

Dhaka pledges more peacekeepers for UN

Obama lauds Bangladesh's contribution

UNB, New York

Bangladesh has pledged additional troops to the UN peacekeeping missions as President Barack Obama said Bangladesh blue helmets not only enhanced the prestige of their country but also the honour of the United Nations.

"We're a peace-loving nation and we're committed to global peace... We're helping the UN in doing the peacekeeping job from our own responsibility," Prime Minister Hasina said during a summit meeting on UN peacekeeping hosted by the US president Wednesday afternoon.

Dhaka wants recognition of the Bangladesh Institute of Peace Support Operation as a regional peacekeeping-training institute to train professional peacekeepers from other countries in the

region, the PM said.

On the outcome of the meeting, Bangladesh Permanent Representative to the UN AK Abdul Momen told UNB that the prime minister said Bangladesh is committed to sending more troops to the UN peacekeeping mission.

"We're committed to contributing additional forces," Hasina said.

Praising the Bangladesh peacekeepers, the US President Obama said Bangladesh not only enhanced her own prestige but also the prestige of the United Nations through the policing of peace.

Heads of state and government from top peacekeeper-contributing countries, including Bangladesh, Pakistan, Uruguay, Nepal, Italy and Ghana, attended the meeting held in a UN Conference Room on the sidelines of the current 64th UNGA

session.

Egypt, China, Jordan, Nigeria, Morocco and Benin--were represented by their foreign ministers at the meeting that lasted over an hour from 12:05pm.

Bangladesh joined the UN peacekeeping mission in 1988 and has sent nearly 82,966 peacekeepers so far. During the period, Bangladesh peacekeepers have served 63 missions when 92 peacekeepers made supreme sacrifices in boots and 106 suffered injuries.

Currently 9,549 army and police personnel are engaged in peacekeeping in 12 countries. The country is now in the second position with 8,082 soldiers and first in terms of police with 1,372 policemen.

"In last 21 years we've shown our professionalism and taken judicious

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Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and US President Barack Obama exchanging views on climate woes of developing countries during a private working dinner Tuesday night on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly Session. PHOTO: NEWS WORLD

Clock goes 1-hr back on Oct 1

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Clock goes back an hour on October 1 as the Daylight Saving Time (DST) scheme for this year ends on September 30.

The next DST one-hour time shift would be on April 1 next year.

The government on June 18 introduced the DST as an energy savings measure. Many criticised it and said it was a meaningless step. The Power Development Board says it reduced up to 200 megawatt (MW) power consumption during typical peak hours between 7:00pm and 9:00pm.

As load shedding hovered around 1000MW to 2000MW

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Constitution stares at major changes

Govt plans to revive some features of 1972 charter, seek consensus on fate of caretaker system, tenure of parliament

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government plans to bring major changes to the constitution to restore the spirit of the Liberation War, Law Minister Shafique Ahmed said yesterday.

The same day ruling Awami League General Secretary and LGRD Minister Syed Ashrafur Islam said the government may move to forge a national consensus on whether to do away with the caretaker government system and curtail the tenure of parliament.

Talking to reporters after meeting the German ambassador in Dhaka at his secretariat office, Shafique Ahmed said his ministry is going to ask the Law Commission to make

recommendations to revive some major features of the 1972 constitution.

Secularism and Bangalee nationalism were among the lofty beliefs for which the nation fought the occupation forces in 1971, he observed.

But during the military regimes, he added, provisions enshrining those principles were deleted from the constitution. Islam was made state religion and restriction on religion-based politics lifted.

The law minister noted the original provisions need to be restored for good governance and democracy to take root.

"The constitution has been altered through

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Ashraf warns against failure of parties

Does not want to see 1/11 recur

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League General Secretary Syed Ashrafur Islam yesterday apprehended recurrence of the 1/11 changeover if political parties fail to institutionalise democracy in the country.

"Any failure to give democracy an institutional shape might result in such incidents in the country again," said Ashraf, also LGRD and Cooperatives minister, while talking to journalists at his office in the ministry.

He urged main opposition BNP and other political parties to join the parliament

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EC to go tough on loan, bill defaulters

Drafting a rule to firm up RPO provisions

SHAKHAWAT LITON

The Election Commission is drafting a rule to make restrictions on loan and utility services bill defaulters more stringent to prevent their participation in parliamentary polls.

According to the proposed rule, a loan defaulter must reschedule the loan six months before filing application for candidacy in parliamentary polls. An individual with records of defaulting utility services bills must also clear the bills with the same time in hand.

The EC is also preparing a set of other proposals, including one to take action against a candidate for suppressing information while filing application for candidacy, to strengthen itself for holding parliamentary election in a free and fair manner.

Officials at the EC Secretariat said the com-

mission would finalise the proposals on consultation with political parties and then send those to the government to amend the electoral laws.

The current provisions of the Representation of the People Order (RPO) allow a defaulter to reschedule their loan and pay outstanding bills only seven days before filing applications seeking candidature.

The first amendment to the RPO was brought hurriedly before the ninth parliamentary elections with the provision of six months' timeframe. But the timeframe was shortened to seven days in the face of strong demand from political parties.

EC officials said the commission is drafting proposals for taking action against a candidate, like disqualifying a person from parliamentary

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Obama pushes for nuke-free world

World powers adopt landmark resolution

AFP, United Nations

World powers yesterday adopted a landmark resolution seeking to rid the planet of nuclear arms at an unprecedented Security Council summit hosted by US President Barack Obama.

"Although we averted a nuclear nightmare during the Cold War, we now face proliferation of a scope and complexity that demands new strategies and new approaches," Obama told the 15-member body.

"Just one nuclear weapon exploded in a city, be it New York or Moscow, Tokyo or Beijing, London or Paris, could kill hundreds of thousands of people."

The talks come as Iran's suspect atomic program has once again been thrust into the spotlight, with world powers warning more

sanctions could follow if Tehran refuses to comply with UN demands to rein in its nuclear ambitions.

The Security Council resolution, adopted unanimously, commits member nations to work toward a world without nuclear weapons and endorses a broad framework of actions to reduce global nuclear dangers.

Quoting former US president Ronald Reagan, Obama told the meeting that "a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought."

"And no matter how great the obstacles may seem, we must never stop our efforts to reduce the weapons of war," he urged, as he became the first American president to chair a meeting of the UN Security Council.

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WB to help boost social safety net

UNB, New York

The World Bank offered to provide Bangladesh necessary supports for creating its social-safety net, alleviating poverty and developing infrastructures.

The assurance came from WB President Robert B Zoellick when he paid a call on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at her suite at Hotel Grand Hyatt on Wednesday.

During the meeting, the Bangladesh prime minister and the World Bank president discussed a wide range of issues of national, regional and international development, including the challenges arising out of the global climate change.

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SUGAR PRICE MANIPULATION Govt orders arrest of 8 traders

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has ordered arrest of eight businessmen who manipulated sugar price during the month of Ramadan.

"We have already identified these businessmen, and directed law enforcement agencies to take immediate action in this regard," Commerce Minister Faruk Khan told The Daily Star yesterday.

Earlier on the day, talking to reporters at his office, the minister said some unscrupulous businessmen were involved in manipulating sugar price. They procured sugar at lower prices from different mills, and sold it at much higher prices causing a price spiral.

Faruk Khan said, "Hopefully, we will get within a day or two the outcome of efforts to arrest the dishonest businessmen who caused sufferings to people by raising sugar price."

Price of sugar jumped to Tk 70 a kg while the government sold it at Tk 39 a kg to appointed dealers through Trading Corporation of Bangladesh (TCB). Businessmen were supposed to sell sugar at a maximum price of Tk 42 per kg in retail markets.

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Gas supply to 6 dists by 2011

QUAZI AMANULLAH, Khulna

Six out of 10 districts of Khulna division will come under gas supply through pipeline by the end of 2011.

Disclosing this Project Director of Sundarban Gas Company Ltd (SGCL) Md Kamal Uddin told The Daily Star that implementation of the South-Western Gas Distribution Project is expected to start in November this year.

Once the project gets final nod from the Executive Committee of National Economic Council (Ecnec), which is likely next month, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) will be approached for release of its committed fund for this project, he said.

The ADB has committed to provide Tk 280 crore out of Tk 643 crore required to implement first phase of the project. And Tk 363 crore would come from the government fund, the SGCL project director mentioned.

In the first phase, a 901-km long pipeline would be laid in six districts -- Khulna, Bagerhat, Kushtia, Jhenidah, Chuadanga and Jessore.

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Employees of Reptile Farm Ltd in Mymensingh are collecting crocodile eggs. Right, croc offspring hatched in captivity will soon reach their adulthood and be ready for export.



PHOTO: STAR

Crocs eye forex

Local farm all set for maiden export

AMINUL ISLAM, Mymensingh

Four years after its inception, the country's first commercial reptile farm--The Reptiles Farm Ltd--in Mymensingh is now all set to make its first export of crocodiles.

The Bhaluka-based farm's Managing Director Mushtaq Ahmed told The Daily Star that they are at the final stage of signing deals with a few importers in France, Germany, Italy and Japan. They are expecting to export around 100 crocodiles aged over two years by November this year.

"Export of each crocodile will fetch us Tk 75,000 and we will get a reasonable profit from the first export," Mushtaq said hoping that his farm would earn up to Tk 35 crore from crocodile exports by 2015.

Mushtaq and another entrepreneur Mesbahul Hoque started working on crocodile farming in 2002 but now it has become a viable business, said Mushtaq.

The two entrepreneurs jointly launched the farm investing Tk 5 crore with 49 percent financial support from the Equity and Entrepreneur Fund (EEF) of the government in the form of interest-free loan.

Established at Hatibeer of Bhaluka upazila in Mymensingh, The Reptiles Farm Ltd got approval from the Forest and Environment Ministry on May 5, 2004. First they imported 75 salt-water crocodiles from Malaysia on December 23, 2004 at a cost of Tk 1.25 crore. During the shipment, one crocodile had died while six more died after reaching the farm.

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