

BDR to get

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assistant directors, and civilian employees of BDR cannot be tried under that law because it has no provision for trying those persons.

The highest punishment for mutiny under the BDR Order is seven years' rigorous imprisonment, which the recommendations found inadequate in light of the gravity of the February 25-26 mutiny, saying the offences committed during the mutiny deserve capital punishment.

Highly placed sources said a three-layer intelligence unit equipped with modern equipment has been proposed instead of the single layer Rifles Security Unit (RSU) as it had failed to get advance intelligence about the recent mutiny and the subsequent carnage at the force's Palkhona headquarters that left 74 persons including 57 army officials killed.

As a part of the first layer of the new intelligence network, special desks will be set up at the National Security Intelligence (NSI), and Directorate General of Forces Intelligence (DGFI) for BGB.

The second layer will carry out counter intelligence, working under a regional head, similar to that of the army and Rapid Action Battalion (Rab). The third layer will collect internal field intelligence and cross-border intelligence, like the field intelligence unit of the army.

Keeping the force's reserved arms and ammunition in nearby cantonments instead of with its battalions has also been recommended.

Fixing rank based retirement ages for its members, like in the army, has been proposed as well.

The premier asked the BDR chief to place a formal proposal to the government for taking appropriate measures to go into the implementation phase," said Faruk who has been heading a high-powered government committee for coordinating the activities of the Prime Minister's Office, and the ministries of home and defence, following the bloody mutiny.

Talking to The Daily Star, one of the meeting sources said the prime minister assured the BDR chief that changes will be brought, to the BDR Order through the parliament, saying the existing law is quite weak.

Sheikh Hasina asked the BDR DG to submit a draft of amendments to the existing BDR law to the cabinet through the home ministry.

Contacted by The Daily Star, the BDR DG said the prime minister listened to his whole presentation intently and gave some guidelines for bringing changes to some of the proposals, while agreeing with most of them.

"I'll submit the proposals to the prime minister again after bringing necessary changes to those in line with her guidelines," he said.

Asked about the prime minister's reaction to his proposals, Maj Gen Mainul said she instructed him to work keeping in mind the overall welfare of the force.

Regarding a proposal for offering golden handshakes in phases to those BDR personnel who are not out of suspicion

although not found guilty, the premier suggested thinking more about it, and to find out if there could be other options, as the issue is very complicated.

Faruk Khan said the prime minister appreciated the BDR DG's presentation.

The proposals include increasing the number of battalions outside the Palkhona headquarters, and also transfer of three battalions to Keraniganj, Narayanganj, and Savar from there.

Recruiting retired army personnel into the border security force has also been proposed.

Asked about it, Mainul said the measure has been proposed considering the highest possible use of experienced human resources.

He said the prime minister assured them of considering all proposals with utmost importance.

Other meeting sources said after handing over the proposals around 12:00pm, the BDR DG made a presentation explaining them using a projector.

State Minister for Home Shamsul Haque Tuku was also present among other senior civil and military officials.

Criminals

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residences at Foy's Lake.

Solaiman told reporters that he met Noorjahan in the afternoon and locked into altercation with her. At one stage of the exchange, he stabbed her to death.

"As Poppy witnessed the killing, I also stabbed her with the same knife," he said.

OC of Kotwali Police Station Mohiuddin Mahmud said they were investigating the real motive behind the gruesome murders.

"We suspect that Noorjahan might have been killed for the huge property that she owned," he added.

Pirates loot

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at about 2:30am and looted fish, nets, money, engine and other valuables from the trawlers, beat them up and opened fire on them, he added.

The pirates also took away three trawlers along with 40 fishermen. They demanded Tk 20 lakh as ransom for their release and gave an address to other fishermen for the payment, said fishermen who returned to Pathargata Wednesday afternoon.

The abducted fishermen include Ali Akbar, Joinal Mazi, Abdul Berek, Dulal Hossain, Yunus Ali, Mansur Ali and Abdul Latif. They all hail from Pathargata upazila of Barguna.

Injured fishermen Abdul Jalil told local journalists that the pirates threatened to kill the fishermen if the ransom is not paid within a week.

Yasin Ali, coastguard officer of Pathargata, told The Daily Star that they were trying to rescue the fishermen and track down the pirates.

Nurul Amin, officer-in-charge of the Pathargata Police Station, said a case was filed with the police station in this connection. The injured fishermen were admitted to the Pathargata Upazila Health Complex, the OC added.

Redeployment

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headquarters conference room yesterday morning.

"We are redeploying the troops of the camps to the battalion headquarters and may send them back there [CHT region] again if necessary," he said.

The withdrawal of troops of army camps in the CHT region is a regular process and after the redeployment of army personnel of 35 camps, as per the government decision, 321 camps will remain in the region, he said.

"According to a regular assessment, the camps, scheduled to be withdrawn, were found unnecessary at this moment, hence there is no need to waste money on them in the region," he said.

The areas the troops are leaving could be covered by nearby camps, he said, adding that telecommunication facilities are available in the region allowing quick response.

The GOC also considered the handling of insurgency in CHT a success and a milestone.

After the CHT Peace Accord was signed in 1997, troops of many camps were withdrawn from the CHT region and the highest 63 camps were withdrawn in 2004, he said.

"We proposed redeployment of the army personnel of the 35 camps as we, after a thorough assessment, were 100 per cent sure that it would not affect the prevailing peace," said the GOC.

On the concerns over recent abductions in the CHT, the GOC said last year the number of abductions that took place elsewhere was higher than that in CHT region.

The division's Principle Staff Officer (Counter Insurgency) Lt Col Mahbubur Rahman showed comparative statistics of pre- and post-CHT Peace Accord situations.

Mahbub through a multimedia presentation said a total of 343 security personnel including army, BDR, armed police, police, Ansar and VDP were killed in encounters with Shanti Bahini before the CHT Peace Accord.

After signing of the peace accord on December 2, 1997, the situation improved significantly with only eight security personnel killed there till date.

Before the peace accord, 1,058 Bangladeshis and 243 aidvsi people were killed, 687 and 182 were injured, and 471 and 286 were kidnapped, or went missing in the CHT region.

After the accord, 271 tribal people and 105 Bangladeshis were killed, 378 and 326 were injured, and 580 and 215 were kidnapped or went missing.

2 killed

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including two of murders, filed with Gulshan Police Station.

According to the ASP, they took Rafiqul to Argarao to recover firearms. No sooner had they got to Music College, Rafiqul's associates opened fire at the team prompting them to retaliate.

"Rafiqul died on spot as he was caught in the line of the shooting during an attempt to flee," said the ASP, adding that all the associates of the deceased managed to get away.

Rab recovered a pistol and two bullets from the scene.

In Mohammadpur, three criminals sustained bullet wounds in their legs in a shoot-out with another Rab-2 team at Aurangzeb Road around 3:30am yesterday.

The wounded were Mohammad Ukil, 32, Akkas, 23, and Abdul Malek, 22.

Rab sources said a gang of four to five criminals in a yellow cab attacked the elite force team as they intercepted the vehicle. At one stage Rab was compelled to open fire in which three of them got wounded. However, rest of the gang managed to escape.

The injured were admitted to Pongu Hospital, added the sources.

Rab personnel recovered three machetes from the scene.

In another incident in Satkhira, Lutfor Rahman, divisional commander of outlawed Purbo Banglar Communist Party (PBCP-ML Janajuddho faction) was killed in a gunfight between his cohorts and law enforcers at Chhoygharia in sadar upazila yesterday.

Police said informed of a secret meeting of the outlawed group, a police team cordoned off the area around 3:00am. Sensing company, Lutfor's cohorts opened fire at the law enforcers and the police retaliated.

Lutfor received bullets during the shootout and died on the spot, said police.

Contacted, Officer-in-Charge Kamruzzaman of Sadar Police Station said Lutfor was wanted in 12 cases, including three of murders, filed with Tala, Dumuria, Kalaroa and Sadar police stations.

HC vacates

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supplementary petitions filed by a pro-Jamaat-e-Islami lawyer and a Bangalee resident of CHT seeking an injunction against the withdrawal of army camps.

On August 16, the HC directed the government to suspend the ongoing withdrawal of troops from CHT until yesterday.

During the hearing on the petitions yesterday the HC bench of Justice Syed Refaat Ahmed and Justice Moyeenul Islam Chowdhury wanted to extend it August 16 order.

Attorney General Mahbubey Alam then told the court that if the court passes such an order the government would not be able to perform its administrative tasks. He also said the government does not expect such an order from the HC.

The court then vacated its earlier order with the expectation that the government would not take any initiatives to withdraw troops from CHT until hearing on the applications is complete.

After delivery of the order Abdur Razzaq, a counsel for a petitioner, told newsmen that the government could not withdraw army from the CHT region following the HC order.

Meanwhile, Bangalee Chhatra Parishad called for a dawn-to-dusk road and waterway blockade today in Bandarban, one of the three CHT districts, demanding a halt to the ongoing army

withdrawal from CHT region, our Rangamati correspondent reports.

It alleged that the government decided to pull out troops from CHT bowing down to pressure from Parbatya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samity (PCJSS) and various donor organisations and without considering the security of Bangalee settlers there.

Boatowners' association in Bandarban has extended its support to the blockade.

Sources in security forces, however, said 34 army camps were withdrawn from Rangamati and Khagrachhari but no camps have been withdrawn from Bandarban.

On December 2, 1997, the previous Awami League government led by then Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina signed a peace accord with PCJSS leader Jyotirindra Bodhipriya Larma, also known as Santu Larma, ending an over two-decade-old insurgency.

After the signing of the accord members of PCJSS surrendered their arms.

Implementation of the accord, however, lost momentum after the BNP-Jamaat-led alliance government assumed power in 2001. The alliance opposed the signing of the peace accord.

Being voted to power last year, the Awami League-led government resumed implementation of the peace accord.

Mobile court

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"Hence, vesting power in executive magistrates or anyone except judicial officials of the republic is in my opinion unconstitutional," he said.

The executive magistrates have lost judicial powers to try people for offences following separation of the judiciary from the executive during the last caretaker government's rule. In the face of strong demand from the admin cadres, the then caretaker government, however, promulgated an ordinance empowering the executive magistrates to run mobile courts to maintain law and order.

The ordinance, which ceased to have effect in late February as it was not ratified in parliament within a specified time, allowed the executive magistrates only to fine individuals for an offence.

The new mobile court ordinance, however, empowers the executive magistrates to fine and sentence imprisonments of up to two years. A mobile court is empowered to hold trials of cases filed under as many as 80 laws including allelectoral laws.

Interestingly, Paurashava Ordinance, 1977, Chittagong City Corporation Ordinance, 1982, Dhaka City Corporation Ordinance, 1983, Khulna City Corporation Ordinance, 1984, Rajshahi City Corporation Act, 1987, Sylhet City Corporation Act, 2001 and Barisal City Corporation Act, 2001, which

3,300MW

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Besides, there is a plan to generate 2,000 MW electricity by setting up four coal-fired powerplants.

To review the progress, an urgent meeting was held at the PDB conference room of Water and Power Development Authority building in the capital yesterday, said a PDB release.

The meeting discussed in detail the report of a committee on feasibility study and site selection for setting up public sector and rental power plants.

Dr Toufiq-e-Elahi, prime minister's adviser on power, energy and mineral resources, suggested formation of a well-coordinated team with the efficient engineers and officials of PDB to implement the project.

He urged all concerned to work sincerely and give emphasis on the visibility of progress of project implementation.

State Minister for Power Enamul Haque said the government's main objective is to reach electricity to the people as per their demand.

He urged all to fix priorities and complete the projects in time.

Power Secretary M Abul Kalam Azad asked the PDB officials to finalise site selection and tender process for setting up the powerplants.

PDB Chairman ASM Alamgir Kabir said four expert groups of the PDB comprising experienced engineers are working on setting up the new powerplants.

PGCB Managing Director M Ruhul Amin and senior officials concerned, among others, attended the meeting.

have been repealed by the caretaker government, are among the 80 laws.

The caretaker government had kept the Representation of the People Order for the parliamentary election.

The Awami League-led government placed bills in parliament seeking to enact new laws on the local government institutions--city corporations and municipalities.

Legal experts said an individual might be sentenced up to seven years' imprisonment for electoral offences but the executive magistrates can sentence an individual to a maximum of two years' imprisonment as per the provisions of the new mobile court ordinance.

After separation of the judiciary, the government cannot empower anybody, except judicial officials, with judicial powers without the approval of the SC, legal experts observed.

They said the order of criminal procedure clearly specifies the functions and jurisdictions of the judicial and executive magistrates and it does not allow executive magistrates to hold trials of cases for any offences and award imprisonment to an individual.

Rivers around

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course. In these cases we shall inform the court about the reality and request for a direction with which we may go ahead," said a Dhaka district administration official, adding that all the land surveys (CS, SA and RS) are gazetted and hence if there is any structure on the gazetted land it will be considered illegally occupied.

BIWTA officials said although the demolition and recovery drive is temporarily suspended, they are nonetheless engaged in removing earth from places along the rivers where earth was illegally dumped.

"We are planning to launch a final demolition and recovery programme on the basis of the official demarcation lines in order to save money and also to prevent encroachers from returning to the area," said a BIWTA official requesting anonymity.

Amin Ullah Noori, additional deputy commissioner of Narayanganj, said a technical committee consisted of members of all departments concerned is now working to establish widths of the rivers and also ways to remove encroachers.

"The committee is now meeting once a week to finalise the demarcation lines and we are confident that we shall be able to submit a comprehensive report to the learned court within the stipulated time," said Noori.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, on the occasion of golden jubilee of BIWTA on August 12, reiterated her government's determination to save the rivers and urged all concerned to work for stopping encroachments and pollution and ensuring navigability of the rivers.

TCB dealers

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of 25,000 tonnes each of edible oil and sugar in the next seven days.

Ramadan starts in a day or two.

The TCB will appoint three dealers from each ward in Dhaka metropolitan area, the officials said. "As of Tuesday we received 100 applications for dealership," said a senior official of the TCB.

A total of 41 dealers bought goods from the TCB warehouses as of 5:30pm yesterday, he said.

Inaugurating the programme, Faruk Khan warned of stern action against unscrupulous traders who will want to make a windfall profit during Ramadan when the demand of goods increases.

"We will take stern administrative action against unscrupulous traders if they are found manipulating the market," Faruk said, instructing leaders of different trade bodies to identify dishonest businessmen.

He said the TCB would start opening letters of credit for importing commodities like onion and chickpea after a week.

He claimed that the commodities market is still stable and members of Rapid Action Battalion and police are constantly monitoring markets to ensure stability during Ramadan.

Each dealer had to deposit Tk 15,000 to the TCB as security money and pay Tk 1,10,000 for purchasing 1,000 litres of edible oil and 1,000 kilograms of sugar.

Talking to The Daily Star, a dealer said the quantities of edible oil and sugar are not adequate to meet the demand of the consumers. Moreover, the margin of profit--Tk3 on each of the two commodities--is not enough, he said.

The government has fixed Tk 40 for one kilogram of sugar and Tk 76 for one litre of edible oil.

"After deducting transport and other costs, the profit will be minimal," the dealer said.

International

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yesterday with Speaker Abdul Hamid in the chair.

Deputy Speaker Shawkat Ali, Chief Whip Abdus Shahid, Food Minister Abdur Razzaque, Foreign Minister Dipu Moni, State Minister for Liberation War Affairs Captain (retd) ABM Tazul Islam, State Minister for LGRD Jahangir Kabir Nanok, Opposition Chief Whip Zainul Abidin Farroque, among others, attended the meeting.

The speaker told the meeting that the international rally would be organised under the initiative of all parties representing the ninth parliament and the parliament will look after the overall issue.

The meeting opined that presence of the prime minister and opposition leader at the same stage would positively impact the poverty reduction programme.

Ashraf

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Referring to the government's strong stand in this regard, he said, "In the inaugural speech of the ninth parliament, President Zillur Rahman vowed to try the war criminals. Later, parliament passed a regulation on the issue."

Ashraf informed that the government has initiated negotiation with the United Nations, Unicef and different human rights organisations to remove the barriers to trying war criminals and already allocated Tk 10 crore to meet the cost of the trials.

On the demand for reviving the 1972 constitution, he said, "I think it is not essential to revive the constitution of 1972 to facilitate the trial."

Addressing the meeting, Mofazzal Hossain Chowdhury Maya, general secretary of Dhaka City Awami League, categorically demanded trial of not just the war criminals but the killers of Bangladesh Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and the masterminds of the August 21 grenade attack on an Awami League rally. He claimed that there are links among these perpetrators.

Economist Prof Abul Barakat said at least 126 militant groups exist in the country at present and one-third of their total finance is generated inside the country.

The Jamaat-e-Islami, militancy and its financing are the major components of communalism and fundamentalism, he observed, adding that all these components must be destroyed.

Comrade Bimal Biswas, general secretary of Workers' Party, Pankaj Bhattacharjee, president member of Gono Forum, Pankaj Debnath, general secretary of Awami Sechchhasebak League, human rights activist Rokeya Kabir, freedom fighter Maj Gen (retd) Amin Ahmed Chowdhury, among others, spoke at the event.

Baghdad bombing

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filled with the twisted wreckage of dozens of cars and several charred corpses.

The walls of the ministry compound in the Salhiyeh district were destroyed and its facade badly damaged, while cars were buckled and burnt for hundreds of metres.

The bombing also destroyed water tanks on houses near the ministry, sending water gushing into homes.

Another truck bomb struck outside the finance ministry in Baghdad's northern neighbourhood of Waziriyah, destroying part of a bridge near the ministry compound, and left more than 200 injured, nearby hospitals said.

Officials from the interior and defence ministries said 47 people were killed at the foreign ministry, while the finance ministry attack left 28 dead.

"We accuse the Baathist alliance of executing the terrorist operations," said Major General Qassim Atta, the spokesman for the Iraqi Army's Baghdad operations, referring to the party of executed former dictator Saddam Hussein.

Atta said the attacks at the finance and foreign ministries were truck bombings, and added that security forces had arrested two senior Al-Qaeda leaders in the Mansur neighbourhood of western Baghdad.

A car bomb also hit a market in the western neighbourhood of Bayaa, killing two people and wounding five, a defence ministry official said, while two mortars landed in the Green Zone -- an area of foreign embassies and gov-

ernment offices -- and one exploded outside, a security official said.

A tally of tolls distributed from Baghdad hospitals indicated that around 370 people were injured in Wednesday's violence.

The attacks -- shortly before Muslims are due to begin the holy fasting month of Ramadan later this week -- pushed the city to a standstill as security forces shot into the air and closed off roads, while ambulances struggled to make progress amid traffic jams.

It was the bloodiest day in the capital since February 1, 2008, when bombs at Baghdad pet markets left 98 people dead.

Recent attacks in the capital have appeared to target various ethnic groups in a bid to spark sectarian violence, which engulfed Iraq in 2006 and 2007, but no such intra-communal bloodshed appears yet to have been sparked.

Wednesday's violence comes exactly six years to the day after a truck bomb struck the UN offices at the Canal Hotel in Baghdad, killing 22 people including de Mello.

Despite a reduction in violence in recent months, attacks on security forces and civilians remain common in Baghdad, the restive northern city of Mosul and in the ethnically divided oil city of Kirkuk.

The number of violent deaths fell by a third last month to 275 from 437 in June, following the pullout of US forces from urban areas on June 30.

The figure for May was 155, the lowest of any month since the US-led invasion of 2003.

Kabul siege sparks

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presidential palace in the heart of the city.

"I asked them what they were doing," Hayatullah told AFP. "One of them put his forefinger on his mouth and said, 'We're suicide bombers'."

I left and told the bank guards."

As the men stormed in, a Taliban spokesman told journalists that 20 fighters and suicide attackers had penetrated the city. "They will carry out attacks but they are waiting for instructions," he warned.

It was a threat not taken lightly a day after a Taliban suicide car bomb killed a Nato soldier, two Afghan UN staff and seven civilians.

Masked commandos raced up the stairs and security forces massed outside the building watched by hundreds of nervous residents and journalists who were kept away by security forces, some of whom used rifle butts on the crowd.

After an exchange of fire that lasted around two hours, police dragged the bodies of three attackers down a staircase snaking up the outside of the dusty building, witnesses said.

They dumped the corpses -- their faces blackened, torsos and legs bloodied and clothes ripped to shreds -- on the side of the road before putting them into the back of a pick-up and driving away.

Authorities tightened security across the capital by erecting scores of checkpoints, searching vehicles with sniffer dogs as most businesses shut down for the National Day holiday.

Afghanistan usually marks such holidays with grand public parades and celebrations, but since gunmen opened fire at one such event attended by President Hamid Karzai last year, big public occasions have been called off.

A recent surge in violence has raised fears about security during Thursday's presidential and provincial council elections.

JS session

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not. The BNP-led opposition lawmakers did not join the budget session.

The all-party parliamentary probe body in a report in the last session asked the House to cancel membership of former speaker Jamiruddin Sircar, punitive actions against former deputy speaker Akhtar Hamid Siddiqui and former chief whip Khandaker Delwar Hossain on charge of financial irregularities and misuse of power.

Former speaker Sircar, however, has filed a writ petition with the High Court challenging the legality of formation of the parliamentary probe body.

cil elections.

Abdul Hakim, 55, who has an ice cream shop just behind the besieged building, said his first reaction to the stand-off was that voting was too dangerous.

"It was barbaric, violent and dangerous, just forget about the voting. It's dangerous. There's so much mess, who can go and vote?" he said, before recanting slightly and rushing out to say he would still try his best to vote.

In a nearby bread shop, baker Mohammad Omar, 58, courted criticism from shoppers when he said the attack had deterred him from voting.

"In such a situation, they would kill us in the voting area. If there was security, we would vote," he said, to cries from shoppers telling him it was his duty to cast his ballot in a bid to bring progress.