

New bill on RTI law

FROM PAGE 16 assurance of considering all the ordinances, which ceased to have any effect from yesterday.

The bill, however, suggested scrapping the RTI ordinance 2008 promulgated by the immediate past caretaker government.

Four other bills were also put before the parliament and were sent to the respective parliamentary standing committees for scrutiny before their placement in the House within 15 days.

Industries Minister Dilip Barua placed the Trade Mark Bill 2009, State Minister for Power Shamsul Haque Tuku put forward Dhaka Electricity Authority (amendment) bill 2009 while Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid tabled Begum Rokeya University, Rangpur bill 2009, and Bangladesh University of Professionals bill 2009.

The immediate past caretaker government promulgated those four ordinances. But they came to cease to have any effect from yesterday on their expiry, as they were not ratified in parliament by Tuesday.

The state minister for power placed the Dhaka Electricity Authority bill seeking to enact a law for continuation of the Dhaka Electricity Authority as public limited company made by the immediate past care-

taker government. Another two crucial bills-- Human Rights Commission and Consumers' Right Protection-- will be placed today or within the next workday of the House. The two bills were already submitted to the parliament secretariat for their placement to the House, sources in the parliament secretariat said.

The immediate past caretaker government promulgated those two ordinances, whose timeframe expired yesterday.

Meanwhile, the Business Advisory Committee headed by Speaker Advocate Abdul Hamid is likely to sit today to extend the tenure of the current session.

Three men set themselves on fire in Beijing

AFP, Beijing

Three men set themselves on fire near Tiananmen Square in Beijing yesterday, state media reported, but authorities quickly put a lid on further information about the incident.

The three men sat in a vehicle and started the fire at 3:00 pm (0700 GMT) at an intersection in a busy shopping area, Xinhua news agency said, citing a Beijing government spokesman.

The intersection of Changan Avenue and Wangfujing shopping street is about one kilometre from Tiananmen Square, the scene of pro-democracy protests in 1989 that the Chinese military crushed with deadly force.

Rab nabs 8 JMB men

OUR CORRESPONDENT, MYMENSINGH

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) arrested eight suspected members of Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) from four villages in Muktagachha upazila early yesterday.

On information, four teams of Rab-9 launched a drive in four villages -- Rampur, Bairaghibag, Goyeshpur and Dullah Chanpur of the upazila at about 11pm on Tuesday and hunted the JMB men till early yesterday.

Eight suspected JMB men were arrested during the drive, Rab officials said at a press conference held at its office yesterday noon.

Rab men held M Anadul Haque, M Abdul Berek and M Abdul Mannan from Rampur village while Mohammad Murtaza and M Saiful Islam from Bairaghibag village and Quari M Saidur Rahman and Mohammad from Goyeshpur village and M Nazrul Islam from Dullah Chanpur village.

The arrestees were being interrogated at Rab office where they confessed their involvement in militant activities, Rab sources said.

Terming Muktagachha JMB prone, it said JMB second-in-command Bangla Bhai was also arrested from the house of Dr. M Shamsul Alam in Rampur village on March 6, 2006. Later, Rab-9 also arrested 15 JMB men along with some books on militancy from the shop of Hira Khalifa on March 6, 2007.

Brig Gen Zia

FROM PAGE 16 core division of Bangladesh Army for a long time.

The telecom watchdog played a strong role in making rapidly growing telecom industry effective in last two years.

Under the leadership of former chairman the BTRC played a pivotal role in the drive against illegal VoIP (voice over internet protocol) business.

The BTRC was able to check the illegal VoIP business considerably in last two years. But those businessmen are back on track now with the political government in power, said an official.

"The new chairman should continue the drive against VoIP," the official hoped.

Hazari asked

FROM PAGE 16 or arrest the petitioner in the cases during a period of eight weeks.

Earlier on February 22, the HC bench directed Hazari, wanted in 19 criminal cases, to surrender before the trial courts within eight weeks in connection with 11 other criminal cases and granted him ad-interim bail for two months in a carjacking case.

Hazari who was awarded a total of 60 years' imprisonment in five cases in absentia appeared before the HC bench yesterday and prayed for bail in the two cases.

Advocate M Shajahan Shaju, a lawyer for Hazari, yesterday told The Daily Star that separate petitions for bail in five cases are now pending with the HC and that is why the law enforcers cannot arrest his client in the cases. Hazari was sentenced to imprisonment in those cases, he added.

Advocate Abdul Baset Majumdar appeared for Hazari.

SL troops

FROM PAGE 16 "Tigers were attacking the troops from three fronts, mobilising all the cadres at their disposal but it will be only a matter of time before the army captured the entire township," Nanayakkarasaid.

Tigers had suffered heavy losses in their bid to defend their last stronghold, he said.

Troops came across double cabs and other vehicles left behind by the Tigers in retreat.

Sixteen LITE cadres who had tried to infiltrate Mullaitivu area from the coastal belt were shot dead. Later the troops on a search operation had recovered all 16 bodies the military spokesman said.

The advancing troops came across an LITE cemetery in Teevipuram where a large number of Tiger cadres killed in battle were buried and in one place the troops detected a tomb where an LITE cadre who had been killed in a confrontation a couple of weeks ago had been buried.

In another instance the troops found a makeshift hut where the wounded had been treated by the Tigers.

Mutiny starts

FROM PAGE 1 many high-ups including the BDR director general hostage and seize control of the headquarters within a few minutes, BDR jawans told The Daily Star. They spray bullets indiscriminately on the headquarters compound.

9:30-10:00am: A person is hit by a bullet in the head on his way to the BDR hospital inside the headquarters during the gun battle. He dies on the spot. Five other people including a BDR member, who sustained bullet injuries, are rushed to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH). Members of Rapid Action Battalion reach the spot.

10:30-11:30am: Panic grips the people of the surrounding areas and vehicular movement on nearby roads comes to a halt. Shops and schools in the area are closed down. Army personnel reach the spot and take positions at various points. An army helicopter patrols above the headquarters and returns in the face of indiscriminate firing from the BDR rebels.

12:30-1:00pm: State Minister for LGRD and Cooperatives Jahangir Kabir Nanak and Jatiya Sangsad Whip Mirza Azam arrives at the BDR headquarters to hold talks with the mutineers. Nanak requests the BDR rebels by a loudhailer to halt firing for the sake of BDR's image.

1:00-3:00pm: The mutineers talk to reporters of various TV channels and newspapers demanding an end to the army's control over the BDR. They demand withdrawal of army personnel from areas around the headquarters and also talks with the prime minister and the home minister.

Jahangir Kabir Nanak and Mirza Azam enter the BDR headquarters with a white flag. Home Minister Advocate Sahara Khatun also enters the BDR headquarters.

3:40pm: A team of 14 BDR members reaches the prime minister's official residence Januna for talks.

6:00pm: Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina announces amnesty for the rebel BDR soldiers after holding a meeting with the team, Nanak tells journalists.

7:30pm: The BDR mutineers stop firing and many injured including women and

children come out of the BDR headquarters.

8:45pm: BDR jawans fire shots again near BDR gate no-1. Additional army personnel are deployed. Jahangir Kabir Nanak and lawmaker Fazle Noor Taposh reaches the Rifles Square to hold talks with BDR mutineers while the home minister and Mirza Azam reaches near Road no-2 at Dhanmondi.

9:00pm: BDR mutineers demand that army personnel are withdrawn from Pikhana by tonight as precondition for laying down arms.

9:40pm: A team of four BDR members meets Sahara Khatun, Jahangir Kabir Nanak, Mirza Azam and Fazle Noor Taposh at Ambala Inn on Road no-2 in Dhanmondi.

10:00pm: Eight more BDR members join the team to hold talks with the government representatives.

10:40pm: Army personnel start retreating from their positions at New Market, Nilkhet and Balaka.

12:10am: The meeting between the rebel BDR personnel and the government representatives ends. Taposh tells the reporters that the rebel jawans agreed to lay down their arms within two hours.

12:25am: Sahara Khatun enters the BDR headquarters.

JS bodies

FROM PAGE 16 committee on rules of procedure and petition committee, Advocate Fazle Rabbi Mia will head the standing committee on government assurance, Abdul Matin Khasru private members' bills and resolutions committee, Deputy Speaker Shawkat Ali library committee, M Idris Ali defence ministry, Shawkat Momen Shajahan agriculture ministry, AKM Mozammel Haque land ministry, Mozammel Hossain social welfare ministry, Dewan Farid Gazi primary and mass education ministry, BM Fazle Karim Chowdhury housing and public works ministry, Zahid Hasan Rassel youth and sports ministry, Kaji Keramat Ali cultural affairs ministry, Dabirul Islam science and information and communication technology ministry, and Promod Mankin Chittagong Hill Tracts affairs ministry.

Nerve-racking

FROM PAGE 16 were strayed around. Most of the members of the families went under the cots and took shelter in the toilets and kitchen, according to the sources.

Talking to The Daily Star, a teacher of BDR College said, they were warned by the BDR Jawan to stay inside of their house.

"I saw some BDR jawans who covered their faces with red clothes were beating their two officials with iron rod," she said requesting anonymity adding "We had just heard the sound of firing. I could not see much," she said.

Narrating the situation near the wall of Hrishipara in Hazaribagh, an eyewitness said, BDR jawans were patrolling in front of the quarters with arms and shooting in the air.

Quoting a commanding officer who escaped from the scene, a retired BDR major said, the gun battle started when director general of BDR was delivering his speech, some jawans came forward and started bargaining about their demands that triggered the bloody armed situation eventually.

Frantic search

FROM PAGE 1 roamed around the BDR Headquarters at Peelkhana since the morning.

They visited morgues and clinics with a hope to find out nearest ones. Some of them also visited various media houses and contacted journalists.

BDR sources said families of around 100 officers reside inside the BDR headquarters. The rebel BDR jawans held hostage the officers along with their family members.

Sylhet Sector Commander Colonel Gulzaruddin Ahmed's niece Shampa Akhter Somu told The Daily Star, "We heard that my uncle made a phone call to one of the journalists in the morning. Do you have any more information about him?"

Sources said Col Gulzar, who is the immediate former additional director general of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab), had made a phone call to an official of Rab and also a journalist at about 9:30am requesting them to do something for his rescue.

Somu said his uncle told the journalist and the Rab official that he was held hostage at gunpoint.

While describing the horrifying picture inside the BDR headquarters at about 10:30 am, a BDR soldier said, the jawans got united and broke open the ammunition depot immediately after the shootout began at about 9:30 am at Darbal Hall.

It was like a battlefield...everyone was holding guns and firing indiscriminately. Many bullet-hit personnel were found lying here and there while some of them dead," another soldier told The Daily Star over cell phone.

"Brothers, let's take arms and stay together," the word was shouting to each other during the massacre. Soon the jawans captured a number of vehicles used by the officers, they started firing indiscriminately targeting their officers, he said.

"The soldiers on duty and those who were in the barracks joined the mutiny. Hours after the shootout started, I saw few bodies were lying in the drains in various points, the jawan said in a trembling voice adding "I am not sure whether those were the soldier or officer."

Gulzar's nephew Sahadat Hossain said he rushed to Holly Family Red Crescent Hospital at about 10:30pm on information that the injured BDR personnel were admitted to the hospital.

Kushia sector commander Colonel Shamsul Arifin came to Dhaka four days ago, family sources said, adding that he stayed in the mess of BDR on Tuesday night.

His brother-in-law Azharul Islam rushed to Holly Family Hospital in an effort to find out Arifin.

He said Arifin had contacted his family members last time at about 9:00am.

Both Azhar and Shahdat said they heard that many officers were killed inside the BDR headquarters.

Sazzad Haider, public relation officer of BDR, told The Daily Star that about 100 families of the BDR officials reside inside the BDR headquarters and of them at least 50 families are of army officials who are deputed to BDR.

Meanwhile, Colonel Mujibul Huq was killed but his family members did not find his body.

BDR at a glance

STAR REPORT

Bangladesh Rifles (BDR), labelled as the ever-vigilant sentinels of the border, is the paramilitary force of Bangladesh. As a force, BDR is second in size only to Bangladesh Army, according to Bangladesh.

Headed by a director general, the main job of the 67,000-strong BDR force include border protection, anti-smuggling work and coming to the aid of civil and military authorities as directed by the government.

BDR has a glorious history of over 200 years. Bangladesh Rifles succeeded East Pakistan Rifles (EPR) in 1972 after Bangladesh was born.

EPR was established in 1947 as a successor to the Eastern Frontier Rifles, which was established in 1920. Before 1920, the Bengal Military Police had guarded the borders since 1891.

Bengal Military Police had succeeded Ramgarh Local Battalion which was formed in 1795, according to official website of BDR.

Rich in heritage, this force demonstrated its superior fighting skills and valour during the Liberation War as 817 soldiers embraced death in the war to become martyrs.

This force had fought valiantly and successfully in a number of border skirmishes during the Liberation War including the ones in Lathitila, Dohogram, Laxmipur, Assalong and Boroirbari.

Two of the seven Bir Shrestha, the highest military award of Bangladesh, awards were given to BDR's Lance Naik Nur Mohammad Sheikh and Lance Naik Munshi Abdur Rouf.

Another eight BDR soldiers were given Bir Uttam, 32 Bir Bikram and 78 Bir Pratik awards.

It also took part in the First and the Second World War.

The soldiers of BDR play a vital role in protecting the 4,427km border of Bangladesh.

BDR is also a familiar force in Bangladesh sports arena.

BNP demands

FROM PAGE 1 statement either from the leader of the House or the home minister.

The opposition lawmakers also submitted notices at the Parliament Secretariat for holding the discussion.

Referring to the opposition lawmakers' notices, Deputy Speaker Shawkat Ali, who was presiding over the sitting, said he did not know the notices were submitted. He said he would enquire the notices and inform the House about his decision on the matter later.

"We hope a statement on behalf of the government will be delivered on time," the deputy speaker said.

A discussion was, however, held for 12 to 15 minutes when Opposition Chief Whip Zainul Abedin Farroque took the floor on a point of order and started talking about the incident. Senior lawmakers of the opposition and the treasury bench also took part.

In response to the opposition lawmakers' demand, Deputy Leader of the House Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury said she hoped the crisis would have a peaceful end.

"It is a critical juncture for the nation. The prime minister and the home minister are working to end the crisis," she said to explain why they were absent in parliament.

She said the home minister must inform the nation about the incident in details.

Ruling alliance lawmaker Rashed Khan Menon criticised Chief Whip Abdus Shahid who opposed the opposition lawmakers' demand for a government statement.

"It is against parliamentary norms," Menon commented over Shahid's speech. "We expected a statement from the home minister or any senior minister. Even the deputy leader should have informed the House about the incident in absence of the leader of the House and the home minister," he said.

After Menon, Awami League Presidium Member Toftail Ahmed took the floor and said the prime minister and the home minister were working to end the crisis peacefully.

Earlier, BNP senior lawmaker Salahuddin Quader Chowdhury said it is a very sensitive matter but they did not have any information on what had happened in the BDR headquarters.

"We know the prime minister and the home minister are busy dealing with the situation. So the deputy leader of the House could have informed us about the incident," Salahuddin said.

He said they submitted adjournment motions and informed the House.

The BNP lawmaker said they are not "doing politics" with the matter but people are worried about the incident.

Mutiny, bloodshed

FROM PAGE 1 the home minister and the rest of the government delegation entered the headquarters.

While the government delegation was inside the headquarters, gunshots were still being fired, and the mutineers were threatening that they would not surrender, until the army is withdrawn, and if their demand was not met they would blow up the entire BDR headquarters.

Bodies of the two officers -- Col Mujibul Huq and Lt Col Enayetul Haq -- were recovered from a sewage system outside the BDR headquarters. But their deaths were not officially declared till filing of this report at 3:45am today.

Col Gulzar Uddin Ahmed, who had joined the BDR early this month following his illustrious stint as the additional director general of Rab, frantically phoned his former colleagues for help from inside the headquarters. But at one point his cell phone went dead.

Sources said the number of dead officers would be much higher. Witnesses said they saw scores of bodies lying on the ground in and around Pikhana, adding that some jawans were seen stabbing the bodies with bayonets.

Unofficial sources claimed that at least a half of around 6,000 soldiers opposed the mutiny. Many of them were killed along with the officers, though it could not be confirmed. Some of the disagreeing soldiers fled Pikhana as soon as they saw the killing of the officers, unconfirmed sources said.

They added that the bodies of the slain persons were dumped through the manholes of Pikhana sewers.

The mutiny apparently had no specific leader, although the rebels named one Nayek Shahid as their leader in their television interviews. Sources said they were acting as sparse small groups.

Following a circulation of leaflets by the rebels on Tuesday, tension prevailed in Pikhana throughout the night between officers and sepoys.

Except for the recovery of the two officers' bodies, no information on the whereabouts of any other officer was available throughout the day and into the night. The mutineers also did not disclose any useful information about them.

Sources said not all hostage officers were confined in Darbar Hall, many of them were taken to different buildings.

Some mutineers claimed in television interviews in the afternoon that one officer had been killed. But within hours of that claim the two bodies of high officials were recovered from the BDR sewage system that ended at Rayerbazar -- indicating that the number of casualties was much higher.

Thousands of army personnel surrounded the BDR headquarters with cannons, recoilless rifles, heavy machineguns and rocket launchers. Trucks after trucks, soldiers after soldiers filed through the streets of Dhanmondi, Satmasjid Road and Jigatola.

According to a SMS from Mujibul Huq's son, sent from the BDR compound at noon, Mujib's house was set on fire and he could not come out fearing death by gunshots. No information about Mujib's son, daughter, and wife could be gathered after that.

Mujib had led BDR's Dal-Bhaat programme under the caretaker government and was present at Pikhana's Darbar Hall from where the mutiny sparked during a speech of Maj Gen Shakil Ahmed, on the occasion of the BDR Week.

The mutineers began by speaking out at the Darbar Hall against the BDR high-ups, accusing them of misappropriating 'profits' made from the Dal-Bhaat programme, where 12 BDR sector commanders, many battalion commanders, and headquarters officers had gathered.

At least three civilians were dead and 23 civilians were injured from bullets fired indiscriminately by the mutineers. One BDR jawan was admitted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH).

The violent mutiny launched by 5,000 to 6,000 jawans rocked the well-populated Dhanmondi-Azimpur-Hazaribag area throughout the day.

After the prime minister announced an amnesty for the mutineers in the evening, responding to their demands, they allowed more than 15 injured jawans to come out of Pikhana around 7:30pm on ambulances. They were admitted to Holy Family Hospital.

However, till filing of this report, the mutiny did not end and tension mounted again as

the army were not withdrawn from the surrounding areas of Pikhana.

The headquarters was seized by the mutineers in such a way that the rest of the world was not getting any clear information about what was going on inside.

Even the army and Rab personnel, who were deployed with firearms and cannons around the headquarters, also could not fathom the situation.

The news of the mutiny spread through mobile phone calls, apparently triggering unrest in other BDR stations in Chittagong, Rangpur, Jessore and Khulna. However, violence was averted in those stations.

The mutineers seized control and took positions at the five gates of Pikhana, the Rifles Square market, and at other points inside the compound with machineguns, light machine guns, mortars, anti-tank rifles, armoured vehicles, and rocket launchers.

They were so violent that they fired machineguns at military helicopters around 12:30pm, when choppers were being sent there to quell the situation. As they missed the targets, the choppers retreated.

Several thousand others, who are family members of the jawans and officers, also remained hostage to the situation as they could not come out of the Pikhana area.

As thousands of gunshots and explosions kept rocking Pikhana, all houses, offices and commercial centres in the adjacent areas including New Market, shut their windows and doors.

Hundreds of BDR soldiers wearing red bandanas or helmets and partly covering their faces, were seen staging armed processions in front of the gates since 10.30am. They chanted slogans saying, "We have been deprived for a long time, we have deep grievances."

According to the rebels, over 3,300 soldiers belonging to battalions 24, 36, 13, and 44 in Dhaka and 3,000 more coming from various battalions of the country, gathered in Pikhana on the occasion of the BDR Week, and ended up participating in the mutiny that went almost unchallenged inside the compound.

There are 46 battalions in the country, each having 826 soldiers totalling to nearly 40,000 soldiers in the entire BDR. The number of officers in BDR is between 250 and 300, they added.

Satmasjid Road, Dhanmondi Road no 1 and 2, and Mirpur Road in front of Dhaka College looked deserted. People took refuge in alleys and were seen peeping from corners to observe the situation.

The situation was so tense that when a stray bullet seriously injured a student near Jigatola at noon, he lay on the ground for more than an hour till he could be rescued and admitted to Ibn Sina Hospital at 3:00pm, where he was declared dead.

At noon the first batch of army personnel arrived on Satmasjid Road and started marching towards the main BDR gate. The rebels taking positions in Rifles Square shopping mall, on top of the sentry post, and behind the BDR gate, started firing machineguns instantly putting the marching army in disarray. Many of them were injured while running to safety.

Some BDR personnel were also injured while attempting to get into Pikhana area by climbing over high walls.

The rebels also held hostage many women and children in different buildings. Some women were locked inside the BDR gym.

A few BDR officers who had not attended the Darbar Hall programme in the morning but were inside their offices in Pikhana, were also locked inside their rooms after their mobile phones were taken away and land phone lines were snapped.

Army sources said, to save themselves from attacks, some officers had taken off their rank badges to melt in the crowd of mutineers who were also wearing uniforms without any rank badge.

The mutiny caused countrywide tension as all feared a peaceful ending of the situation would be very hard to ensure.

During the BNP rule between 1991 and 1996, the lower tier of BDR had staged mutinies in Dhaka, Chittagong, Feni, Jessore, Khulna and Naogaon, expressing similar grievances.

Those mutinies did not witness bloodshed and the jawans were assured of measures addressing their issues which were ultimately shelved.

Britain runs anti-terror Pak TV ads

AFP, Islamabad

Britain will try to overhaul its image in Pakistan when an anti-extremist advertising campaign featuring prominent British Muslims takes to television screens nationwide yesterday.

"The people of Pakistan are perhaps more on the frontline of extremist and terrorist activity, and are far more affected by it than any other country in the world," the British campaign's mastermind Khurshid Ahmed told AFP.

With more than 1,600 people killed in bombings across the Muslim nation in less than two years, Britain recently pledged six million pounds to help the country it created in 1947 tackle militancy.

The "I Am Muslim, I Am British," campaign homes in on 15 to 25 year old men in a three-month pilot costing Britain 520,000 pounds (758,268 dollars).

Dying

FROM PAGE 16 Nayek Babul Khan was the only BDR man who was receiving treatment at the hospital.

The other injured persons who took treatment at DMCH included Akhter Hossain, 14, Zahir, Monir Hossain, Al-Amin, Kamrunnabar, a student of Dhaka University, Sayed Ahmed Rana, a student of Dhaka College, Pinton Hasan, Humayun Kabir Pintu, 38, Selim, 40, and Masud.

While talking to The Daily Star Lance Nayek Babul Khan said a bullet hit in his leg while he was entering the BDR Headquarter through gate number 5. He said he was not aware of the mutiny.

Jamaluddin, 65, who was found groaning in pain at DMCH, urged doctors to start his treatment. A group of BDR men came to his house at New Paltan adjacent to the BDR gate No. 3 at about 10:30am, he said, adding that they hurt him