

Army seeks to form crisis unit

Proposed Quick Reaction Force to tackle internal security; can be sent for UN peacekeeping; JS body to discuss the proposal

SHAKHAWAT LITON

Bangladesh Army seeks to form a special unit named, Quick Reaction Force (QRF), to ensure the country's internal security, particularly to tackle on an urgent basis -- incidents like mutinies and bombings.

Terming such an unit 'indispensable' for the country 'under the current circumstances', the army in a report claimed that QRF troops will be

able to neutralise the threats to the nation much quicker, sources said quoting from the proposals stipulated in the report.

Placed for discussion before the Parliamentary Standing Committee on the Defence Ministry on last Thursday, the report also suggested that the government approves formation of a QRF brigade.

In the report the army termed the absence of

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VITAMIN-A CAMPAIGN Over 200 kids fall sick

Health minister says medicines are safe

STAR REPORT

Over 200 more children fell sick in the last two days in Natore, Jhenidah and Faridpur after taking government-supplied Vitamin-A capsules and deworming tablets.

Meantime, Health Minister Dr AFM Ruhul Haque ruled out all doubts about the quality of the Vitamin-A capsules and deworming tablets taking which over a hundred children fell sick in Faridpur and other districts.

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Operation Clean Heart to be opened

Govt to examine controversial Joint Drive Indemnity Act 2003; 44 killed, hundreds injured in the drive

JULFIKAR ALI MANIK

The government as part of its stance against extrajudicial killings is likely to examine whether the controversial Joint Drive Indemnity Act, 2003 that indemnified all concerned for their acts during the Operation Clean Heart should be scrapped.

Meanwhile, rights activists and eminent jurists who were strong critics of the

law still believe it should be repealed to ensure fundamental rights of the people as enshrined in the constitution.

Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Shafique Ahmed told The Daily Star the government would examine the indemnity law if any person aggrieved by the joint operation wishes to get remedy or justice which has been prohibited by the law.

"We would examine whether the

indemnity law should be repealed or not," the minister said.

The BNP-Jamaat-led four-party alliance government indemnified all persons for all acts during the Operation Clean Heart, a countrywide joint drive against crime, which began on October 16, 2002 through an order and ended on January 9, 2003.

Around 24,023 army men and 339 navy

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Home asked to beef up SC security

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The law ministry yesterday sent a letter asking the home ministry to strengthen security on the Supreme Court (SC) premises as an intelligence agency apprehends attack on the apex court premises.

Law Minister Shafique Ahmed told The Daily Star

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CROSSFIRE Departmental probe on into 2 students' death

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government is conducting departmental probe into the killings of the two students of Tejgaon Polytechnic Institute by Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) members, State Minister for Home Affairs Tanjim Ahmad Sohail Taj said yesterday.

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At a time when the country's greenery is rapidly depleting, the Roads and Highways Department has cut down a large number of old trees along Dhaka-Narayanganj Link Road to expand it. PHOTO: SHAFIQU ALAM

Tax to double on big deposits

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

Taxes on bank deposits over Tk 10 lakh will be doubled in the next budget.

Finance ministry sources said taxes on imported powdered milk, non-essential food items, Ayurvedic medicines, refrigerator and air conditioners would be increased.

However, duties on computer, new hybrid motor vehicles, Internet and energy-saving bulbs will be brought down to zero.

The sources said tax rate for deposits of Tk 1 lakh to Tk 10 lakh would be raised to Tk 350 from the present Tk 250 while for deposits ranging from Tk 10 lakh to Tk 1 crore the tax would be increased to Tk 1,000 from Tk 500.

In case of deposits from Tk 1 crore to Tk 5 crore, the tax rate will be Tk 5,000; at present the rate is Tk 2,500. For deposits of Tk 5 crore and above the tax will be raised to Tk 10,000 from the existing Tk 5,000.

The ceiling for tax-free deposit will be increased to Tk 20,000 from the present Tk 10,000, but the tax rate for deposits up to Tk 1 lakh will remain unchanged at Tk 120.

A proposal has been placed for increasing the supplementary duty on different types of vehicles up to 150 percent, but the duty on new hybrid cars will remain at zero, sources said.

The present 3 percent supplementary duty on importing computers may be withdrawn in the next budget.

The existing 12 percent supplementary duty on imported powdered milk may be increased by 5-6 percent in the interest of

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Some politicians helped Daud spread crime web

Another aide to the mafia don arrested

MUKLESUR RAHMAN

Detectives have found some political leaders and influential people in Bangladesh to have close relations with international mafia don Daud Ibrahim.

The police suspect the influential people maintain close link with Daud to get his support in expanding their businesses in Dubai, a stronghold of the Mumbai-based mafia don.

"The names of a number of political leaders and influential people surfaced during interrogation of two detained accomplices of Daud. We're now verifying what kinds of relations



Arif Hossain

they maintain with him," Deputy Commissioner (DC) Monirul Islam of Detective Branch (DB) told The Daily Star.

He however refused to reveal the names and identities of the influential people at this stage of investigation.

Meanwhile, the detectives arrested another accomplice of Daud Indian national Arif Hossain at Krishi Market in Mohammadpur in the city Saturday night.

The police have so far arrested three of Daud's accomplices since May 27 who are either convicted or accused in criminal cases

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300 MP-advisers for municipalities

JS body recommends the bill

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Three hundred lawmakers including Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and Speaker Abdul Hamid might soon be made advisers to municipalities in their respective constituencies, as a parliamentary standing committee recommended the move.

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on LGRD Ministry yesterday recommended that the House passes the municipalities' bill with a set of recommendations including one for making lawmakers also advisers to the local government bodies.

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Budget braces for tough challenges

SAJJADUR RAHMAN

The next fiscal year might prove a tough one for the country's economy as economic growth in 2008-09 fiscal year dipped to 5.88 percent from the previous year's 6.2 percent with the decline in output of manufacturing and services sectors.

Following the impact of the global recession, the turnover in the industry sector in the outgoing fiscal year dipped by 0.9 percentage point to

5.9 percent from the previous year's 6.8 percent.

Growth in the services sector, which accounts for half of the country's gross domestic product (GDP) worth about \$80 billion, fell to 6.3 percent this year from 6.5 percent of the previous year.

Bangladesh recorded a GDP growth of 6 percent or more for the last four consecutive years till 2007-08 with a steady rise in industry, services, exports and remittances.

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