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Govt to probe BDR intelligence failure

M ABUL KALAM AZAD and
HASAN JAHD TUSHER

The government considers the carnage at the BDR headquarters last month a consequence of "massive intelligence failure" and decided to launch an enquiry into the matter.

The issue came up for discussion in the meeting of the cabinet committee on law and order at the home ministry. The committee itself was enquiring into the intelligence failure.

Many members of the committee suggested that radical changes be brought in the intelligence wings to prevent recurrence of such terrible incidents.

Chaired by Home Minister Sahara Khatun, the meeting decided to hold in the near future a special sitting of the committee to discuss the BDR mutiny, how it took place, who were the perpetrators and what roles did the intelligence agencies play to prevent it.

"More or less all the members of the committee questioned the role of the intelligence agencies and blasted them for their failure in the February 25-26 mutiny at Pikhana," a minister, also a member of the committee, told The Daily Star after the meeting.

"They [intelligence agencies] are supposed to inform the authorities concerned beforehand about any sabotages

or conspiracies in the country," said the minister, regretting the failures of the intelligence agencies in the past.

A senior home ministry official said some committee members at the meeting alleged that most of the intelligence agencies were preoccupied with political affairs rather than doing their basic job. A few members blamed previous governments for using them for other purposes.

Sources said the intelligence agencies that came up in the discussion are the National Security Intelligence (NSI), Directorate General of Forces Intelligence (DGFI), Military Intelligence (MI), Rifles Security Unit (Bangladesh Rifles

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Iraq jails Bush shoe attacker

AFP, Baghdad

An Iraqi court yesterday jailed for three years the journalist who shot to fame in the Arab world for throwing his shoes at former US president George W. Bush.

Muntazer al-Zaidi, a 30-year-old television journalist, had pleaded not guilty at the hearing in the Iraq Central Criminal Court to assaulting Bush during his farewell visit to Iraq last year.

"He was sentenced to three years in jail," defence lawyer Yahia Attabi told reporters outside the Baghdad court.

"We expected the decision because under the Iraqi criminal code he was charged with assaulting a foreign leader on

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All containers aboard a vessel that arrived from Singapore were scanned at the Container Terminal Jetty-3 at Chittagong Port yesterday after receiving information about the possibility of explosives onboard.

PHOTO: STAR

Ctg rain trees back to life

SHAHIDUL ISLAM, Ctg

Hundreds of century-old rain trees at different locations around the port city which were struck by a fungal disease about two years ago prompting authorities to start cutting down the trees, have begun growing new leaves and branches over the last week.

Rain trees (Albizia saman) at the Central Railway Building (CRB), Polo Ground, Tiger Pass and Lalkhan Bazar

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SC stays bail of ex-forest boss Gani

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Supreme Court (SC) yesterday stayed the High Court (HC) order granting bail to former Chief Conservator of Forest (CCF) Osman Gani in a corruption case filed by the Anti-corruption Commission (ACC).

A special court in Dhaka, earlier, sentenced Osman Gani to 12 years' imprisonment in the case for amassing wealth illegally and concealing information in wealth statements

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Free ACC vital

Says EU

UNB, Dhaka

The European Union (EU) thinks it is very important for the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) in Bangladesh to remain as an independent institution for the continuation of the country's democratic government.

"(For) the continuation of democratic government in Bangladesh, there are (some) fundamental institutions (that are) needed -- and anti-corruption (watchdog) and

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CTG AMMO HAUL 2 top ex-CUFL officers held

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Two former high officials of Chittagong Urea Fertiliser Limited (CUFL) were arrested in connection with the sensational 10 truckloads of arms haul case yesterday.

The then managing director Mohsin Talukder and general manager (Admin) Enamul Haq of Chittagong Urea Fertiliser Limited (CUFL) have been shown arrested on charge of non-cooperation with the interrogation.

They were hauled before a Chittagong court in the

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Prayer Timing		
March 13		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-05	5-40
Juma	12-30	1-15
Asr	4-30	4-45
Maghrib	6-12	6-15
Esha	7-30	8-00

Source: Islamic Foundation

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PHOTO: ZOAHER HOSSAIN SHIKHER

Rain trees in Chittagong city previously infected by a fungal epidemic have begun growing new leaves and branches over the past week.

Clashes mark Pak protest

Cops detain marchers, seal Karachi exit

AP, AFP, Islamabad

Cheering opposition activists and lawyers set off for the Pakistani capital yesterday vowing to stage a sit-in outside the parliament building, defying a government ban on protests and hundreds of arrests nationwide.

With the showdown threatening to destabilise the country's one-year-old democratically elected government at time of rising militant violence, US Ambassador Anne Patterson met with top opposition leader Nawaz Sharif in a bid to resolve the crisis, a Sharif spokesman said.

Former prime minister Sharif and the country's lawyers' movement are demanding President Asif Ali Zardari fulfil a pledge to restore independent-minded judges removed in 2007 by former president Pervez Musharraf whom some believe could be hostile to Zardari.

Sharif is also furious over a Supreme Court decision last month that barred him and his brother from elected office. After the ruling, the federal government dismissed the Punjab provincial administration led by Sharif's brother, stoking popular anger at Zardari.

Murals of Zia removed from Ctg airport

CU CORRESPONDENT

Some wooden murals of former president Ziaur Rahman were removed from the lounge of Shah Amanat International Airport in the port city Wednesday night.

Chittagong Airport Security Officer Nasir Uddin

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The picture on the left shows the empty wall inside the lounge of Shah Amanat Airport in Chittagong while an older snap, right, shows the mural of late president Ziaur Rahman on the wall.



PHOTO: STAR

Direct election to 100 reserved JS seats

Govt details plan for 10th parliament

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The number of seats in parliament will be increased to 400 from present 345 keeping 100 reserved seats for women to be elected directly.

LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Syed Ashrafur Islam disclosed it to The Daily Star yesterday outlining the AL-led government's plan to ensure women empowerment in line with its electoral pledge.

Ashrafur, also AL spokesperson, said the constitution will be amended so that the 10th parliamentary election slated for 2014 can be held under the new system.

Asked about his party's stance on the issue of increasing the number of reserved seats for women in parliament, Opposition Chief Whip Zainul Abidin Farroque said BNP will make the

right decision when the government places the bill in the House for amending the constitution.

Each of the 100 reserved seats will be constituted with the territories of three general seats. Women candidates will also be able to contest the elections to the 300 general seats.

The same system has already been introduced in local government institutions -- city corporations, municipalities and union parishads -- keeping one third of the total number of wards reserved for women in addition to general wards.

"This is the last indirect election to reserved seats for women in parliament," said Ashrafur at the Election Commission Secretariat while his party nominees were filing applications to contest the election to reserved seats.

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Recession package by this month

Muhith says govt working on cash subsidy details

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government will offer a 'recession package' including cash subsidy and bank facility for the export-oriented industries affected by the global meltdown.

The package would be announced this month, Finance Minister AMA Muhith said yesterday.

Talking to reporters at his Secretariat office after a meeting with Bangladesh Jute Association (BJA), Muhith also said government-formed committees are now working on modalities of providing cash subsidy. There is a secretariat committee to address the recession, and it will decide on the needs of different sectors.

The minister said the government will sit with the banks regarding bank facilities. The banks have to look after the interest of their clients to carry on their business. "I hope they will look into those interests," he said.

"We are trying to prepare the total package on the basis of demands of different sectors."

Muhith said it is not jute sector alone but all the sectors are saying they have bank liabilities, which they cannot service now

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ADP may be cut by 10pc

REIAUL KARIM BYRON

The size of Annual Development Programme (ADP) of the current fiscal year may be cut down by 10 percent (Tk 2,600 crore) to Tk 23,000 crore because of resource constraints and slow implementation.

The resources committee yesterday held a meeting with Finance Minister AMA Muhith, discussing the revised budget for this fiscal year and the next budget. The meeting also discussed implementing pay scale in phases and giving recession packages against the backdrop of global financial meltdown, sources said.

Prime minister's economic adviser Dr Moshir Rahman was present at the meeting held at the finance ministry.

Sources said after discussing revenue collection situation and expenditure the meeting gave a guideline for the revised budget of this fiscal year.

The original size of the ADP for this fiscal year was Tk 25,600 crore and 31 percent of it (Tk 7,832 crore) was implemented in seven months.

The meeting was told that after downsizing, 90-95 percent of the Tk 23,000 crore ADP will be implemented. The cut will not make any significant change to the total size of the Tk 99,962

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