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Some 250 BDR men still on the run

New chief holds a coordination meeting with surviving officers today

JULFIKAR ALI MANIK

Around 250 suspected mutineers of Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) are still on the run defying government orders to get back to barracks.

The Daily Star has obtained the rough figure from army officers preparing a list of the paramilitaries who were at the Pilkhana headquarters during the bloody mutiny that left dozens of their commanding officers from the army killed on February 25-26.

Meanwhile, new BDR Director General Brig Gen Md Mainul Islam has asked the surviving army officers, deputed to BDR, to convene at Senakunja in Dhaka cantonment this morning.

He told The Daily Star yesterday that

BDR has lost all its 12 sector commanders and chiefs of several battalions based in the capital and elsewhere.

The remaining battalion commanders and staff officers from the battalions that do not have any commanding officer at present will participate in the coordination meeting.

"Objectives of the meeting are to assess the situation, strengthen co-ordination within the force and give necessary directives," Brig Gen Mainul said.

An officer involved in the rescue operation last night said, "Roughly speaking, I'd say around 7,500 BDR men were supposed to be inside Pilkhana during the carnage. We need a few more days to have

the exact figure."

As of yesterday afternoon, a notice board at the BDR headquarters showed around 1,500 border troops missing. That number was based on a sketchy estimate that around 9,000 paramilitaries were in the Pilkhana compound when the deadly revolt broke out.

However, late at night, the officials concerned revised that figure down to 7,250. Around 250 BDR personnel might have been on leave at that time.

"Though our notice board still shows 1,500 missing, the number would come down to around 250," said an army officer.

In the week following the end of mutiny, news reports citing primary investigations said at best 200 mutineers

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2 more BDR troops held

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Criminal Investigation Department (CID) yesterday arrested two more BDR jawans from BDR headquarters in connection with the mutiny.

Investigation Officer (IO) of the mutiny case ASP Abdul Kahar Akand told the reporters that CID officials also recovered three pistols, 36 bullets and one SMG in an abandoned condition from the headquarters.

Meanwhile, six other jawans were shown arrested yesterday in connection with the mutiny case filed against over one thousand people, including its Deputy Assistant Director Touhidul Alam, with the Lalbagh police station.

The IO said Metropolitan Magistrate Faisal Atiq Bin Qadir directed to show the detainees arrested in the case after a prayer.

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15 tcf offshore gas calls for \$50b investment

Gas pricing adjustment, financial incentives key factors to attract oil companies

SHARIEF KHAN

While the ever-deepening energy crisis demands that Bangladesh vigorously begin oil and gas exploration in the Bay of Bengal besides other initiatives, the Bay needs a staggering investment of \$50 billion to explore and develop gas fields having at least 15 trillion cubic feet (tcf) gas.

Analysts from some foreign oil companies say such a huge investment also requires specialised operational skill and demands involvement of oil companies. But Bangladesh has not done much homework in recent years to attract oil companies, they observe.

They believe Petrobangla needs to restructure and unbundled its activities to promote competitive environment.

This means that gas pricing subsidy -- which is presently calculated to be around Tk 1,450 crore or \$200 million a year -- should go and free market principles are established to ensure

self-sustainability of the sector.

"Gas price corrections have already taken place in Myanmar, Pakistan and India. India, for example, allows the market to set gas prices. Pakistan and Myanmar set prices based on international market conditions. As a result, oil companies are more interested to take part in the bids in these countries," says an analyst of a foreign oil company.

The widely accepted United States Geological Survey (USGS) study forecast that there was a possibility of finding 15 tcf gas in the Bay equivalent to 2.5 billion barrels of oil. Oil company analysts say it demands around \$12.5 billion of investment at the exploration level and another \$37 billion at development level.

"This kind of investment for an industry average of 1 in 12 types of success ratio can only be invested by the IOCs," says another analyst.

"The quantum of investments is discouragingly high and the risk associated

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A child places a lit candle at the Central Shaheed Minar yesterday evening in remembrance of the BDR officers massacred at their headquarters last month. Bangladesh Christian Association organised special prayers and a candle procession there.

Give proofs to probe bodies

PM urges Khaleda

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday urged her political archrival Khaleda Zia to divulge every piece of evidence she has before the probe body on the BDR mutiny for a fair investigation to identify the culprits.

"I earnestly request her [Leader of the Opposition and BNP chief Khaleda Zia] to hand over all the evidence she has to the probe committee so that a fair investigation is carried out into the incident [BDR mutiny] to identify the culprits," said Hasina.

She was addressing a discussion marking the father of the nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's historic March

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Try mutiny perpetrators

Khaleda demands again

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Khaleda Zia demanded exemplary punishment of the perpetrators of BDR mutiny on Feb 25-26.

She made the remark when Wahida Akhter, mother of university student Sajib, one of those killed by bullet of BDR mutineers, demanded trial of the killers of her young son.

"I want that no mother

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7

Help new ROs in holding polls

EC asks DCs, SPs; law, order reviewed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission (EC) yesterday directed the deputy commissioners (DCs) and Police Supers (SPs) to extend all out supports to its officials who have been made returning officers for the first time to help conduct the parliamentary by-elections to seven constituencies.

Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) ATM Shamsul Huda made the directives at a meeting on the law and order situation ahead of the by-election to be held on April 2 and re-polling on

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BDR MUTINY TRIAL

Govt waits on probe reports

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Law Minister Shafique Ahmed yesterday said BDR jawans who were involved in the Pilkhana killing can be tried under the Army Act 1952 while outsiders under the International War Crimes Tribunal Act 1993 or the Special Tribunal Act.

He also said the government will decide after getting the probe reports on what law--conventional law or special

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

WB assistance in power sector sought

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh sought assistance from the World Bank in public and private power sectors along with attracting Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in the sector.

Finance Minister AMA Muhith after meeting World Bank Vice-president for South Asia Region Isabel M Guerrero

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

In shadows of recession

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

With the global financial crisis panning out across the world, Bangladesh sees export orders being cancelled. Payments and shipments have been put on hold or deferred. Migrant workers are flying back home, after losing jobs in the Middle East, which is no longer safe from the brewing storm. Inflow of fresh foreign direct investment to Bangladesh will shrink further, analysts fear.

Domestic investment for export-oriented industry has already started feeling the fallout from the crisis.

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