

PM tells Senakunja reception

BSS, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said the unprecedented development and modernisation of Bangladesh Armed Forces had been accomplished during the tenure of the Awami League-led government.

The Awami League never used the armed forces for its political interests, she said. "Rather, the party has done everything required for building an efficient, strong and modern force."

Hasina made the remarks while addressing a reception, marking the Bangladesh Armed Forces Day, at Senakunja in the capital.

She said the Bangladesh Armed Forces have earned confidence of people and have set a unique example of patriotism through their relentless stride to protect the sovereignty of the country.

The armed forces acclaimed recognition from international arena for maintaining peace, stability and security, she told her audience.

Through discharging their duties with sincerity and devotion, they not only brightened the image of Bangladesh, but also the

image of the UN, she added.

The competence of the Bangladesh Armed Forces is now recognised all over the world, she said, adding that the forces are standing on a strong foundation laid by Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

Referring to the BDR mutiny in 2009, the premier said, the government has already completed the trial of the persons involved in the mutiny and murder.

There is no second example in the world of so proper trial of such a big criminal offence, she said, adding that the government never hesitated to bring all the culprits to book.

Hasina also said the government has taken steps for modernisation of Bangladesh Navy and Bangladesh Air Force.

After addressing the audience, Hasina exchanged pleasantries with the armed forces officials and their family members, diplomats and other guests.

She also exchanged greetings with BNP acting secretary general Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir.

UN warns Somalia over rights abuse

AFP, Nairobi

The United Nations in Somalia yesterday called for a "proper investigation" after police again arrested an alleged rape victim and the journalists who reported her story.

Rape, and reporting on sexual assault, is one of the most sensitive topics in Somalia, and the case is the latest in a series of arrests of victims and the journalists who aired their story.

Previous cases have seen the victim and reporter jailed for "offending state institutions".

The alleged victim, a 19-year old reporter, told the independent Radio Shabelle she was attacked and raped at gunpoint by two fellow journalists.

"One of the men threatened me with a pistol, and took me to the bedroom by force... both of them raped

me several times, destroying my pride and dignity," she said, in a video interview broadcast on Somalia's Radio Shabelle website earlier this week.

"I am appealing to the government to take legal action against the rapists, they might have done the same to other poor girls," she added.

The video has been carried by several other Somali news websites.

Police in the capital Mogadishu have arrested the woman, as well as Mohamed Bashir Hashi, the reporter who interviewed her, and Shabelle's manager Abdulmalik Yusuf.

Nicholas Kay, UN special representative for Somalia, said in a message Thursday the UN was monitoring the "new rape allegation in Mogadishu" and warned that "legal representation, proper investigation and media freedom

(are) important issues."

Earlier this month HRW called on the government to order a new and impartial investigation into that case, saying the response to the incident "has been marred by mismanagement, opacity, and the harassment of the female rape survivor and support service providers."

This "points to security officials trying to silence both those who report the pervasive problem of sexual violence and those who help rape survivors," HRW added.

Rape is a major problem in Somalia, ravaged by conflict since 1991.

Amnesty International warned in a report earlier this year that "rape and sexual violence a constant threat" in Somalia, especially for women living in camps where they have fled conflict.

Germany to initiate nat'l minimum wage

AFP, Berlin

Germany is set to introduce a national minimum wage, conservative Chancellor Angela Merkel said yesterday, relenting on a key demand of her likely future centre-left governing partners.

"The Social Democrats will not conclude negotiations without a universal legal minimum

wage," she said about ongoing talks to form a 'grand coalition' government.

She stressed that her Christian Democratic Union (CDU) had opposed such a move and added that she and her party would "try everything to prevent the loss of jobs through this measure".

Merkel won September 22 elections but fell

narrowly short of a governing majority, forcing her CDU and its Bavarian partners the CSU to enter into coalition talks with the Social Democratic Party (SPD).

In the talks, SPD chief Sigmar Gabriel, Merkel's likely future vice chancellor, has insisted on a minimum wage of at least 8.50 euros (\$11.40) to help a growing army of working poor.

ACC law to spark

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"Who are the beneficiaries of corruption?"

He pointed out that ACC officials would not feel comfortable when they are to work under the controversial provision.

He said the preamble of the ACC act stated that the law had been framed to set up an independent commission. Section 3(2) of the Act referred to an independent and impartial commission while article 27 of the constitution stated that all citizens are equal before law and entitled to equal protection of law.

But ignoring all these the controversial provision had been incorporated, the acting ACC boss said, adding that the law is not only discriminatory but also restricts ACC officials, as it kept jail terms for them.

As per the amendment, if any investigation by a commission official is proved to be false, the official concern will face three to five years' imprisonment, although section 31 of the Act states that ACC officials will not have to face any civil or criminal court if they carried out their duties on good faith.

On November 11, a day after the House had passed the bill, ACC Chairman Badiuzzaman, who is now aboard, made similar comments on the media.

Terming the new provision unconstitutional, he had said, "The amendment curtails ACC's freedom to some extent, as it will need prior permission from the government for filing cases against public servants."

Nepal polls in a shambles

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demanded a halt to vote-counting after losing his own seat in Tuesday's elections aimed at installing a constituent assembly and ending years of political instability.

"We urge the election commission to stop the counting," Prachanda told a press conference. "We accept (the) people's verdict but cannot accept conspiracy and poll-rigging."

As protesters gathered outside the party's headquarters chanting "We are ready to fight again!", the former guerilla said ballot boxes were tampered with while being transported from polling stations to counting centres.

Prachanda, the country's first post-war prime minister, finished a distant third in his Kathmandu constituency, well behind the winning Nepali Congress party candidate, Rajan KC, according to the election commission.

The Maoist party swept elections in 2008, but results showed them trailing badly in a vote seen as vital in completing a long-stalled peace process which has drifted in recent years.

Tentative results showed the Maoists leading in just 11 percent of the 187 constituencies where vote-counting has been completed or is well under way.

Even if the party were to sweep the remaining 53 directly-elected seats, it would have won less than one third of the vote.

Millions of Nepalis voted on Tuesday, registering a higher turnout than the first post-war elections in 2008 which created a constituent assembly tasked with writing a new constitution.

But after five years, five prime ministers and endless political infighting it collapsed without completing the process in 2012, leading to a leadership vacuum which Tuesday's election was intended to fill.

Even before Prachanda's protest, a hardline splinter group of the Maoist party had decided to boycott the vote and launch a campaign of intimidation, leading to a series of small explosions and arson attacks.

"This is a genuine election and if some political parties are not satisfied with the outcome, they must come with evidence... there's no place for violence," head of the EU's election observer group, Eva Joly, said yesterday.

She said the polls were held in an "independent and impartial manner", a view echoed by other international observers including former US President Jimmy Carter.

Earlier, the United States on Wednesday hailed elections in Nepal as a vital step on the road to cementing a peace process launched in 2006 to defuse a civil war.

The Maoists won the last elections with the promise of social change, economic growth and lasting peace in a country which lost an estimated 16,000 people during the 10-year war between the rebels and government forces.

But they have since faced sharp criticism from many core supporters who accuse them of abandoning their ideals and adopting a life of luxury after helping to abolish the country's monarchy.

Chief Election Commissioner Neel Kantha Uprety said counting would continue despite Prachanda's demand.

Former US president Carter, who is in Kathmandu to monitor the polls, told a press conference yesterday that he was "very disappointed" over the Maoist rejection of the electoral process and pledged to meet with Prachanda later yesterday.

Maoist spokesman, Agni Sapkota, said the party would hold a central committee meeting tomorrow to discuss its future tactics.

Preliminary results are likely to emerge by today, with full results expected by the end of the month.

More than 100 parties, including three major ones -- the Unified Marxist-Leninist, the Nepali Congress and the Maoists -- fielded candidates for the assembly.

In addition to the 240 directly-elected seats, an additional 335 seats will be awarded via a proportional representation system and a

Against all odds

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averse to the profession. In fact, he has always wanted to become a police officer. Therefore, his jubilation yesterday was tinged with disappointment.

"Still I wish to be a police officer. I will try it again," said Kadar, who had the police cadre as his first choice.

Then a student of biochemistry and molecular biology, Kadar was detained on charges of robbery when he was returning to his dormitory around 1:30am on July 16, 2011.

He was arrested even after he showed police his identity card, he said, adding that they even stabbed him in the left calf with a cleaver.

Police filed three separate cases against him to implicate him falsely. But following media outcry, the High Court on July 28 that year ordered the inspector general of police to probe the incident.

Three officials of Khilgaon Police Station, including the officer-in-charge, were suspended and Kadar was released on bail on August 3.

Kadar was acquitted of all charges last year. He on January 23, 2012, sued officer-in-charge Helal Uddin for torturing him and filing false cases against him. The case is still pending.

"After the incident," Kadar said yesterday, "everyone, especially my teachers, senior stu-

dents and friends, inspired me to become a BCS cadre and I resolved to become one."

Kadar completed his master's from Dhaka University in December last year, but did not take any job in order not to hamper his preparations for the BCS exams.

"I concentrated on my studies to become a first-class cadre. Today I am happy because I have achieved that," he observed.

Anisur Rahman, one of Kadar's friends, told The Daily Star, "We are pleased that Kadar has landed the job. However, we would be happier if he became a police officer."

He added, "As a police officer, he could work to stop recurrence of such incidents."

Too big for 'routine job'

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election-time government would be the same as those of the non-partisan caretaker governments in the past.

Abolished in 2011 by the Hasina-government, a caretaker government was constitutionally tasked with carrying out only routine work, and extending all-out support to the Election Commission to conduct a free and fair parliamentary election.

The constitution had barred an interim government from taking any policy decision. Headed by the chief adviser, it comprised a maximum of 10 other advisers and had a 90-day tenure.

But Hasina's election-time government so far has 29 ministers and state ministers. In addition, she already has eight advisers with the status of a minister, and she appointed two more advisers yesterday. So, the PM now has 10 advisers as in the caretaker governments that held elections in 1996, 2001 and 2008, which were almost free and fair.

The PM may even appoint some more advisers from other political parties having no representation in parliament, if they agree to join her poll-stime government. Some of the government policymakers made surreptitious efforts to bring other parties in the election-time administration to show participation of many political parties in it.

The prevailing situation is really exciting for small political parties. Now is the golden time for them either to become ministers or advisers. If s/he is a lawmaker from a small party, s/he has an opportunity to become a minister.

The PM enjoys constitutional powers to induct any MP, if s/he agrees, in her cabinet. She also has powers to appoint someone as her adviser.

As regards appointments of individuals, who are not MPs, as technocrat ministers, there are some restrictions. They must be eligible to become MPs and their number will be only one-tenth of the total number of ministers, who are MPs. But the PM may not take any technocrat minister in her polls-time council

Survivor testifies on killing attempt

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Second prosecution witness Kanai who was about 18 during the war said he had received training from Surjo Molla and Ali Molla at Nagarkanda.

The witness said after arrival of the Pakistani army in Faridpur in April, he returned home from the training.

Khokon, his elder brother Zafar and Aynal took training from the Pakistani army and went to the Hindu majority Jongurdi-Bagutia village at the end of May. "They burned down one of our and a neighbour's houses," said the sexagenarian witness.

"They [Khokon and others] forcefully converted our neighbours -- Bhuban Das, Sontosh Das, Jibon Das, Khetromohon Das and Nitai Das and their wives -- to Muslims," said Kanai, adding, the victims had to wear Islamic caps.

Khokon's brother Zafar, who was a Razakar commander of Nagarkanda, was killed in a combat between freedom fighters and the Pakistani army and its auxiliary force Razakar on

May 29.

After Zafar's death, Khokon took charge as the Razakar commander and became more furious against the freedom fighters, the witness said.

He added Khokon told him before shooting that he must die as the freedom fighters had killed Zafar.

First prosecution witness Abul Kashem, who was 15 and lived at Kodalia village in Faridpur during the war, said Khokon and his associates looted and set fire to the houses of Bangram and detained 17 people.

The 17 were taken to Nagarkanda and were tortured for two days. Khokon and his associates later freed them in exchange of Tk 10,000 in ransom paid by the villagers.

On May 27, Khokon and Razakars went to Chandhaat village in Banikpara where they looted houses and raped three women, said Kashem, who verified the incident from freedom fighter commander Aziz Molla.

The witness said he had seen Khokon and his

associates along with the Pakistani army committing the massacre at Bangram three days later.

"I went to the house of Sattar Mia where I found 16 bodies," he said, adding, four other bodies were also seen.

The witness said three elderly and sick persons were killed on May 31 and Khokon was involved in the killings.

They [Khokon and his associates] killed about 15 people of Churaichar and Baghat on June 1.

Third prosecution witness Iqram Molla corroborated the incident of the 17 people's detention at Bangram.

Ikram also said his house was burned to ashes by Khokon and his associates on May 31.

State-appointed defence counsel Abdus Shukur Khan cross-examined the witnesses after their deposition.

Khokon is facing 11 charges for his alleged involvement in killing, genocide, torture, abduction and confinement during the war.

The proceeding of the case was adjourned until

Australia police, central bank websites hacked

AFP, Sydney

Australian police and central bank websites fell victim to cyber attacks yesterday with an Indonesian hacker claiming responsibility, reportedly demanding that Canberra apologise in an intensifying row over spying.

The row -- triggered by reports that Australian spies tried to tap the phones of the Indonesian president, his wife and ministers -- has pushed ties between Jakarta and Canberra to their lowest level since the turn of the century.

Officials called the attack on the Australian Federal Police and the Reserve Bank of Australia "irresponsible", and said whoever was to blame could face prosecution.

"These attacks... will not influence government policy," the federal police said in a statement. "Activities such as hacking, creating or propagating malicious viruses are not harmless fun. They can result in serious long-term consequences for individuals, such as criminal convictions or jail time."

Police officials said their site, which hosts

no sensitive information, was operating when staff left work on Wednesday evening but it was down on Thursday morning.

The outage comes barely two weeks after activist group Anonymous Indonesia claimed responsibility for defacing more than 170 Australian websites to protest at reports of Canberra spying on its nearest neighbour and strategic ally.

Ties between the two countries have deteriorated after reports this week, based on documents leaked by US intelligence fugitive Edward Snowden, that Australia tried to listen to the phone calls of the Indonesian president, his wife and ministers in 2009.

A member of Anonymous Indonesia, using the hashtag #IndonesianCyberArmy, claimed responsibility for the latest attacks.

The Australian Broadcasting Corporation contacted the hacker who said the sites were targeted "because (of) the act of spying by Australia".

The federal police and central bank were targeted "because we think (they are) most important sites of government companies in Australia".

3 shot dead in Rangamati

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United People's Democratic Front (UPDF) and the PCJSS MN Larma faction killed our leaders."

Brushing aside the allegation, UPDF press secretary Sona Moni Chakma said the killing was the result of a feud between Shantu Larma and MN Larma factions of the PCJSS.

The bodies were handed over to the relatives after autopsies at Rangamati General Hospital.

Meanwhile, leaders and activists of Shantu

Larma faction brought out a procession in the district town and held a rally at New Court Building protesting the killings at noon.

The organisation's district unit president Gunendu Bikash Chakma presided over the meeting.

They demanded the arrest of the culprits and proper compensation for the victims' families.

They also blamed the government for failing to implement the peace agreement.

18-party mulls

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During a rally this afternoon at Suhrawardy Uddyan, the opposition alliance may also announce programmes like mass agitation or lay siege to election offices across the country.

Khaleda last night discussed the party's next course of action with the party's senior leaders, including Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain, Mirza Abbas, Goyeshwar Chandra Roy, ASM Hannan Shah and Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir at her Gulshan office.

The BNP-led opposition observed 204 hours of nationwide hartals in three phases between October 27 and November 13.

8,529 get govt job

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A total of 1,93,059 candidates applied for the 33rd BCS examinations, and 18,693 of them were called for the interview after they passed the preliminary and written tests. Some 18,108 were interviewed from May 12 to September 9 this year.

According to a PSC press release, about 15,991 examinees have come out successful in the exam, but all of them cannot be recruited to the cadre services due to shortage of posts.

Efforts will be made to appoint the remaining successful candidates to first class non-cadre posts as per the non-cadre appointment rules. It, however, added, "No assurance of such appointment can be given."

Nesar Uddin said the results of BCS forestry cadre have been postponed as a case regarding this service is

pending with the High Court. The commission will publish the results after receiving the court's decision.

For the second time, the commission has recommended 10 qualified candidates with disabilities for the recruitment, headed.

The controller said they will make a recommendation to the public administration ministry to take necessary steps for the appointment.

"Normally, it takes two or three months to complete the whole recruitment process," Nesar added.

According to health bulletin-2012 of the Directorate General of Health Services, some 5,884 posts of physicians were vacant.

Even after the big recruitment in the health services, a good number of posts will become vacant as about 1,000 doctors will go into retirement next month, a top official of the directorate told The Daily Star.