

Defence policy

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We have a framework in place for the defence policy," M Idris Ali, chief of the committee, told The Daily Star after the meeting.

He said more discussions on the draft will follow in the committee.

"The ultimate product of our meeting will not be kept secret. We will disclose everything for the public, except some sensitive matters if there is any," the committee chief added.

Talking to The Daily Star after the meeting, a number of committee members said in the meeting some of them also suggested modernisation of the armed forces in line with the changing time.

They also said the draft of the defence policy is voluminous, which it should not be, adding that it deals with many unnecessary things in it as well.

A member of the committee said the meeting also discussed the issue of the army's role being questioned after August 15, 1975 for a series of coups and counter coups, and for grabbing of the state power twice by the force.

He said however their role in preparing the latest voter list with photographs, and in assisting victims in post natural disaster situations are lauded by the people.

Meanwhile, Planning Minister Air Vice-marshal (ret'd) AK Khandker, yesterday told the House that a total of 75 officials of the armed forces had been sent to forced retirement or dismissed from the services during the BNP-led alliance government.

Khandker, who is also in charge of defence ministry affairs in the parliament, in a scripted answer to a query of

Delwar rejects

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statements on Ziaur Rahman.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on Wednesday in parliament during a question-answer session said, "Nobody could prove that body of Zia was brought there. It was just a coffin and I doubt whether the Zia's body was buried in the grave at Zia Uddin."

She also rejected a lawmaker's proposal to shift the grave of Khaled Mosharraf, chief of K-force during the Liberation War, to Zia Uddin and preserve there a place for burial of S-force commander KM Shafiqullah.

"Ziaur Rahman killed many freedom fighters including Col Taher, Brigadier Huda and Brigadier Khaled Mosharraf. I don't think their family members will agree to shift their graves to Zia Uddin," Hasina, also leader of the House, added.

Regarding the allegation that Hawa Bhaban was involved in the August 21 grenade attack, Delwar said it was the BNP government that had arrested Mufi Hannan and brought him to book.

Maoist leaders

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Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) and the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) were involved in the operation.

"Of these five battalions are from BSE, four from ITBP and the rest from CRPF," he said.

The BSE, ITBP and CRPF are jointly operating in Chhattisgarh, considered the heartland of the Maoists who believe in a rural insurrection aimed at seizing territory in rural areas and then taking power violently.

"However, it will not be before March when the security forces will launch their operations in all the Maoist-affected states," the official said.

According to rough estimates, over 60,000 paramilitary forces would be in action against 6,000-7,000 Maoists armed with heavy weapons as well as light machine guns, AK-47s, AK-56s and Insas rifles.

The highly-placed official pointed out that a similar strategy had led to the dramatic killing of forest brigand Veerappan, who like some of the present Maoist leaders had been on the run for years.

"Once Veerappan was gone, it became easy for police and security forces to swoop down on other bandits. We have adopted a somewhat similar strategy."

"Our men are gathering intelligence about Maoist leaders. We won't go on the offensive until and unless there is actionable intelligence," the source added. "We have arrested some people but we are yet to net the big fish."

Asked about Kishenji, the elusive Maoist leader who keeps giving interviews to television channels, the source said he had managed to slip away from the Lalgarh area of West Bengal Tuesday.

DU violence

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Battalion-3 personnel picked Sumon up from capital's Gopibagh area on Tuesday on suspicion of as Pasha and later handed him over to the Shahbagh Police.

But Additional Deputy Commissioner of police Nurul Islam told The Daily Star the police confirmed that the picked up youth was not Saiduzzaman Pasha and then he was sent to court "shown arrest" on a Dhaka Metropolitan Police act.

A senior officer of the Detective Branch of Police said they already tracked down cell phone numbers of at least 15 culprits who were seen wielding firearms and sharp weapons during the violence.

Apart from the Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal cadres, the Bangladesh Chhatra League men who also took part in the clashes backing a rebel faction of JCD went into hiding fearing arrest, campus sources said.

Meanwhile, the strike enforced by JCD at DU yesterday disrupted classes but did not hamper examinations, reports our DU correspondent.

The presence of students, however, was larger than the first day of the strike on Tuesday.

JCD, student wing of the opposition BNP, called the strike following the gun battle between two factions of JCD that left JCD President Sultan Salauddin Tuku injured on Monday.

JCD blamed BCL for the clashes that left at least 25 people including the DU proctor and JCD chief injured.

Police yesterday obstructed JCD leaders and activists to enter on DU campus as they failed to show identity card of DU studentship. Around 200 JCD men tried to enter the campus through the Shahbagh entrance at around 9:00am to stage a demonstration on support of the strike.

Later, the JCD men held a rally at Shahbagh intersection and brought out a procession that marched several streets outside the campus.

BCL men also brought out a procession and held a rally on the campus in protest of the strike. They demanded exemplary punishment to culprits who were wielding firearms during the clash.

Tanneries

FROM PAGE 1
replying to queries from lawmakers.

He said four highly-polluted rivers surrounding the capital were declared ecologically critical and necessary steps were taken to save them.

The High Court in June last year ordered relocation of the tanneries within February 28 this year and asked the authorities concerned to shut down the tanneries that fail to comply with the directive.

The tannery industry at Hazaribagh causes severe environmental pollution and contamination of the water of Buriganga River posing serious health hazards.

The state minister said cases are being filed against the industries that are operating without any ETP.

"The Department of Environment has taken legal actions against 1,423 industries for environmental pollution across the country in the last six months," he said, placing a list of those industries.

Brickfields, textile mills and dyeing factories are at the top of the list.

At least 55 cases were filed and 38 industries were fined. Besides, 1,330 industries were served with warning notice, Hasan Mahmud said.

CLIMATE CHANGE FUND
The state minister said the government has approved projects involving Tk 60 crore from the climate change fund to tackle the adverse effects of climate change.

He said the government has taken measures to ensure transparency in releasing money from the fund.

"We have received several other project proposals from government and non-government organisations. We are scrutinising them," Hasan Mahmud said.

The government has included the issues of migration and rise in sea level in its charter to deal with climate change, he said.

The government has taken a project involving \$4 million under the UNFCCC for afforestation in the coastal belts, the state minister said.

He said the government has taken a plan to produce organic fertiliser from wastes under the clean development mechanism project.

Biswa Ijtema

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Bangladesh through Benapole check post in the last seven days to attend the Ijtema.

However, a member of police was killed near Station Road while performing his duty in the Ijtema area, reports a correspondent from Gazipur. Abdus Sattar, 45, who worked for Rajshahi range, died as a bus hit him from behind.

The number of devotees will increase on the day of Akheri Munajat--the concluding prayer--on January 24.

The Tablig-e-Jamaat has been organising the event since 1976.

The Ijtema features sermons on fundamental issues of Tablig, prayer for spiritual adulation, exaltation and welfare of the Muslim community.

Sermons already started yesterday morning although the Ijtema officially starts after Fazr prayers today.

Several thousand devotees have volunteered to prepare the 150-acre ground to accommodate the participants.

Shahjahan Miah, state minister for religious affairs ministry, Mozibur Rahman Fakir, state minister for health ministry and Jahangir Kabir Nanak, state minister for LGRD, visited the Ijtema ground yesterday.

Multi-tier security measures have been taken up in and around the venue to avert any possible threats and subversive activities of different quarters.

Around 18,000 security personnel from different agencies and several hundred plainclothes law enforcers will keep vigil in and around the area. Law enforcement agencies have set up nine observation towers to watch people's movement while 60 CCTVs have been installed across the venue including 18 entrance points to monitor the Ijtema ground.

Besides, helicopters, speedboats and pickup vans will keep patrolling in and around the area.

The electrification work and installation of 500 special loudspeakers at the Ijtema ground has been completed, said the organisers.

This year the organisers have divided the Ijtema ground into 33 sections. Large maps indicat-

ing roads and those sections have been hung at the entrances.

Five more deep tube-wells have been installed at the venue in addition to the existing eight to ensure supply of around 2.60 lakh gallons of water an hour, said sources at Public Health and Engineering Department of Gazipur.

Around 1,768 sanitary latrines, 25,000 semi-pukka latrines and 3,000 temporary toilets have been set up around the ground, they said.

Fire brigade vehicles and ambulances have been kept ready for emergency. The organisers have also marked parking spaces.

Twenty-one special trains and 50 BRTC shuttle buses have been introduced to ease transportation of people to the venue.

Meanwhile, Tongi General Hospital has added 50 seats while around 50 medical teams will work for providing treatment to the devotees free of cost.

Talking to The Daily Star, Aminul Islam, a devotee from Khulna, said they are pleased to see this year's arrangement.

President Zillur Rahman and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina greeted people of the country as well as the Muslim Ummah on the occasion of Biswa Ijtema.

In his message, President Zillur Rahman said the Ijtema has been playing an important role in establishing good relations among all members of the Muslim Ummah and spreading the teachings of Islam.

"The solidarity of the Muslim world would be strengthened through the congregation," he said.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in her message said the congregation has been significantly contributing to the preaching and spreading of Islam's core messages of universal peace, fellow feeling, cordiality and generosity.

She expressed hope that the congregation will further strengthen the bond of unity, solidarity and brotherhood of people around the world and the Muslim Ummah.

Both the president and the prime minister wished success of the event.

Land grabbers' list

FROM PAGE 1
Besides, his ministry has sent a proposal to Gazipur's deputy commissioner to evict the grabbers.

Earlier, in a scripted query, Jatiya Party lawmaker Hafiz Uddin Ahmed sought to know how much forestland has been grabbed in Dhaka and Gazipur and the names of the grabbers.

In reply, the state minister came up with the list on the forestland grabbed in Gazipur district.

Cocola Food Products Ltd tops the list with 12.35 acres at Kaliakoir.

Of the individuals, Nurul Islam Babul has 4.53 acres also at Kaliakoir.

Of the other organisations Rosheya Spinning Mills has grabbed 4.63 acres, RAK Ceramics 4.26 acres, Prithi Poultry 1 acre, Razzakul Haider Aranno Kutir (picnic spot) 3.42 acres, Echo Cotton Mills 5.62 acres, Auto Spinning Mills 2.14 acres, Messrs Hong Kong Manzala Textile 2.57 acres, Joynal Abedin Titu 1.37 acres, Vowal Industries Ltd 4.04 acres, Jayson Aggravate Ltd 0.55 acre, Hotapara Garments Ltd 0.02 acre, Sunpower Ceramics 0.50 acre, Koroni Composite Ltd 1 acre, Shamsuddin Spinning Mills 7.16 acres, Rahmat Textile Mills 6.72 acres, Hydro Oxide Ltd 3.30 acres, Hamid Spinning Mills 6.78 acres, NM Textiles Mills 1.68 acres, Solar Ceramic 0.70 acre, Hazi Islamuddin Spinning Mills 0.80 acre and Royal Green Products Ltd 6.28 acres.

Of the individuals, Nurul Huda has grabbed 0.20 acre, Abdul Aziz 0.10 acre, Siraj Mia 0.10 acre, Yaseen Mia 0.05 acre, Afzal Hossain 0.05 acre, Mohammad Aminul 0.10 acre, Jasim Uddin 0.10 acre, Mohor Ali 0.10 acre, Abdul Latif 0.10 acre, Kashem 0.50 acre, Montaz Ali 0.05 acre, Shukur Ali 0.10 acre, Mohammad Faruk 0.05 acre, Chowdhury Monowar Uddin Siddiqui 2.05 acres, Abdul Mannan 0.02 acre, Mohammad Aziz 0.02 acre, Alim 0.02 acre, Mozammel 0.03 acre, Zohura Begum 0.04 acre, Mongol Chandra Barman 0.08 acre, Aziz Chandra Barman 0.05 acre, Ranjit Chandra Barman 0.07 acre, Alauddin 0.04 acre, Ibrahim 0.08 acre, Abul Hossain 0.04 acre, Falu Mia 0.13 acre, Iddis Ali 0.10 acre, Abdul Rashid 0.15 acre, Ohid Ali 0.18 acre, Nur Mohammad Ali 0.10 acre, Ismail Bepari 0.15 acre, Afsar

Uddin 0.12 acre, Moslemuddin 0.10 acre, Nurul Islam 0.07 acre, Jonab Ali one acre, Mohammad Poran 1.25 acre, Korom Ali one acre, Mohammad Shamim 0.50 acre, Dhonu Mia 1.50 acres, Alhaj Sohrab 1.53 acres, Ansar Ali 0.20 acre, Abdur Rahim 0.20 acre, Lal Mia 0.20 acre, Abul Hossain 0.75 acre and Abdul Mamun Gong 0.58 acre.

Representatives

FROM PAGE 16
Earlier on January 3 in a press conference at the Dhaka Reporters Unity, they have asked the government to meet their 10-point demand by January 20. Otherwise, they threatened to announce tough actions.

Soon after the elections were held on January 22 last year, the upazila chairmen and vice chairmen demanded that the government make upazila parishads effective. They had been deprived of their duties to perform in the upazilas, they said.

Meanwhile, attending the meeting as chief guest former adviser of a caretaker government Akbar Ali Khan urged the government to hold a referendum regarding strengthening of upazila parishad. "Arrange a referendum and let the people decide whether they want their upazila parishads to be strengthened or not," he said.

Akbar Ali also said the government should withdraw the control of lawmakers from the upazilas and laws, which allow appointment of lawmakers as advisers of upazila parishads, should be amended.

"The local government should not be considered part of the central government," Akbar Ali said.

Regretting the role of opposition parties regarding upazila parishad, he asks, "Those who fight for a seat in Parliament, how can they ignore such an important issue?"

The chairmen and vice chairmen at the meeting demanded that the government meet their demands immediately otherwise they would launch movements including even strikes.

Dr Badiul Alam Majumdar, secretary of non-governmental organisation Shujan, and local government expert Dr Tofail Ahmed also spoke at the meeting.

Power import

FROM PAGE 16
most suitable site for the sub-station considering the geographical and other facilities. The survey report was sent to the authorities concerned Wednesday.

Upazila Nirbahi Officer of Bheramara Rajibul Islam and officials of Ishwardi 230 KV power sub-station were present during the survey.

According to the survey team, the government has 600 acres of free land under railway (west zone) in Ramkrishnapur while only 250 to 300 acres of land is necessary for the new sub-station. Moreover, the site is only 35 kilometres from Nadia, a border district of India, they added.

Besides, setting up of power station here would reduce cost as a power network is already there due to Ishwardi sub-station. Only eight kilometres of cable connectivity will be necessary to supply electricity to Ishwardi sub-station, said the sources.

Ishiaq told The Daily Star yesterday that the survey team proposed to set up the power station at Ramkrishnapur considering all aspects, including minimal distance from India and other facilities.

The Bheramara UNO confirmed sending of the survey report to government high-ups.

Sayed Ahmed

FROM PAGE 16
of Bangladesh, Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy, Drama and Music Department of Dhaka University, Tibbia Habibia College, Shefa-ul-Mulk Hakim Habibur Rahman Foundation and actor Bulbul Ahamed mourned the passing away of the drama doyen.

Information and Cultural Affairs Minister Abul Kalam Azad and State Minister advocate Promode Mankin also expressed their deep shock.

Meanwhile, in a condolence message Hasina said Sayeed Ahmed's contribution towards drama is immense and his death is an irreparable loss, reports UNB.

She conveyed sympathy to the members of the bereaved family and prayed for the salvation of the departed soul.

Kaptai dam

FROM PAGE 16
"If we construct another dam six km downstream of the Kaptai Hydroelectric Dam, we can generate the same extent of power from the new plant," Mahmud said.

The state minister requested the US government to provide more assistance for adaptation and mitigation of the adverse impacts on Bangladesh of the global climate change due to excessive carbon emissions from the highly industrialised developed countries.

During the meeting, Patrick Moon appreciated Bangladesh for taking the leadership on climate change and playing constructive role at the summit-level Copenhagen conference.

He assured that the US government would "always stand beside Bangladesh in implementing its effective steps for the protection of environment."

They also discussed the two countries' cooperation on environmental issues in the future.

BDR trial

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village, Nayek Subedar Abul Hossain, Nayek Anisur Rahman and chef Pintu Mia of 7 Rifle Battalion in Nildumur.

BDR Director General Maj General M Mainul Islam, who heads the special court at 41 Rifle Battalion headquarters in Sathkira, recorded their statements.

Two other members of the court are Lt Col Gazi Khalid Hossain and Maj Lutful Karim. As per the BDR law, the accused cross-examined the prosecution witnesses with the assistance of BDR officer Maj Shamim Reza and lawyer Zahid Hossain.

Fifteen of 40 prosecution witnesses gave depositions before the court till yesterday. The court took depositions of ten others on Tuesday and Wednesday.

The special court framed charges against 60 BDR mutineers of 7 Rifle Battalion on January 18.

Meanwhile, 16 of the 60 accused BDR Jawans on Wednesday admitted to their involvement in the mutiny and begged for mercy in writing before the court.

The special court adjourned the proceedings till March 21.

Deputy Attorney General advocate Khasruzzaman and senior public prosecutors Mosharraf Hossain Kajal and Sahidur Rahman stood for the state.

New subsidy

FROM PAGE 1
Under the approved project, lower- and middle-class farmers will have to form a three- to four-member team to qualify for the subsidy, said an agriculture ministry official.

The subsidy will be given mainly for buying tractors, power tillers, thrashers for rice and wheat, and transplanters.

The ministry will appoint a dealer in each upazila and the farmers in groups will procure the equipment through that dealer. The government will pay for 25 percent of the equipment's price.

An agriculture ministry study says modern equipment could help avoid a 5 percent post-harvest loss and save about 35 lakh tonnes of crops.

The districts to be covered are Tangail, Mymensingh, Netrakona, Jamalpur, Kishoreganj, Sherpur, Gopalganj, Faridpur, Shariatpur, Comilla, Chittagong, Patuakhali, Bhola, Dinajpur, Kurigram, Thakurgaon, Bogra, Jessore, Rangpur, Naogaon, Satkhira, Khulna, Sylhet, Sunamganj and Moulvibazar.

The agricultural ministry has also taken up a project to install deep tube wells (2nd phase) at a cost of Tk 248 crore. Under the project, 37,500 hectares of land will be brought under irrigation. This will help produce an additional 1.87 lakh tonnes of crop.

In parliament, replying to a query from Awami League lawmaker Meher Afroz, Matia Chowdhury said Tk 3,600 crore was allocated for agricultural subsidies in the current budget.

"In the revised budget, that amount has been proposed to be raised to Tk 5,000 crore," she added.

The minister said the government currently subsidises urea, triple super phosphate, diammonium phosphate and muriate of potash fertilisers.

Besides, it gives subsidy to increase production of sugarcane and sugar. A 20 percent rebate is given on electricity used for irrigation purpose.

She also informed the House that Tk 5,178 crore was allocated for farm subsidies in the previous year.

The government is likely to place the revised budget for parliament's approval during the next session.

While replying to lawmakers' queries, Matia came down hard on land developers constructing apartment blocks filling waterbodies in the city. She said many waterbodies in Keraniganj had been blocked up to make way for housing projects.

A decrease in natural reservoirs leads to indiscriminate use of underground water, which in turn threatens serious arsenic contamination, she noted. It is not possible for any scientists or engineers to rid underground water of arsenic.

"We are ruining ourselves," she said answering a question from Nasrul Hamid, AL lawmaker from Keraniganj.

The government however has undertaken massive programmes to encourage use of surface water for irrigation, construction of infrastructure and food production, continued the minister.

She said 36 programmes at a cost of Tk 312.86 crore aim to ensure maximum use of surface water.

Gas rationing

FROM PAGE 1
The Petrobangla ultimately decided to ration gas to improve the situation and divided Dhaka and its adjacent areas into seven zones for the purpose, said a Petrobangla official.

After yesterday's meeting, Abdus Salam Murshed, president of Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association, said they agreed to keep production in their factories suspended for one day in a week following an assurance of better pressure of gas.

He said at present they are following the staggering system in power supply one day in a week in seven industrial zones in and around Dhaka. "The rationing of gas will be on the same day. The system will be helpful if Petrobangla can ensure better supply of gas on other days of the week," Murshed said.

The major industrial locations that came under the system are different Dhaka metropolitan areas, Savar, Gazipur, Tongi, Mymensingh, Manikganj, Narsingdi, Ghorashal, Jinjira, Sonargaon, Fatula and Narayanganj, he said.

Chittagong zone remains out of the rationing, he added. Talking to The Daily Star, Fazlul Hoque, president of Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association, said

face water and sustainable technology to produce more food grains.

To another query, she said the country has 77.65 lakh hectares of land, according to data Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics gives for 2007-08.

The amount of cultivable land was 80.31 lakh hectares in 2002-03.

"This means the cropland is decreasing 0.66 percent a year. Experts however claim it to be 1 percent," she said.

On protecting cropland, Matia said an inter-ministerial meeting would be held to discuss enacting a law or initiating legal measures making it mandatory to take prior permission for construction of houses and industries on cultivable land.

PROJECTS OKAYED BY ECNEC

The other projects approved at Ecne meeting yesterday include procurement of 46 locomotives for Bangladesh Railway under the Road and Railway Division (Tk 936 crore), Sayedabad Water Treatment Plant (phase-2) under the local government division (Tk 1,140 crore), Pirchar-Shibchar-Madaripur road expansion and improvement under Road and Railway Division (Tk 33 crore), rehabilitation of Hatia-Jahajmara road and Tamrudin link road (amended) under Road and Railway Division (Tk 27 crore), construction of residential building and other works at National Defence College in Mirpur Cantonment under the defence ministry (Tk 61 crore), and development and fortification of Bangladesh Betar Kabirpur 250-kilowatt short wave centre under the information ministry (Tk 60 crore).

These projects and the one on subsidy for farmers together involve a cost of Tk 2,654 crore.

DC's house

FROM PAGE 1
telephone lines and took away the water pumps.

When another guard Masud Rana immediately informed the police of the matter, the miscreants scaled the wall of the house and fled.

The complainant in the case, filed with Bogra Sadar thana, suspected that members of fundamentalist or extremist group might be involved in the incident.

Bangabandhu

FROM PAGE 16
Syed Farooq Rahman and Mohiuddin Ahmed filed the review petitions with the SC on January 19, Bazul Huda and AKM Mohiuddin Ahmed on January 10, and Sultan Shahriar Rashid Khan on January 12.

The apex court yesterday fixed the date of hearing following a prayer moved by advocate Anisul Huq, chief state counsel in Bangabandhu murder case.

Anisul Huq told The Daily Star that hearing of all the five review petitions will be held simultaneously at the apex court on January 24.

On November 19 last year, the SC confirmed death sentences to a dozen ex-army personnel including the detained ones in Bangabandhu murder case.

Of the seven others, one died and six are on the run.

Association, said knitwear manufacturers agreed to the gas staggering system as it is not possible to extract gas immediately.

"But, in the rank of gas consumers' list, RMG and textile mills are in the fourth position followed by the power sector, fertiliser factories and CNG