to cancel its Kathmandu-bound flight yesterday due to similar reasons.

Meanwhile, Biman has so far got only two slots (prescribed timing for arriving and departure of flights) although it applied for 12 slots to facilitate ferrying of Hajj pilgrims.

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Biman has so far ferried 26,349 Hajj pilgrims, out of about 43,000 pilgrims.

"The Jeddah-bound BG-037 was scheduled to depart from Chittagong airport at 10:30pm on Tuesday, but technical glitches caused the delay," said a Biman official.

The Dhaka-Chittagong-Jeddah flight left Zia International Airport for Chittagong at around 5:00pm and then left Chittagong airport with the Hajj pilgrims on board at around 7:30pm, he added.

He also said the civil aviation authority of Saudi Arabia has so far granted only two slots to Biman against its requirement of 12 slots to ferry Hajj pilgrims.

"We are trying to get more extra slots from Saudi civil aviation authority," he added.



Brother Robi Purification, headmaster of St. Gregory's High School, speaks at a press conference at the National Press Club in the city yesterday. On his right are AKM Shamsul Azam and Shahidullah Azim and on his left are Brother Chandan Gomes and Nilotpal Sarkar.

Efficient management in power sector underscored

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Capacity of any power plant could be increased up to ten percent through efficient power generation and distribution, speakers at a workshop said yesterday.

Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) organised the workshop titled 'Total Quality Management of Power Sector of Bangladesh' in the city's Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre.

The workshop aimed at helping Bangladesh Power Development Board in achieving quality assurance in power generation, distribution and efficient workload management.

Secretary for Power Dr Faozul Kabir Khan, Japanese Ambassador in Bangladesh Masayuki Inoue and Resident Representative of JICA Bangladesh Office Nobuko Suzuki Kayashima were present.

Japan International Cooperation Agency have been implementing Total Quality Management (TQM) project since 2006, the organisers said.

It also aims at decreasing unscheduled shutdowns, sufficient utilisation of installed capacity, reduction of system loss and increase in sales/revenue, they added.

Speaking at the programme, Dr Faozul Kabir Khan appreciated Japanese assistance in different sectors and stressed faster implementation of foreign development projects in Bangladesh.

Nobuko Suzuki Kayashima urged the authorities of the power sector to take prompt initiatives to enjoy the fruit of good and efficient management for a long time.

Mentioning the huge gap between demand and supply in power generation in Bangladesh, Masayuki Inoue underscored the need for addressing both policy side and technical side in order to solve the critical power demand-supply gap.



Fall in temperature likely

UNB, Dhaka

Weather may remain mainly dry with partly cloudy sky over the country in the next 12 hours until 6:00pm today.

Night temperature may fall by 1-2 degree Celsius over the country during the period, Met Office said.

Highest temperature 29.6 degrees Celsius was recorded yesterday at Cox's Bazar and lowest 13.7 degrees Celsius at Rajshahi and Chuadanga.

The sun sets in the capital at 5:11pm today and rises at 6:28am 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	26.3	17.3	83	67
Chittagong	27.5	18.4	83	73
Rajshahi	27.1	13.7	86	78
Khulna	26.4	16.3	87	76
Barisal	27.5	16.5	91	86
Sylhet	27.0	16.0	75	74
Cox's Bazar	29.6	18.8	77	74

CNG AUTORICKSHAW

10-day CMP ultimatum to owners, drivers

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Chittagong

The traffic department of Chittagong Metropolitan Police (CMP) yesterday issued a ten-day ultimatum for installation and repair of meters in every CNG-run autorickshaw plying the streets in the port city.

Deputy Commissioner (traffic) Mohammad Ali in a meeting said no CNG-run autorickshaws would be allowed to ply the city streets without meters from December 16. Law enforcers would take stern action against the drivers and owners who will fail to comply with the rules.

The announcement came from a meeting of the CMP Traffic department with deputy commissioner (traffic) in the chair.

Representatives from CNG autorickshaw drivers, owners, commuters, journalists and Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA) attended the meeting.

The meeting also decided to provide a price-chart, as per the adjusted price structure made by the government earlier in a gazette published on May 27, for the drivers who could not change the software in their existing meters.

Leaders of the owners' association urged the BRTA authorities to take steps to ensure the availability of meters and required parts in the market.

BRTA allowed only ten companies to sell and install meters in Chittagong but most of them are not running their business now, they alleged.

General secretary of Chittagong Autorickshaw Drivers' Association Md Nazrul Islam Sarkar alleged that most of the owners compel the drivers to pay Tk 500 to Tk 800 violating the rule.

Due to such exorbitant daily payments realised by the owners, the drivers have no other way but to force the passengers pay extra fair without using the meters, Nazrul added.

DC (traffic) Mohammad Ali at the meeting urged the owners to take Tk 450 as daily payments from the drivers according to the government guideline in this regard.

BRTA Assistant Director Sheikh Ataulah Chowdhury, Chittagong Press Club General Secretary Ejaz Eusoffi, Dr Moimul Islam Mahmud, Engineer Subhas Barua, Assistant Commissioner (AC) (traffic) Tofayel Ahmed Miah and leaders of the owners association Delwar Hossain and Abdul Bashir Mia were present at the meeting.

The tariff offers made by Green Power and Energy Prima range between \$15.9 per kilowatt a month and \$19.75 while the offers of Alstom and Aggreko range between \$21.7 and \$27. "The wide difference is too suspicious to ignore," a source said.

GROSS ANOMALIES

The Power Cell's bid qualification criterion specifically stated that the bidder shall have experience of rental plants of 20MW or higher capacity during the last three years. The bidder will state the plant's location, capacity, owner, power purchaser and commissioning date.

The criterion further dictates that the bidder must have barge-

skid-, trailer-mounted power plants in ready stock, either through ownership or "other arrangement".

"Firstly, the consortium called Energy Prima is not even a legal entity," said a source, adding, "It is not even registered under the Companies Act of Bangladesh. How can the tender committee even consider looking at its bid?"

Energy Prima consortium consists of Energy Prima and Hosaf Meter, which are both owned by Moazzem Hossain, and Russia's Geo-Spectrum Group. Energy Prima's business has been shown as "local agent" without explaining whom it represents and how it is related to the power sector. Geo-Spectrum, on the other hand is a Russian power plant manufacturer and not a rental power developer. Hosaf Meter Industry's profile also says it is a "local agent/distributor" of a foreign manufacturer without clarifying what it actually means.

"Still, Geo-Spectrum is a power company but they did not name Geo-Spectrum as the lead bidder, rather put Energy Prima in the forefront," quips a source.

Energy Prima's notated consortium agreement for the bid states, "The consortium of the parties shall be named as Energy Prima which will be duly incorporated under the Companies Act of Bangladesh upon its being selected as the successful bidders by the Power Cell."

Neither Energy Prima, nor Green Power possessed any rental plants with three years' experience. Therefore, they used the "other arrangement" part of the criterion. This "other arrangement" came in the form of letters from a number of foreign companies.

Energy Prima produced a letter from one Cemak of Thailand stating that it has booked 50MW

equipment for Energy Prima. It also added a letter from Geo-Spectrum, which says it is involved in power plant ownership, building and operation for the last seven years and that it is associated with Energy Prima.

As these letters were inadequate, the Power Cell sought Energy Prima's clarification. After this, the consortium vaguely informed that it had a number of plants in Russia, some in Europe and some in Denmark. It claimed to have "sales agreement" with a German company Power International AG on October 18, which will supply the necessary machinery.

"These still do not comply with the bid's terms. This is a rental power bid... not just yet another typical power tender. It looks like Energy Prima went out shopping for equipment after it submitted bids. If such shopping arrangements had worked, that would have been the way rental power plants were installed worldwide," noted an official.

Lotus Kamal group's consortium Green Power does not even have a foreign participant. This consortium has Green Power, Bangla Trac and Desh Energy as members.

The government has been trying to sign rental power contracts for the last three years without any positive results. The last government tried to award dozens of rental power schemes to its party's men with 15-year tender term and almost none of these bidders had any experience in power sector. Whereas rental power schemes demand each bidder must have its own power generator.

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There should be transparency in poverty alleviation projects taken up for achieving the millennium development goals, the head of the caretaker government observed. It would be possible to reduce the level of poverty if the public sector services could be delivered to the poorer segments of population in a proper manner, he noted.

"If the citizens could learn these initiatives, their participation as well as accountability of the government could be ensured. The process of building a corruption-free democratic society would also be consolidated in this way."

Referring to proposals of the Public Administration Reforms Commission to make official information public, Fakhruddin said the government is eager to introduce the concept of citizens' charter in all service-providing government organisations soon.

Speaking as the special guest, Law Adviser Mainul said the expected result of the right to information act cannot be attained without capacity building of the government in providing information.

"It's not possible to make the administration competent over-

Right to information act

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night for providing information as required," he observed.

The journalists' responsibility will turn greater as soon as the act is promulgated, he said, adding that they should be prepared to use information keeping in mind the public interests and national security.

"It's not enough to only know information; rather they should have adequate skill, political spirit and judgement while using the information."

Dr Shamsul Bari in his keynote speech said the goal of the right to information act is to compel the authorities to provide information for public interest.

The Official Secrets Act was promulgated by the British rulers during their colonial rule as they treated the people of this land as their subjects, he added.

"We are no more subjects, we are citizens. So, information is our right, not need." Involvement of people, especially the politicians and officials, is very important and there should be measures in this regard, he added.

Launch of the practice for making public-interest documents open is very important, Dr Bari said, adding exemptions are however listed in the draft act and must be followed.

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evaluation committee includes an official against whom repeated complaints of favouritism were levelled from 2006. A number of bidders once again raised allegations against the same official and recently sent letters to the power ministry in this regard.

Once awarded a power contract, the contractor must start power generation within 120 days.

BIDS

The Green Power Ltd appears to be the lowest bidder in the Ashuganj 50MW and the Bhola 30MW bids. However, the Bhola bid also had a competing offer from a consortium comprising Indonesian Kalmax Energy and local GBB. "Till the evaluation is announced, it is hard to say who is the lowest in Bhola," said a source.

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