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Foreign enemies got benefited

Says BDR boss at first Darbar after mutiny

JULFIKAR ALI MANIK and KAILASH SARKAR

About six months after the Pilkhana massacre on February 25-26, the Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) chief yesterday for the first time hinted that the country's foreign enemies benefited from the carnage.



BDR Director General Maj Gen Md Mainul Islam addresses the BDR jawans during a Darbar yesterday.

Without naming any such enemies, BDR Director General Maj Gen Md Mainul Islam yesterday at his Darbar said, "Definitely the people who started the mutiny have done it for their benefit. BDR has not gained anything; whatever has happened has been a loss. This

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BDR MUTINY
Trial reference sent to SC for opinion

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

President Zillur Rahman yesterday sent a reference to the Supreme Court (SC) for its opinion on whether the people charged with mutiny and massacre at the BDR headquarters can be tried under the military law.

The civilians and BDR officials including assistant directors and deputy assistant directors, allegedly involved in the BDR mutiny and the massacre, can not be tried under the BDR law, said the reference.

Quoting the reference, an official press release said the highest punishment under the BDR law is seven years' imprisonment while it's death penalty under the military law.

The offences of killing, attempts to murder, arson and looting that took place during the mutiny at the BDR headquarters, cannot be tried under the BDR Act. But, questions have been raised on whether the trial of perpetrators can be held directly under

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Act tough on extortion

PM warns of stern action against colleagues or anyone if found involved in the crime

HASAN JAHID TUSHER

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday directed the authorities concerned to take immediate stern actions to stop rampant extortions in the country.

At a regular cabinet meeting she warned that none including ministers, state ministers, lawmakers and political leaders irrespective of party affiliations will be spared if found involved in extortions.

"Stern actions will be taken against whoever is involved in extortion," Hasina was quoted to The Daily Star as saying by a minister who requested anonymity.

At the meeting chaired by herself, Hasina, also the president of ruling Awami League (AL), directed the home ministry to be tough on extortionists irrespective of party affiliations.

Referring to food and disaster management minister's recent statement that the prices of essential commodities are spiralling upward due to extortions in the transport sector, the prime minister told Shipping Minister Shahjahan Khan, and a transport labour leader to look into the situation and to take actions accordingly.

The shipping minister told the cabinet that the police are also involved in extortion in the transport sector, according to



sources present at the meeting.

Hasina wanted to know from the food minister what was the basis of his recent statement. The minister replied that his statement was based on his own study and previous experience, the sources said.

The prime minister is very unhappy with unbridled extortions, caused among others by her party leaders in the capital and other parts of the country, and she already talked to her close aides about how to tackle the problem, said highly placed sources.

She also directed the home minister to engage lawmakers of the capital in dealing with rising extortions and improving the law and order situation by forming different committees in respective constituencies.

Following the direction, Home Minister Sahara Khatun called an emergency meeting in her official residence scheduled for 7:00pm today.

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday one of the ministers said, "I told the prime minister that party leaders, who have been involved in extortions and other unlawful activities, might end up ushering in an electoral debacle for the party in the next election, if they are not dealt with an iron hand right now."

Issues including price hike of essentials, power and gas crises, pullout of troops from Chittagong Hill Tracts and the recent High Court ruling for suspending the pullout, import of egg, chicken and potato, and the swine flu situation were also discussed among other issues.

About the swine flu situation, the prime minister directed the health minister to take all out measures to contain it, and to keep public hospitals prepared.

The minister said they are on high alert as

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Lease of 8,000 acres hill land cancelled

Deeds of 15,000 acres more to be scrapped; JS sits in Rangamati today, favours land for landless

MONIRUL ISLAM MONU, Bandarban

Leases of 8,175 acres of land in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT), given years back for horticulture and rubber plantation, have been cancelled for violation of lease agreements.

Official sources said leases of 15,000 acres more await immediate cancellation. The leases of CHT land cancelled until last Sunday include 7,450 acres in Bandarban, 425 acres in Khagrachhari and 300 acres in Rangamati.

The lessees include influential people like ex-adviser to the caretaker government Major General (retd) MA Matin, former ministers and

civil and military bureaucrats. They enjoyed the possessions of these plots of 25 acres each for more than a decade but did neither develop horticulture nor rubber gardens as per the agreements.

As the parliamentary standing committee on CHT Affairs Ministry holds its meeting in Rangamati today to discuss issues like lease, the JS body member Bir Bahadur, MP, told The Daily Star that those who had leased out acres of CHT land to a handful of powerful people in violation of rules would not be spared too.

The lawmaker also said that the government

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Army pulled out for peace in CHT

Says PM

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina said the government has decided to pull out army camps from the hill districts as a peaceful situation now prevails in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) region.

She made the remark when a delegation of the International Commission on Chittagong Hill Tracts called on the prime minister at her

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TCB fixes prices of sugar, edible oil

Market watch committees formed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Trading Corporation of Bangladesh (TCB) has fixed the prices of commodities to be sold during the Ramadan.

The state-owned corporation has fixed the retail price of sugar at Tk 40 per kg, gram at Tk 50 per kg, palm oil Tk 58 per litre, unpacked soybean oil at Tk 70 per litre and bottled soybean oil at Tk 76 per litre, a commerce ministry press release said.

At dealers' level, TCB will sell sugar at Tk 37 per kg, gram at Tk 47 per kg, palm oil at Tk 55 per litre in Dhaka and at Tk 54 per litre outside Dhaka, unpacked soybean oil at Tk 67 per litre and bottled soybean oil at Tk 73 per litre, said the release.

TCB made these decisions yesterday in a meeting held at the

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