

Business behind

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representatives and they accepted the report unanimously.

The last part of the nine-episode documentary said that one of the reasons behind the resentment in BDR was their involvement in the "Dal-Bhat" (fair price shop) programme. The allegation of corruption in the program brewed grievance among BDR members.

In an interview with BBC, chief of the investigation committee Anisuzzaman said, "There were scopes for corruption in the Dal-Bhat programme and that triggered discontent in BDR which later turned into a mutiny."

"As a result we have recommended the government to engage all military or paramilitary forces fully in their chartered duties, which is to protect the country, not to run any institution," he added.

Former army chief Lt Gen (Retd) Mahbubur Rahman said, "Army should not get involved in any financial or industrial or business activities. The Dal-Bhat project is a mere example of a disastrous consequences."

M Moniruzzaman, former chief of Bangladesh Institute of Peace and Security Studies, said, "The less the army gets involved in activities other than protecting the country, the better it is."

"There is hardly any business sector in the country where the army do not have interest. It is obviously wrong and needs to stop," said former adviser to a caretaker government M Hafizuddin Khan.

"If they keep running hotels, garments or power plants when will they focus on the country's security?" he added.

CID to take

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and dispel the myth that the government was trying to protect the lawmaker, said one of the highly placed government sources.

Briefing newsmen after the meeting, Syed Ashraf Islam, AL general secretary and LGRD and cooperatives minister, said they want a proper investigation into the case and that the real culprits are punished.

"The investigation is on. So it won't be wise to make any comments on the case at this time," said the ruling party spokesperson.

Ashraf urged the main opposition BNP to return to the parliament and point out the government's failures in running the country instead of launching movements.

The meeting expressed satisfaction over stability of prices of essentials, law and order situation, electricity supply during the Ramadan and the Eid-ul-Fitr, and the progress in war crimes trial.

At the meeting, the prime minister directed her party's policymakers to be vigilant as the opposition might try to destabilise the government in an effort to save the war criminals, sources at the meeting said.

The meeting also decided that AL presidium member Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury will be the acting president of the party during the premier's visit in the USA. The prime minister will fly to the USA on a 10-day visit today.

Media trying

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case and condemned misinterpretation of his comments regarding ruling party lawmaker Nurunnabi Chowdhury Shaon, an accuse of the case.

"Police are trying to unearth the truth through impartial and transparent investigation," said the statement.

The commissioner alleged that many of the dailies are trying to influence the investigation by publishing fabricated and misleading reports.

In the statement, Shahidul Hoque also claimed that he never tried to save Shaon although a number of newspapers reported so.

He said police have no intention to hide the involvement of the ruling party lawmaker in the case.

At a media briefing in his office Thursday, the commissioner said although Ibrahim was killed in Shaon's car and with his pistol, investigators did not find his involvement in the shooting.

Lawmaker Shaon was interrogated by the Detective Branch of Police Wednesday night, he added.

Ildris Ali, chief of parliamentary standing committee on defence, however said the projects or plans that the army has taken so far are philanthropic or related to it. He thinks that this does not affect their duty.

The BBC documentary also observed that the leading people in military and civil sectors seemed quite uncomfortable over the issue. It is certain that the more the army gets involved in business the stronger the debate would be.

The final episode of the documentary by Kamal Ahmed also cited some businesses--especially, those in which the army is involved in collaboration with overseas firms. The programme also raised questions over the army's transparency and accountability in terms of business audits.

Germany denies alleged Merkel comment on camp

AP, BERLIN

German Chancellor Angela Merkel's office denied yesterday that she had told French President Nicolas Sarkozy her country planned to evacuate its own illegal immigrant camps, after he suggested Berlin was planning measures similar to those undertaken by Paris.

Sarkozy, who has drawn widespread international condemnation for ordering the clearing out of some 100 illegal immigrant camps, many inhabited by Gypsies also known as Roma told reporters after the European Union summit on Thursday that Germany planned similar action.

"Madame Merkel indicated to me her will to proceed in the coming weeks with the evacuation of camps. We will see at that point the calm that reigns in German political life," he said.

Merkel's spokesman, Steffen Seibert, flatly denied the chancellor had made any such remark, but refused to be drawn on what her reaction to it was.

"The issue of the Roma in Germany played no role in the talks between the chancellor and the French president," Seibert said, adding that the situation in Germany cannot be compared to that in France.

"The investigation is on. So it won't be wise to make any comments on the case at this time," said the ruling party spokesperson.

PM leaves

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AK Khandker, Ambassador-at-large Mohammad Ziauddin, 12 officials of the Prime Minister's Office (PMO), 11 security personnel, 8 persons from PMO's media wing, 13 eminent citizens, 30 distinguished entrepreneurs, and 6 journalists.

Majority of the eminent citizen's in the entourage are leaders and workers of ruling Awami League, reputations of many of whom are quite questionable, according to AL insiders.

The prime minister will attend the plenary meeting of UNGA on Millennium Development Goals on Sept 20. The next day she will attend a breakfast meeting of the heads of least developed countries on the same subject. On Sept 22 she will attend a Biodiversity Summit chaired by the president of the 65th UNGA on the sidelines. She will deliver her UNGA address on Sept 25.

The premier and her younger sister, Sheikh Rehana, will also attend a reception hosted by the US First Lady Michelle Obama.

Hasina is scheduled to leave New York for Dhaka via Dubai on September 28.

THREE POETS SET RARE EXAMPLE
Three notable poets of the country -- Nirmalendu Goon, Mohabed Saha, and Dr Muhammad Samad -- who are accompanying the premier as eminent citizens, set a rare example by downgrading their business class tickets to economy class, to save the state's money.

The government allocated Tk 5,70,476 for each of them to travel with the prime minister in business class, but the poets saved the state around Tk 12 lakh, by downgrading their tickets.

Dr Samad, also the director of Dhaka University's Social Welfare Institute, told The Daily Star yesterday, "We are already honoured to be in the entourage of the prime minister. We don't want a luxurious journey with the state's money, so we changed our tickets to economy class."

Never-ending

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quick damage, he said, adding that accidents on the road have become a regular feature. "I had to spend about Tk 400 to repair a wheel of my rickshaw-van which tumbled on the road on August 23," said Nizam, who carries goods from Kamalbagh to Armanitola.

During the rainy season the situation worsens further as the thoroughfare goes under knee-deep water due to poor drainage system, said Nazrul, a resident of the area.

It makes carrying goods or even a walk through the road very difficult, he added.

Commuters are faced with problems of passing through the pot-holed slippery road during rain, said Dulal, an employee of Hanif Paribahan's counter at Swarighat.

A woman along with her daughter fell down on the road few days ago and they had to travel with hurting limbs and dirty clothes on, added Dulal.

Anwar Hossain, a bus driver of Babubazar-Amin Bazar route, said it takes an hour to cross less than half a kilometre, which is normally a five-minute's drive.

The Road from Swarighat to East Islambagh was constructed around two years back, said Jyoti Prashad Ghosh, executive engineer of division-2 of Bangladesh Water Development Board.

"We have handed over the Swarighat to Gabtoli road to the Roads and Highways Department (RHD) around seven months back and it's their duty to maintain it," he said.

KM Monir Hossain, executive engineer of RHD, said they have a plan to carpet the road and are now waiting for final approval of the department.

They submitted a project proposal to the communications ministry to upgrade the road into a four-lane one from the existing two-lane to reduce tailbacks, said the RHD official.

MDG progress

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governance measures need to be fully integrated in all future development," he added.

Dr Iftekharuzzaman, executive director of Transparency International Bangladesh said, "We have been able to demonstrate in Bangladesh that participatory social accountability tools designed to promote integrity and disclosure of information can improve performance at the service delivery levels in key MDG sectors like education, health and safety nets."

The HC issued the suo moto rule as reckless driving and speeding vehicles are major causes of road accidents that, according to police records, claim 3,500 lives a year.

A World Bank survey conducted in 2002, however, found that around 10,000 people are killed annually in road crashes across the country, which also causes an annual financial loss of Tk 7,500 crore, Prof Shamsul Hoque, director of the Accident Research Institute of Buet, earlier told The Daily Star.

Deputy Attorney General Mostafa Zaman Islam on September 8 told The Daily Star the government has submitted a petition to the HC on June 30 seeking one more year to implement its directive.

The court has yet to hear the time petition, he added.

During the one-year period given by the HC, BRTA only confined its activities to

holding meetings and exchanging letters to related ministries, according to documents BRTA placed before the HC recently.

The documents show BRTA has requested the roads and highways department to set up standard signboards with speed limits on all the roads and highways.

As per the eighth schedule of the Motor Vehicle Ordinance, 1983, speed limit for light vehicles like cars is 113 kilometres per hour (kmph), passenger vehicles (buses, minibuses, etc) 56 kmph, and heavy vehicles (trucks, lorries and fire brigade vehicles) 48 kmph.

The BRTA asked the Economic Relations Department through authorities concerned to look for development partners like United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Department for International Development (DFID) and Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) to implement the project.

It also held meetings with five companies licensed by BTRC to get ways about how vehicle-tracking system can be installed to monitor speed and movement of vehicles through Global Positioning System (GPS).

have to discharge their noble duties with devotion to build the nation.

Urging the teachers to be sincere in implementing the education policy, he said there would be a need for recruiting teachers when the policy is implemented.

Qazi Kholiquzzaman Ahmad, co-chair of the education policy formulation committee, said the government is sincere about the education policy, and funding would not be a problem for its implementation. But the education administration has to be corruption free.

Prof Quazi Faruque Ahmed, chief co-ordinator of NFTE, read out a keynote paper with a 17-point demand.

Education Day Observed
Different student organisations yesterday observed the Education Day in the city with elaborate programmes.

BNP high-ups

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only duty is to see that party lawmakers can work freely."

Meanwhile, neither the standing committee members nor the party's parliamentary party got the chance to discuss joining parliament and disagreements heightened among top-level leaders.

"It's true we did not discuss the issue in the standing committee or in the parliamentary party," Salauddin told The Daily Star yesterday.

Salauddin on Thursday said the party would go to parliament to record its stance on some sensitive issues while Farroque yesterday said party might return to House only after their demands are met.

Party insiders said standing committee may sit soon to discuss the issue but it is not clear whether the BNP parliamentary party will sit at all.

A number of senior leaders, however, said the chairperson is in a dilemma over making the decision. They also hinted that the party high command is facing pressure from inside and outside the party to return to parliament but none mentioned the source of the pressure.

On BNP's returning to parliament, standing committee member Goyeshwar Chandra Roy said they would get the chance to place their opinion if only the standing committee sits.

Lt Gen (ret'd) Mahbubur Rahman said parliament is the most important forum and everyone expects debates inside and outside it to ensure public welfare.

Referring to BNP chairperson's asking the government to sit and resolve crises, the former army chief said her plea created a positive ground for returning to House.

Lawmakers of BNP-led four-party alliance have been away from parliament since they joined parliament on June 2 for 25 minutes, just

before Finance Minister AMA Muhith tabled the national budget.

Party Chairperson Khaleda Zia was in the House for five days and her party lawmakers were present for 43 days out of 158 days in five sessions of the present parliament.

Farroque, also BNP publicity secretary, made the two new demands yesterday to add to the dozen already the party made as conditions for them joining parliament.

Farroque said they would return to parliament when their demands are met and there is a congenial atmosphere.

Govt, opposition

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Hamid expected that opposition MPs' absence from the parliament would not persist, and said such partisan politics tarnish the country's democracy.

Supporting the MDGs, Agriculture Minister Matia Chowdhury said, "We sincerely want to achieve all the goals".

The MDGs are eight international development goals that all the 192 member-states of the United Nations and at least 23 international organisations agreed on and aimed to achieve by 2015.

The goals include eradicating poverty, reducing child mortality rates, fighting epidemics such as AIDS, and building a global partnership for development.

Minar Pimple, chief of UN Millennium Campaign (Asia), said Bangladesh has made significant progress in achieving the MDGs. The country would receive a UN award for reducing the infant mortality rate.

Planning Minister AK Khandker, State Minister for LGRD Jahangir Kabir Nanak, former speaker and BNP lawmaker Jamir Uddin Sircar, APPG Secretary General Shishir Sheel also spoke at the rally.

Edn Policy

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mark the Education Day yesterday.

The minister said the policy was formulated taking the socio-economic condition of the country into consideration and can be amended in the future responding to public demand and its practicability.

He, however, did not mention anything about the passage of the policy in the parliament sitting.

Meanwhile, the Education Day was observed commemorating the sacrifices of Mostafa, Babul, Wajiuallah and other students who were killed by police in a shootout while they staged a protest against the SM Sharif Education Commission during the Ayub Khan regime in 1962.

About the implementation of the policy, Nahid said, "The process to implement the policy has already been started".

Reiterating his earlier pledge that teachers would have a separate pay scale, he said the government is working to improve the financial and social status of teachers.

It is a matter of regret that teachers get only Tk 100 for house rent a month, he said.

"We want to see the teachers get the highest salaries, honour and dignity," Nahid said. But the teachers will also

2 cops killed in road crash

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kurigram

A road accident took lives of two police constables on Kurigram-Rangpur highway in Kurigram yesterday.

The deceased were identified as Abdul Baten (police badge no- 84), 35, of Shirajgonj and Jahangir Alam (police badge No-186), 36, of Lalmonirhat. They were working with Kurigram police.

Police and locals said a bus heading for Dhaka rear-ended a motorcycle leaving biker Abdul Baten dead on spot and his companion critically injured in front of Sadar Upazila Parishad around 10:15am. The bus fled after the incident.

Locals rushed Jahangir Alam to the Kurigram Sadar Hospital where the doctors referred him to Rangpur Medical College Hospital as his condition was deteriorating. He succumbed to his injuries on the way.

Later, police managed to grab Shafiqul Islam, 35, the driver of the bus from near the Teesta Bridge of Lalmonirhat around 10:45pm.

A case was filed with Sadar Police Station in this connection.

Businesses

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incidents of extortion over the cell phone. Police should have a special cell to tackle the problem," said Probir Kumar Saha, another director of FBCCI.

The business leaders were speaking at a view exchange meeting with the newly appointed Inspector General of Police (IGP) Hasan Mahmood Khandaker yesterday.

FBCCI arranged the meeting with its president AK Azad in the chair to discuss the current law and order situation of the country.

They urged the IGP to increase the number of police outposts and making the existing ones more effective to check extortion and drug business.

"In my area in Hazaribagh, drug business is going on unabated right under the nose of police officials," Mejbahul Rahman Bhuiyan, yet another FBCCI director, said.

The business leaders also complained about the city's nagging traffic jam, mugging, footpath encroachment and charging of extra fare by CNG-run auto-rickshaw.

The IGP assured the business leaders to address the issues.

"There is always a difference between expectation and fulfillment," Hasan Mahmood observed, "The wider the difference, the deeper the frustration. I'll try to reduce the gap."

On checking illegal drug business, he said the effort to contain it is on and they are planning to bring changes in the law to control it.

Hasan Mahmood, the former Rab director general, also urged all to assist police and work together to improve law and order.

Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) Commissioner AKM Shahidul Hoque, present at the meeting, asked businessmen to report immediately to police about extortion over the phone.

Khulna plant

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power project by March and award the contract to the best bidder within next September," the official notes.

It will take around three years to complete the construction.

Coal power is considered one of the cheapest in the world but one of the unclean ways to produce electricity. This is why Bangladesh intends to build the plant using super-critical technology to keep the level of pollution as low as the current global technology allows.

The country would set up another 1,320MW such plant in Chittagong under a private-public partnership. Under this deal, the PDB is likely to hold 30 percent share, leaving the rest to the private sector.

The tender for the Chittagong plant is likely to be complete before the Khulna plant as it involves the private sector, PDB officials said.

Acquisition of land for this project is also near completion.

At the request of PDB, the NTPC has been conducting a feasibility study for both these plants. Another agency is preparing an environmental impact report for both the sites. The primary reports of both these studies would soon be available to the PDB.

The Infrastructure Investment Facilitation Centre is conducting a study on how coal would be handled for both these plants. This is important as Bangladesh would have to import hundreds of thousands tonnes of coal each month to run these two plants.

Transportation and storage of the coal are two vital issues that must be addressed before project implementation.

Urgent call on EU to stop billion-euro 'alien invasion'

BBC ONLINE

Leading experts on invasive species are demanding Europe-wide legislation be put in place by next year to tackle the threat to native wildlife.

The researchers want urgent action from the EU to protect Europe's indigenous species from these "alien invaders".

Invasive, non-native animals, plants and microorganisms cause at least 12 billion euros of damage in Europe each year.

The scientists are meeting at the Neobiota conference in Copenhagen.

They are demanding Europe-wide legislation to be in place by next year to ensure the threat doesn't worsen.

Invasive species are defined as those that are introduced accidentally or deliberately into a place where they are not normally found.

A European inventory in 2008 found more than 10,000 alien species in Europe, with 1,300 having some kind of impact. This impact was exerted either on the environment, economy or, on human health.

And numbers are on the rise. Research published this year in the journal Science found alien species in Europe have increased by 76% in the last 30 years alone.

Piero Genovesi is chair of the Invasive Species Specialist Group (ISSG), a global network of experts on invasive species. He told BBC News that the figure of 12 billion Euros represents a significant underestimate of the impact of alien species.

Huge cost
"For many species we have no idea what damage they cause or their economic impact. This is just a fraction of the actual cost," he told BBC News.

And he added that this estimate does not include any assessment of the economic value of lost biodiversity caused by non-native species.

Scientists gathered at the conference are calling for urgent action by the European Union to implement laws similar to those that already exist in countries like New Zealand and Australia.

"We're asking the EU to rapidly develop and approve a policy on invasive species, fulfilling the formal commitment agreed by the council of European ministers in June 2002."

Drinking water
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The district administration has distributed Tk 3 lakh in cash and 132 metric tonnes of rice among 10, 000 flood-affected people, although many claimed they were yet to receive any relief material.

Around 6, 000 hectares of farmland of Sadar, Kazipur, Belkuchi, Shahjadpur and Chowhali upazila have been submerged by the flood. Faridpur: Flood situation of the district improved yesterday.

The district administration has opened 11 shelters, where around 5,000 families have taken refuge. The flood left marooned nearly 30,000 people of Sadar, Charvadrashan and Sadarpur areas.

The district administration distributed 20 kg rice and Tk 200 each to 92 families.

Kurigram: Flood situation of the district improved yesterday.

Nearly 30,000 people of three upazilas of the district have been affected.

The ministry of food and disaster management has allocated 250 metric tonnes of rice and Tk 5 lakh for the people, while the deputy commissioner distributed 100 metric tonnes of rice and Tk 2 lakh.

Gaibandha: Flood situation slightly improved, as water level of Tista and Jamuna fell yesterday.

More than 40,000 people of Sadar, Sundarganj, Shahghata and Fulchari upazila remain marooned due to the flood.

The ministry concerned has allocated Tk 2 lakh and 150 metric tonnes of rice but the distribution was yet to start as of yesterday.

Madaripur: Flood situation remained unchanged yesterday.

More than 300 families of the four upazilas have become homeless due to river erosion. The district administration distributed 10 kg rice each to 270 families each.

Around one lakh people of Rajoir, Shibchar, Kalkili and Sadar upazilas have become marooned.

2009," Mr Genovesi told BBC News.

"This is urgent, we would like this to be in place by next year."

Some species introductions have been intentional. The Ruddy duck was introduced to Europe as an ornamental species. It is one of the worst culprits because of its aggressive courting behaviour and willingness to interbreed with endangered, native duck species.

Mr Genovesi, who is also a senior scientist with the ISPRA (The Institute for Environmental Protection and Research) in Italy hopes new legislation will also help prevent non deliberate introductions of species.

"Legislation on aquaculture, for example, would reduce the risks of accidental escapes from fish farms into the environment, he told BBC News.

Human health
As well as the impact on biodiversity and agriculture some species are also a problem for human health.

The Asian Tiger mosquito (Aedes albopictus) originally native to areas of South East Asia has, in the last couple of decades, invaded many countries throughout the world because of increasing international travel and transport of goods.

A. albopictus is one of the 100 worst offenders in Europe according to DAISIE (Delivering Alien Invasive Species Inventories for Europe) an inventory of invasive species in Europe.

It is the vector for Chikungunya fever which, in humans, causes a severe illness which affects the joints and can last for years.

Avian invaders
New research in the journal Biological Conservation has shown that many bird species have an impact on agriculture and human health as far reaching, if not worse, than many mammals.

Wolfgang Nentwig, from the Institute of Ecology and Evolution in Switzerland has just published one of the first detailed studies of the impact of alien birds in Europe.

25 killed

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wounded survivors. President Mahinda Rajapakse, who is on his way to attend the UN general assembly in New York, sent his condolences.

Medawala initially gave the death toll as "over 60" but later revised it down to 25. He said 16 policemen, two Chinese contractors and seven Sri Lankan civilians were killed. Another 54 people were wounded, he said.

"The type of explosives was dynamite that is usually used to blast rocks when building roads," Medawala said.

The Chinese contractors were working for state-run China Overseas Holding Limited, a construction company carrying out building work in the war-ravaged area, according to police spokesman Prishantha Jayakoddy.

Karadiyanaru is a fishing village that was previously under control of the separatist Tamil Tiger group, which fought for more than three decades for a homeland for the Tamil ethnic group on the Indian Ocean island.