

Green light

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"In the light of what happened in Rugganj, they have almost decided to slash the size of the project," said the officer who prefers anonymity, as he is not authorised to talk to the media about the issue.

The first phase of the project would be implemented on the land already purchased or in the process of being purchased. The land that locals would willingly sell to the army would also be included, said a source involved in AHS.

In the original plans, 26,000 plots were to be developed in Rugganj. The number would now come down to 4,000.

Besides the army men, the navy and air force officers, retirees and civilians affected by the project will be eligible to get AHS plots.

However, those who have plots in DOHS and Rajuk will not be entitled to any.

"Army Housing Scheme (AHS) will continue to fulfill its mission in respect of all ranks in different stations at suitable locations. The first project will be for officers at Dhaka. Thereafter, AHS will start its different projects for all ranks in other locations," say the project documents.

The sites to be selected for AHS would be close to cantonments/any important commercial/administrative areas.

The issue of housing problems facing the servicemen first came up for discussion at the army Darbar with the prime minister after the BDR mutiny last year.

Army officials said this mega project was taken up after the authorities found there was not much land left to set up any new DOHS (Defence Officers' Housing Society).

An officer said the Indian army has been implementing such projects for their officers since 1978 through the Army Welfare Housing Organisation.

The project documents say while DOHS is a welfare project sponsored by the government, AHS is self-financed.

For DOHS, the government gives land for free. The officers only have to pay for taxes and the cost of land development, which one officer said, are very little.

But expenses for almost everything in AHS are financed by the officers themselves.

Regarding approval for the project, the AHS website (www.ahs.org.bd) reads, "A proposal for AHS was sent to the Armed Forces Division. It was accepted by the government in principle through the prime minister's office, AFD, Administration and Management Directorate, Dhaka Cantonment in November last year."

Army officials began purchasing land in Rugganj in September, and bought around 1,400 bighas before Saturday.

Lankan sentenced in attack on ex-president

AP, Colombo

A Sri Lankan man was convicted of conspiring to kill the country's former president in a suicide bomb attack and was sentenced to 30 years of hard labour, an official said.

Former President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga survived the attack at an election rally in December 1999 but lost one eye in the blast.

Twenty-six others were killed and scores of others were wounded in the attack, blamed on the now-defeated Tamil Tiger rebels.

The defendant, Sakthivel Ilankesvaran, an ethnic Tamil man employed as a driver who was 19 at the time of the attack, confessed to transporting the explosives from rebel-controlled territory to the capital, Colombo.

Brokers blamed

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though many male villagers are still on the run fearing arrests. The whereabouts of three missing people still could not be known, police say.

Lawmaker Dastagir and the additional superintendent of Narayanganj police urged the male villagers to return to their houses. They have assured that common people won't be arrested or harassed.

AHS will convert the land into plots and hand those over to registered buyers on no-profit no-loss basis.

Most of the plots will measure five kathas. Only a few to be set aside for commercial purposes will be bigger, say the project documents.

The price would be around Tk 15 lakh. Those willing to buy plots have already deposited Tk 8 lakh in two instalments. They have been asked to deposit the rest in four instalments by October 10, 2012.

Out of around 6,000 officers down to the second lieutenant rank, over 4,000 have already deposited Tk 8 lakh each.

The officers who have not had an opportunity to serve at lucrative UN missions are getting loans from the Trust Bank to buy plots.

For JCOs and ORs, there might be independent housing plots subject to the availability of land.

The housing scheme will have facilities of international standards. It will have amenities like walkways, parks, community centres, mosques, shopping centres, etc.

"Bangladesh Army is striving to excel in its quest for ensuring affordable new homes for the officers--both serving and retired--for a better and equitable future. The government's generous support towards building a well-trained army crosses a milestone through the initiation of this mega project," Quarter Master General Lt Gen Iqbal Karim Bhuiyan, also chairman of AHS, says in a message posted on the project's website.

The project will be gradually expanded so the officers in future do not have to face the housing crisis. The work of drawing up an integrated master plan is already underway.

Besides, there are plans to have AHS registered as a limited company under the Companies Act-1924.

Russia calls for 'clemency' for Tareq Aziz

AFP, Moscow

Russia's foreign ministry yesterday called for "clemency" for former Iraqi deputy premier Tareq Aziz after he was sentenced to death by hanging for murder and crimes against humanity.

"It is obvious that considerations of elementary humanity demand that he is shown clemency," the ministry said in a statement, calling on the Iraqi authorities to take account of Aziz's age and ailing health.

"We would like to be able to count on Iraq's presidential council not allowing this sentence to be enforced," the ministry said, acknowledging however that the sentence was Iraq's "internal affair."

Iraq's supreme criminal court imposed the death sentence on Aziz, the long-time international face of the Saddam Hussein regime, on Tuesday after finding him guilty of "deliberate murder and crimes against humanity."

Aziz turned himself in to US forces in April 2003, days after the fall of Baghdad and was sentenced to death along with two other pillars of the former Iraqi regime, former interior minister Saadoun Shaker and Abid Hmoud, a one-time aide to Saddam.

Russian lawmakers earlier in the day denounced the death sentence imposed on Aziz after he was convicted on charges of murder and crimes against humanity.

"What has happened in Iraq is the elimination of a witness and a settling of accounts between different religions, not a victory for justice," Mikhail Margelov, the head of the foreign affairs committee in Russia's upper house, the Federation Council, was quoted as saying by Interfax.

Press Council

FROM PAGE 1
The council gave its verdict on April 5 this year verifying the documents. It said the news reports were baseless and rebuked the newspaper management for publishing them.

The newspaper then ran reports claiming that the chairman and members of the council gave the verdict in favour of the complainant in exchange for "favours." The customs officer later filed another case with the Press Council.

The council in its judgement on October 20 said the newspaper violated the code of conduct of journalism by publishing unacceptable reports.

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Shyampur canal

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Locals said the canal, which was around 50 feet in width had been completely filled up at various points during the last five years.

Lal Mia, a resident of Nama Shyampur said even 10 years ago the canal was linked with both Buriganga and Shitalakhya rivers.

Due to the poor condition of the canal, the locals not only experience water logging but also suffer from deadly diseases like malaria and dengue as the stagnant water serves as a breeding ground for mosquitoes, said another resident, Anwar.

Javed Jahan, coordinator of Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon at the old town said the authority needs to excavate the canal thoroughly as it remains filled up at different points.

He said the areas near the canal become submerged in knee-deep water even after a light shower.

The situation near Kadamtali Police Station is so bad that one has to wade through a couple of feet deep filthy water to reach the station, he said.

"We have been facing this problem for the last two years," said a police official.

An official of BWDB said the Shyampur canal stretches 8.50km from Jurain Rail Gate to Shanirakhra Zia Sharani.

He said they are currently conducting the drive for the first 3.5km and will deal with the remaining portion later.

The project to recover, excavate and demarcate all the canals of DND area will cost Tk 275 crore and excavation of the Shyampur canal will be also done under its wing, he said.

The proposal of the project would be sent to the Water Resources Ministry within a day or two, he said.

"We will also set up four pumping houses under the project which will be at Adamjinagar, Pagla, Fatullah and Shimrail," he said.

WASA drive Dhaka Water Supply and Sewerage Authority (Wasa) will start a two-day drive on Kalyanpur Ka Khal on Sunday.

"We will demolish five structures on the canal and then excavate the filled up portions at different points of around half a km of the 2.50 km canal near Gabtoli Bus Terminal," said Ruhul Amin.

The drive will be carried out in line with the government's decision to recover four city canals under Wasa, he said.

"We have already conducted a drive on October 4 and evicted illegal establishments from the canal," he said.

He said though the drive on Ramchandrapur canal was suspended on October 18 but it will resume later and Rayerbazar canal will also be brought under the drive soon, he said.

Interns

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Wednesday when a patient Moti Miah, 71, in a critical condition, was rushed to the hospital by his relatives.

"Duty doctor Mamun asked them to shift the patient to Dhaka Medical College Hospital or Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University as the hospital was unable to treat the patient," Dr Alam said.

Later, a scuffle took place between the doctor and the relatives who demanded immediate treatment of the patient citing his critical condition. At one stage, the attendants assaulted the doctor.

An intern doctor seeking anonymity said, "Though our fellow doctor was injured by the patient's attendants, the hospital authority did not take any action in this regard."

"So, we have decided to go on an indefinite strike and we demand investigation into the incident," he added.

"We also want the hospital to adopt the system of issuing cards or passes for the attendants, so that the number of attendants per patient can be controlled," the source said.

The interns also demanded installation of a permanent police camp within the hospital premises to ensure their security and removal of hospital director and assistant director, he added.

The permanent physicians, nurses and other hospital employees also expressed their solidarity with the interns.

"We are trying to resolve the issue through holding a meeting with the striking doctors and other staffs," Azad said.

WIKILEAKS WAR LOGS

British forces exposed over Afghan attacks

GUARDIAN ONLINE

The conduct of three British military units in Afghanistan has come under serious question after the Ministry of Defence released unprecedented details of incidents in which troops attacked Afghan civilians.

The disclosure, in response to a request under the Freedom of Information Act made by the Guardian, revealed that of the casualties caused by British forces, two-thirds involved troops from the three units, triggering calls for an inquiry into their behaviour.

Releasing information about 21 incidents, the MoD revealed that the Coldstream Guards shot four civilians in Kabul over a period of three weeks; the Royal Marine commandos killed or wounded civilians eight times in six months; and the third unit, the Rifles, were involved in three incidents last year.

Among the casualties were children, and on one occasion a man with mental health problems.

Details of the attacks were not released at the time, but they were among thousands of incidents mentioned in US army logs posted by the whistle-blowing website WikiLeaks in the summer. Today's release came after the Guardian pressed for more details of those cases.

One cluster of incidents involved the Coldstream Guards in Kabul in autumn 2007. On 21 October, they killed one individual and wounded two others in a silver minibus while on patrol in Kabul.

The MoD says the minibus failed to stop when the soldiers signalled for it to do so, and the guardsmen shot at it. In another incident, on 6 November 2007, the son of an Afghan general was killed. He was driving a Toyota car and was said to have accelerated towards a Coldstream Guards patrol. The soldiers could only shout a warning before shooting at the car; it skidded to a halt and the man fell out, the MoD said.

The Coldstream Guards' unofficial blog described the mood within the detachment at the time: "The overriding threat is that of suicide bombers, of which there have been a number in the recent past."

The second cluster of civilian casualties involved the Royal Marines, who were stationed in Helmand province.

Prosperity score

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of the Legatum Institute, a London-based international think tank. The survey was posted online Tuesday.

The institute is a leading advocate for a holistic understanding of prosperity, one that combines wealth and well-being as measures of individual and national prosperity.

The annual survey of 110 countries, based on the wealth and happiness of their citizens, ranks Bangladesh below South Asian neighbours such as Sri Lanka, India and Nepal.

But India suffered a huge slippage, as the world's fourth largest economy moved down to 88th from 45th last year. This year, Sri Lanka has been ranked 59th and Nepal 91st.

Bangladesh has, however, fared well compared to other South Asian nations such as Pakistan, which has been ranked 109th.

The index has crowned Norway in the first place, followed by Denmark in the second, and Finland third.

Last year's bottom-placed Zimbabwe came last also in this year's ranking.

The survey has covered 90 percent of the world's population, taking into account factors that contribute to the overall prosperity -- such as education standards, health, personal freedom, safety, security and democracy.

"It (Bangladesh) has moved down mainly due to lower rankings in education, personal freedom, health, and safety and security," Jiehae Choi, research and programme analyst of Legatum Institute, told The Daily Star in an email.

Bangladesh has stood 66th on economic fundamentals because of relatively unstable economy, with inflation hovering around 8.9 percent.

In the indicator of entrepreneurship and opportunity, the country of 16.44 crore people has been ranked 95th, as the

ince. On 19 November 2008 they shot dead a child in a white Toyota which they believed was driving towards them. "There had been a report of a suicide bomber in the area," said the MoD.

On 4 December 2008, marines wounded a man who had been "trying to locate his family as they had moved compounds". The marines thought he had been tracking them, the MoD says.

That month, a 12-year-old boy was wounded when a van sped towards a Royal Marines patrol and "failed to stop after verbal warnings were given".

On 19 January 2009, two children were injured "in their abdomens by shrapnel" after missiles were fired from above by unmanned drones. The Royal Marines had called for the air strikes, fearing they were being threatened by Taliban insurgents.

A few days later, the marines shot a man and a child after they believed two men were "reporting their progress" in order to prepare a bomb attack.

A mentally ill man was shot in the last incident, on 26 March 2009. The marines had received a report of a bomb threat when a man on a motorcycle "approached the patrol driving slowly and observing them". He disappeared after warning shots were fired. But he soon returned. The marines thought he was an "imminent threat" and shot him, according to the MoD.

The Rifles were involved in three incidents last year, including calling in RAF aircraft whose bomb killed an undisclosed number of civilians in Nad-e-Ali, Helmand last September.

The Labour MP Paul Flynn called for an inquiry into the conduct of the units in what he said could be "atrocities in the name of the British people". "Truth has a cleansing function," he added.

Royal Marine commandos were the last UK troops to be stationed in Sangin, one of the most dangerous areas of Afghanistan, before handing over to US forces earlier this year. The Rifles sustained particularly severe casualties when they were deployed in Sangin at the beginning of this year. The Coldstream Guards, one of the oldest regiments in the British army, have been deployed in Afghanistan at regular intervals.

Tougher law

FROM PAGE 1
death of Mizanur Rahman by stalkers in Natore, Hasina said one of the culprits was arrested and the government is very serious to deal with this matter.

College teacher Mizanur succumbed to his injuries at BSMU Hospital in Dhaka.

Mizanur Rahman, a chemistry teacher of Lokmanpur College in Bagatipara upazila of the district, had been in coma for eight days.

Mizanur protested stalking of college girls. Incensed at the act of the teacher, a gang of local stalkers ran a motorcycle over him at Lokmanpur Bazar on October 12, leaving him critically injured.

The prime minister urged all to have patience in this matter, assuring that the government will take appropriate actions in this regard.

Graft level

FROM PAGE 16
"It report is shameful for the country which proves government's failure to reduce corruption," the BNP leader said while talking to reporters after placing wreath at the grave of party founder late president Ziaur Rahman on the occasion of the 32nd founding anniversary of Jatiyatabadi Juba Dal, youth front of the main opposition party.

Nazrul said government has absolutely failed to implement its electoral pledge to reduce corruption. "How corruption would be reduced in the country if ruling party activists are behind tender manipulations, criminal activities and grabbing," he put up question.

Party standing committee member MK Anwar, Senior Joint Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir, Juba Dal president Syed Moazzem Hossain Alal and general secretary Saiful Islam Nirrob, were among others present.

Pilkhana hearing

FROM PAGE 16
Earlier, the court had granted bail to two other accused in the case-- BCL leader Santosh Kumar Hawladar and Jubo League leader Sazzad Rahman Sajal.

Hasina said she was on duty at the intensive care unit (ICU) at the hospital on February 25 evening.

When she gazed outside from the veranda of the ICU to find out whether it would be safe for her to return home, she saw Rezaul with a firearm in his hand and a bandolier roaming around the hospital.

"I asked him whether I could go home. He threatened to break my spine if I had tried to leave the hospital. Then I went back inside the intensive care unit," Hasina told the court.

Rezaul denied the allegation terming it baseless.

Three other witnesses -- Maj Ishtiaq, Subedar Maj (Assistant) Nurul Islam and Nayek (assistant) Abdul Latif -- also gave deposition to the court.

On Monday, complainant Subedar Mohamad Solaiman Patwary and witness Maj Khaled Ahmed gave deposition before the court.

Prosecutor Lt Col Mizanur Rahman after the court proceedings said the mutineers took position around the hospital to make sure that none of their high officials could receive treatment there.

All 111 accused were hauled up before the court for their alleged involvement in the February 25-26 mutiny that claimed the lives of 74 people including 57 army officers.

Lower judiciary

FROM PAGE 16
prime minister's advice on political consideration.

Although the judiciary has been separated from the executive, the administration has kept the rope around the neck of the lower court judges, he commented.

The SCBA president said that he met Chief Justice ABM Khairul Haque at his office on Tuesday, and urged him not to administer oath to Ruhul Kuddus Babu and M Khosruzzaman who were appointed as the High Court judges on April 11, 2010 by the president.

He said if the chief justice administers oath to 'controversial' Ruhul Kuddus and Khosruzzaman, the lawyers of the country will not accept this, and SCBA will hoist black flag at the court.

He added that the chief justice has assured him of upholding the image and dignity of the judiciary.

SCBA Secretary Badruddoza Badal, among others, was present at the briefing.

Rab caught

FROM PAGE 16
At one stage, Opu was caught in the line of fire and sustained bullet injuries in his leg while his cohorts fled away.

Later, Rab personnel sent him to a local hospital.

Biman travellers

FROM PAGE 1
evening.

"Tough actions will be taken if they do not join work calling off their activities within 48 hours," Jamal Uddin Ahmed, chairman of Biman board of directors, told The Daily Star over the phone after the meeting.

All but one attended the meeting of the 11-member board of directors, he said.

He termed the pilots' protest illegal and said a general instruction will be issued today to captains and first officers.

Captain MA Basit Mahtab, general secretary of Bangladesh Airline Pilots' Association (Bapa), told the media earlier yesterday, "We will continue to abstain from work unless the authorities withdraw the orders and notices against us."

Mahtab told the latest position of Bapa after he and three of his colleagues were withdrawn from flight duty Tuesday evening on the grounds of passenger safety. The decision led to the spontaneous work abstention of pilots.

Mahtab claimed to have the backing of 110 of the 116 members of Bapa.

On Tuesday evening, 46 pilots reported that they are sick and declined flights duties and this number is expected to go up unless Biman authorities withdraw their orders, pilots said.

Biman Chief Executive Officer and Managing Director Muhammad Zakul Islam termed the sickness of a large number of pilots deliberate.

He said the management had to change the type of

8 more accused

FROM PAGE 16
Earlier, the court had granted bail to two other accused in the case-- BCL leader Santosh Kumar Hawladar and Jubo League leader Sazzad Rahman Sajal.

Assistant Public Prosecutor Ali Amzad Kaderi Sipar said the court yesterday granted bail to eight accused considering their age and the period they already stayed in jail custody.

Asked about this, a lawyer of Pabna court Murshed Subhani said although this is a case under non-bailable section, court can grant bail if it is satisfied with the grounds for seeking bail.

Two cases -- one for attacking administration officials and another for vandalising their cars -- were filed with Pabna Sadar Police Station accusing more than 100 people, including 31 leaders and workers of AL and its front organisations.

Twenty-one accused surrendered before the judicial magistrate's court on September 26 and four more on October 6. Besides, police arrested five people soon after the incident.

Indonesia devastated

FROM PAGE 16
a popular destination for surfers, generating a tsunami as high as three metres (10 feet) and sweeping away 10 villages.

Several Australian tourists were also caught in the disaster.

One group's boat was smashed by a vast wall of water and they were washed into the jungle but survived. Another group of nine surfers was found alive after being reported missing.

Medical personnel flew in on helicopters but rescue efforts have been hampered by poor communications to the islands, which are about half a day's ferry ride away from the port of Padang on Sumatra.

Rough seas have made it difficult to ship aid to the Mentawai islands from Padang, the nearest major port on Indonesia's largest island, Sumatra. Forecasters say the bad weather is likely to continue in the coming days.

Helicopters and some planes landed on Wednesday bringing relief workers and much-needed medical supplies, reports said.

Even as the rescue effort escalated, doubts emerged about the effectiveness of an expensive early-warning system designed after the lethal Indian Ocean tsunami of 2004.

Survivor Borinte, 32, a farmer from Detumonga village on the coast of North Pagai Island, said he managed to stay alive by clasp to a piece of wood. His wife and three children were killed.

"About 10 minutes after the

aircraft to maintain flights even though there are disruptions in some flights. "Haji flights are okay. But we are continuing flights by changing equipment [aircraft] and flight schedule," he said.

Zakul said passengers are facing difficulties due to the delays but he claimed it was not atypical for Biman.

Biman MD also denied any scope for settlement with the agitating pilots through an out-of-court settlement.

He said, "Whatever is needed will be done to keep the flights going."

Earlier, Biman sought explanations from four pilots, including Bapa acting president Captain Zakir Hussain and its General Secretary Mahtab, for holding news conference on pilot benefit issues when the matter is under trial.

Pilots claimed that Biman made the decision to increase retirement age of pilots but slashed several benefits including insurance and rehabilitation coverage when a pilot loses his or her wings for not having fitness.

The age increase decision also overlooked the existing agreement between Biman and Bapa, which irked pilots who claimed to have served the airline by going beyond their duty rules for the sake of the national carrier.

PM visits Japan

FROM PAGE 16
Meeting sources said the ongoing projects being implemented with Japanese assistance were reviewed.

Also, the current state of economic cooperation, Japanese investment situation and their support in the social and infrastructure sectors were reviewed.

The meeting asked all concerned ministries to prepare detailed reports of the Japan-Bangladesh projects and programmes under them and to place the reports in the next inter-ministerial meeting.

The meeting also asked all to place proposals for projects where Japan can invest or show interest, and those proposals will be later placed in discussion during the PM's visit to Japan.

Foreign Ministry sources said several agreements, MoUs