

PM renews commitment to modernise army

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday renewed her government's commitment to ensure higher training for members of the armed forces and procure modern weapons and equipment for their modernisation.

Addressing a function at the Headquarters of the President Guard Regiment (PGR) marking its 35th founding anniversary, Hasina said all steps will be taken so that Bangladesh can send more troops to the UN peacekeeping missions.

PGR Commandant Brig Gen Humayun Khaled also spoke on the occasion.

Ministers, members of parliament and chiefs of the three services were present.

Praising performance of the PGR members, the PM called upon the PGR members to continue their training and acquire professional excellence with high skill, discipline and loyalty.

She recalled with deep gratitude to the PGR members who in the past sacrificed their lives while performing their duties. She also assured members of the armed forces of taking necessary measures to remove their housing problems.

About her government's vision to turn Bangladesh into a modern digital one, Hasina vowed to serve the people's interests at any cost.

"By voting us to power, the people have reposed a great responsibility on us. They have kept faith and trust on us. We will have to honour their trust at any cost," Hasina said.

She said the government



Photo: PID

Members of the President Guard Regiment (PGR) pose for photograph with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at PGR Headquarters, Dhaka Cantonment yesterday.

started its journey with the 'charter of change' for the well-being of the people and the nation.

Hasina said when the present government took the office, the country was facing severe power crisis, price hike of essentials and impacts of global economic recession.

She listed several programmes like equalising ration for the Army with the Air Force and the Navy and increasing daily allowance of the JCOs and other ranks for their temporary duties.

Besides, she said the government has increased daily allowance of the army to Tk 20 from Tk nine for their duty of civil power as well as LPR duration and financial benefit

Medical College to ensure medical facilities for family members of the armed forces.

Hasina said although the hospital was not established afterwards, now the government is determined to build the hospital.

She said the government has implemented various programmes like equalising ration for the Army with the Air Force and the Navy and increasing daily allowance of the JCOs and other ranks for their temporary duties.

Pointing to poor housing condition of the soldiers, Hasina said the government is contemplating to increase housing facilities for them within the cantonment area.

from four months to six months for the JCO and other ranks.

Steps have also been taken to provide collateral-free loan to the soldiers from the Trust Bank so that they can refurbish their houses during their two months annual leave, she added.

Pointing to poor housing condition of the soldiers, Hasina said the government is contemplating to increase housing facilities for them within the cantonment area.

She said the government has also introduced low-cost and free telephone facilities for the Bangladeshi UN peacekeepers so they can easily talk to their family members from

abroad. Mentioning the difficulties faced by the Bangladesh Army with the foreign forces for their ranks of colonial era like 'Nayek' and 'Hawildar' Hasina said this had also been worked out to overcome the problems.

Hasina recalled with gratitude Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman who established the PGR.

She, however, regretted that Bangabandhu could not see formal functions of the PGR for the tragic incident of August 15, 1975.

Hasina advised the PGR in particular to continue their training programmes, saying

that there is no alternative to acquiring knowledge and enhancing proficiency.

She expressed the hope that the PGR would continue their endeavor in the future for ensuring foolproof security to the heads of state and government with their sincerity and devotion.

Earlier, the prime minister inspected the Quarter Guard and took salute from the smartly turned out contingent of the PGR at the PGR Headquarters.

She met with relatives of the martyred soldiers who laid down their lives while on duty in the past and distributed gifts among them.

KIBRIA KILLING

Date for further probe deferred for 35th time

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Divisional Speedy Trial Tribunal Judge of Sylhet yesterday deferred the date for submitting report of the "further investigation" in Kibria killing case to July 12.

The date was fixed for the day as special public prosecutor Kishore Kumar Kar prayed time extension stating that the CID could not finish its job and it need more time, court sources said. The date for "further investigation" has been deferred for the 35th time.

CID failed to submit the "further investigation report" in the last 40 months. The then investigation officer (IO) of the case senior ASP of CID Munshi Atiqur Rahman in a petition informed the court about necessity of "further investigation" on March 7, 2007. Munshi went on retirement after a few months and ASI Md Rafiqul Islam was given the job.

Former finance minister SAMS Kibria, his nephew advocate Shah Manzurul Huda, local Awami League leaders Abdur Rahim, Abul Hossain and Siddique Ali were killed in a grenade attack on a public meeting at Baidderbazar of Habiganj sadar upazila at the night of January 27, 2005.

IO Munshi Atique submitted charge sheet against ten persons in the case on March 20, 2005.

Of the accused, eight have been arrested while two went into hiding.

Of them, after spending three years in jail, Habiganj district unit BNP vice-president Abdul Quayyum came out on bail and claimed him and others innocent. Later, CID started further investigation.

On March 8 this year, Rab held alleged Huji operative Mizanur Rahman Mithu, who gave confessional statement before judicial magistrate in Habiganj following the day. CID then remanded the former state minister for home affairs Lutfozzaman Babar in connection with the case.

CID ASP Rafiqul Islam, IO of the case, told the Daily Star that they need more time to submit supplementary charge sheet as "further investigation" is still going on. He claimed that the job would complete soon.

DU student hurt in dorm ceiling collapse

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A student of Dhaka University was injured as part of the ceiling of its Sergeant Jahurul Haque Hall collapsed and fell on him early yesterday.

Arif Hossain, 6th semester student of the Management department, is a resident of the room no 304 of the hall. He was admitted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

Another student of the dormitory Shamsul Kabir Rahat said such an incident is not new one, it occurs regularly. The students got panicked after the incident, sources said.

Rahat alleged that the hall authorities is yet to take any step to repair the building despite their repeated request.

Hall provost Prof Zahidul Islam said he has taken the issue seriously and necessary steps would be taken immediately.



PHOTO: STAR

Editor and Publisher of The Daily Star Mahfuz Anam hands over a cheque for Tk 10 lakh to Bangladesh Cancer Hospital and Welfare Home of Bangladesh Cancer Society Chairman Dr SN Samad Chowdhury on behalf of the family of founder editor of The Daily Star late S M Ali at the newspaper office in the city yesterday. The money was donated to set up a two-bed cabin in the name of late Syed Mustafa Ali and late Syed Muhammad Ali in the hospital. On the occasion, Prof MA Hai, Prof Ahmed Syed, Prof SM Keramat Ali, Dr SM Kabir, Sultan M Rahman of the cancer society and senior staff members of The Daily Star were present. Syed Ruhul Amin represented the family of late S M Ali.

Plan to develop Gulshan, Banani, Baridhara Lake

Ecneec likely to consider 8 projects in today's meet

UNB, Dhaka

The Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (Ecneec) will hold its first meeting today for fiscal 2010-11 to consider eight development projects, including one to develop and reclaim Gulshan, Banani and Baridhara Lake in the city.

Ecneec Chairperson and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will preside over the meeting.

The Gulshan, Banani and Baridhara project under the Rajdhanee Unnayan Karttripakha (Rajuk) seeks to protect the lake from illegal occupation and to reclaim and preserve the water retention capacity of the lake as well as its beautification.

The other projects likely to be considered in the meeting are special development of University of Dhaka (4th phase) under the

education ministry, Special Rural Water Supply Project under the Local Government Division, setting up single line meter gauge railway tracks on Dohazari-Ramu-Cox's Bazar and Ramu-Gundum near Myanmar border under the Roads and Railways Division, construction of Dirai-Shalla highway near Madanpur-Dirai-Shalla road under the Roads and Railways Division, 2D seismic survey under fast track programme under the Energy and Mineral Resources Division, rural infrastructure development project in greater Faridpur (2nd phase) under the Local Government Division, and coordinated forest development (2nd phase) under the Agriculture Ministry.

The meeting is also likely review the ADP implementation progress of the Roads and Railways Division.

Tax Evasion Case Hearing on charge framing against Babar adjourned

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday for the third time adjourned the hearing on charge framing in a tax evasion case against former state minister for home Lutfozzaman Babar till August 17.

Special Judge's Court-5 Judge AKM Nasiruddin Mahmud passed the order after a petition submitted by Babar's lawyer saying his client had filed a writ petition with the High Court seeking quashment of the case.

After the hearing, the HC issued a rule upon the government to explain why the case should not be quashed, he added. So, Babar's lawyer prayed the adjournment of the hearing.

On February 14 this year, Deputy Tax Commissioner of the National Board of Revenue Syed Zakir Hossain filed the case against Babar.

NBR, in its case statement mentioned that Babar, director of Master Electronics Industries Limited, evaded Tk 2,65,44,122 as income tax upon his income of Tk 8,06,80,122 for the fiscal years 1999-2000 to 2008-2009.

Babar repeatedly provided false information about his real income and expenditure, alleged the NBR statement.

He was shown arrested in the August 21, 2004 grenade attack case and remanded a number of times.

CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

1 in 2 sexually abused: Study

A shocking 91 percent of them in the hands of family members

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

One in every two children with disability in the country is sexually abused with a shocking 91 percent of them by family members or close relatives, said a study.

Of the victims, aged between seven and 18, 52 percent are girls while 48 percent are boys.

The grim revelation is the findings of a six-month-long study jointly conducted by Bangladesh Protibondhi Foundation (BPF) and Save the Children Sweden-Denmark.

The picture is even worse in case of intellectually challenged children due to their inability to express themselves or understanding the intention of the offender, said Psychologist Dr Selim Chowdhury, who presented the findings at the National Press Club yesterday.

The abuse happens due to the fact that the understanding of personal body parts, personal security and sexual abuse is unclear to the physically and mentally challenged children and to their family members, Dr Selim said.

The study was conducted in six divisional districts on 216 children with disability, aged between 7-18, 535 adult persons with disability, their family mem-

bers, teachers and NGO workers.

Sharing the survey findings, experts working on the issue said children with disability are at a higher risk of sexual harassment or rape because they cannot protect themselves.

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), persons with disability constitute about 10 percent of the country's total population. However, there is no known survey on the total number of such children.

Lack of social and legal support, and the social tendency to keep the issue secret increase the risk factors often giving the abuser a chance to escape punishment, Dr Selim said.

He also stressed that along with legal punishment there is a serious need of psychosocial counselling for the offenders.

"In the absence of counselling, they [the offenders] would continue to abuse even after being punished," he said.

Bangladesh is a signatory to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities with some 600 NGOs working on the disability issue while there are laws to ensure the rights of persons with disability.

However, with all the tools and mecha-

nism the country has failed to change the lives of these people, said Khandaker Jahurul Alam, president of National Forum of Organisations Working with the Disabled (NFOWD).

To curtail such abuse, speakers recommended increasing self-protection ability of the children with disability as well as to make the concept of sexual abuse clear to them through specially designed counselling.

They also recommended counselling for the family members on how to better handle the issue, and undertake capacity building programmes for the NGO workers dealing with it.

Dr Naila Jaman, professor of Child Neurology and Development, Dhaka Shishu Hospital, Nasima Begum, joint secretary, Ministry of Social Welfare, Jowaherul Islam Mamun, secretary general of NFOWD, Shamim Ferdous, executive director of BPF, Samsul Alam, deputy country director and Selina Ahmed, director of Child Protection, Save the Children Sweden-Denmark, among others, spoke at the programme.

Privatisation of power may lead to more debts

Say speakers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a meeting yesterday said privatisation in power sector might lead Bangladesh to more public debts and poverty.

They made the remark while addressing the view exchange meeting titled "Crisis in power sector: privatisation and public debts" at National Press Club in the city yesterday.

Action Aid, Equity BD, Jubilee South, Supro, MFTD, Unnayan Onneshan and Voice jointly organised the meeting, said a press release.

Lidy Nacpil of Jubilee South said the government and people have to pay much, if the power sector becomes privatised. Privatisation in this sector will create poverty and public debts, Nacpil added.

Rashed Al Titumir of Unnayan Onneshan stressed the need for total public investment and planning in power generation to ensure people's rights to electricity.

Sayed Aminul Haque and Shamsuddoha of Equity BD and Faruque Ahmed of MFTD, among others, spoke at the meeting.



Children with disabilities perform at a function at the National Press Club in the city yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR