

Serve people with professionalism

PM asks female military paramedics

UNB, Tangail

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday urged the country's first batch of female military paramedics to serve people with devotion and professionalism rising above their personal interest.

"I hope your today's great pledge of providing others with services will play a positive role in the healthcare of general people," she said.

Hasina was addressing the oath-taking ceremony and passing out parade of the first female military paramedics batch at the Army Medical Corps Centre and School at Shaheed Salahuddin Cantonment of Ghatail.

She said the participation of women in a challenging profession like the army would play an important role in women empowerment. "Women constitute half of our population, and a complete success in any field is not possible without their spontaneous participation."

The PM said Bangladesh's position in the women's political empowerment was 7th in a 2013 report of the Global Gender Gap.

"A positive change would come in the whole society if the outlook towards women is changed and they

are evaluated socially," she said.

Through yesterday's passing out parade, Army Medical Corps recruited 879 female soldiers for the first time. This was the largest contingent of female soldiers that passed out at a time in the world history.

Of them, Mosammet Memory Hasan and Shantona Rani Mondol of the female recruit were adjudged the first and second.

BANGABANDHU CANTONMENT Sheikh Hasina yesterday inaugurated the Bangabandhu Cantonment near the Bangabandhu Bridge at Bhupur in the same district.

She also unveiled a mural of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman as well as the plaques of newly built headquarters of the 98 Composite Brigade Office Building, a 12-storey Officers' Mess Complex, separate multi-storey family residences for the officers and soldiers.

Earlier on her arrival at the new cantonment, Hasina was welcomed by Army Chief General Iqbal Karim Bhuiyan.

State Minister for Textiles and Jute Mirza Azam, members of parliament and high civil and military officials, among others, were also present.



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina takes salute during the passing-out parade of the country's first female military paramedics batch at Shaheed Salahuddin Cantonment of Ghatail, Tangail.

PHOTO: PTD

Man dies during Rab raid in city

Family claims of torture, Rab denies

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A man died during a raid by the Rapid Action Battalion in the capital's Moghbazar last night.

The victim's brother alleged he died from Rab torture, but the elite force denied it.

Rab said the victim, Mainuddin Bhuiyan Biplob, 43, fell unconscious during their raid to arrest some drug peddlers in the area around 9:00pm. He was taken to a nearby private hospital where doctors declared him dead.

But Biplob's brother Newazuddin Bhuiyan Manob told this correspondent, "We saw wounds in his [Biplob's] forehead."

Biplob, an employee of a private organisation, was a resident of Pearabagh.

Manob said his brother had informed the Rab members of his heart problem when they tried to bring him out of the building, where he went with a friend.

In the raid, Rab arrested three people -- Biplob, Alam and Zakir. Of them, Alam, the house owner, is an alleged drug peddler.

Contacted, Saiful Islam Saif, ASP of Rab-3, denied that Biplob died from torture and insisted that he died after he had fainted.

The body was sent to Dhaka Medical College morgue for an autopsy.

Police detain 30 madrasa students

6 of them arrested, 8 fined under DMP act

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police picked up 30 students, including 21 Dakhil and Alim examinees, after raiding a dormitory of Tamirul Millat Kamil Madrasa in the capital's Jatrabari early yesterday.

On information of subversive activities, police conducted the drive, said Atikur Rahman, sub-inspector of Jatrabari Police Station.

Police, however, released 16 students in the custody of their guardians. They also showed six students arrested under Section 54 of the Code of Criminal Procedure and eight others under the Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) act.

A Dhaka court fined eight students Tk 200 each, in default they have to serve six days in prison. Six others were sent to jail.

Madrasa students and teachers alleged that around 50 policemen entered the six-storey dormitory named Darul Anam by breaking open its main gate at Mir Hazirbagh. During the raid, the law enforcers beat up some students and damaged two rooms.

A staff of the madrasa told The Daily Star that police often harassed the students by raiding the madrasa. As a result, many left the dormitory. Around 60 students were there during the raid.

When asked, Deputy Commissioner of Wari Division of the DMP Mustak Ahmed said police carried out the drive on the basis of information of planned subversive activities and seized huge books from the dormitory.

However, the madrasa students claimed the seized books are their textbooks.

Mohammad Abu Yusuf, vice-principal of the madrasa, said it was very sad that police detained the students, most of them examinees, when they were sleeping.

Students are in panic as police frequently enter the madrasa, he said.

Police could take action if any student was caught during committing crimes on the streets, Yusuf added.

Withdraw blockade for students' sake

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"For the sake of God and humanity, withdraw the blockade during the exams. Look at the students, think about them.... Please have mercy on us," Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid requested the 18-party alliance at a press briefing at the secretariat.

He hoped the BNP would withdraw the nationwide blockade within three days. "Still there is some time left and I hope they [BNP leaders] will be acting upon their conscience and humanity by that time," added the minister.

The ministry has taken some measures including boosting security at the exam centres and beefing up police patrol in the violence-prone areas.

But the guardians are concerned about reaching the exam halls safely. "Is it possible to ensure security of each of the 14 lakh students?" questioned Firoz Ahmed, the father of an examinee from the capital's Mohammadpur.

Responding to a similar question from journalists, the minister said: "They

[BNP] will have to say it clearly. Should we suspend the exams indefinitely if the blockade continues?"

Nahid said the SSC examinees last year had faced problems due to hartals. "And this time around, everyone is concerned [about the exams]. The students are making preparations under extreme psychological pressure which will affect their future."

An education ministry official said they will wait for an announcement from the BNP before holding the exams. "We can say something only after analysing the situation," he mentioned.

Meanwhile, BNP standing committee member Nazrul Islam Khan last night said the liaison committee of the 20-party alliance will decide on whether to continue with the blockade programme or not during the SSC exams.

He was talking to journalists at the BNP chairperson's Gulshan office. Nazrul, however, did not say when the committee would meet.

MANY LEFT OUT

Though the number of total examinees has gone up by 45,539, over 1.87 lakh students, who had registered with the education boards in class IX as regular students, are not taking the SSC exams this year.

Many schools didn't allow some of their weaker students to fill in the examination forms fearing that it would affect their position among the top-performing schools, said a source.

At the briefing, the minister said a total of 297 overseas students will take the exams in eight overseas centres under Dhaka education board. All the papers except for Bangla 2nd, English 1st and 2nd of the SSC general exams will be held under the creative question method, he added.

On question paper leak, Nahid said they took strict measures to check it.

The exams are scheduled to end on March 10 while the practical exams will commence the following day.

Anomalies rife

BRIBE FOR	AMOUNT IN TK
● Recruitment of auditors, junior auditors, drivers	3-5 Lakh
● Being sent to chosen auditee's office	0.5-1 Lakh
● Annual local and revenue audit	0.5-1 Lakh
● Non-annual local and revenue audit	4-5 Lakh
● Auditing head office of foreign-aided projects	0.5-5 Lakh
● Auditing branch office of foreign-aided projects	0.5-2 Lakh
● Works audit for defence directorate	0.5-1 Lakh
● Posting at desired office	1-2 Lakh

Six ministers, two state ministers, a chairman of a parliamentary standing committee and central leaders of the ruling party lobbied for having a candidate recruited at OACG

Public Accounts Committee takes bribe to settle audit objections

SOURCE: TIB

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Auditor General Masud Ahmed. Their opinions were included in the final report.

Masud has opined that the report should be published, added Iftekharuzzaman.

The survey found the auditors in exchange for bribe leave out objections involving big amounts and include less important issues instead in the audit reports. This makes it easier for the auditee organisations to come up with "acceptable" explanations. Sometimes, the audit teams prepare answers for these organisations.

It is also very common for the audit teams to accept gifts and costs of food and accommodation during audit inspections. But the auditors never face any action for their corruption and irregularities, the survey found.

Corruption is rife also in the recruitment process at the OACG. For example, candidates have to pay between Tk 3 lakh and 5 lakh for jobs as auditors, junior auditors and drivers.

Last year, 413 auditors and junior auditors were hired at the office of the Controller General Defence Finance, a wing of OACG.

"A huge amount of money changed hands during the recruitment. Many paid bribes of Tk 4 lakh to 5 lakh," the report says.

The office of the Additional Director General (Finance) Railway, another OACG arm, recruited about 500 people as auditors and junior auditors in 2012. Nearly half of them paid kickbacks between Tk 3 lakh and 4 lakh. And in all this, senior officials of the OACG are involved, the study reveals.

Political interference in recruitment is also prevalent.

Besides, ministries do not reply to the audit objections. They also do not implement recommendations by the Public Accounts Committee of parliament to realise illegally spent and misappropriated money.

The report also highlights the many challenges facing the OACG, one being a lack of workforce.

The government budget and the number of offices and employees go up every year, thus increasing the responsibility of the auditors. But the workforce of the OACG has not increased as required. Presently, a third of its approved posts are vacant.

The OACG is responsible for auditing more than 30,000 offices and projects but it can barely audit 10 percent of those, said Dipu Roy, a TIB programme manager, who presented the findings.

Despite being an independent body, the OACG has to share its audit findings with the Prime Minister's Office although the PMO itself is audited by the auditors, said TIB Chairperson Sultana Kamal.

"As a result, the constitutional right of the OACG is violated because the power still remains with the executive authority," she said.

On the positive side, the OACG has realised and adjusted Tk 18,527 crore in five years till 2013. It has also included automatic system in the auditing process in 2012 and set up a media cell.

"It has brought in some positive changes in recent years, which are commendable. But they are not enough," said Iftekharuzzaman.

Political unrest casts shadow on economy

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and poverty decline," he added.

The MPS projected between 6.5 and 6.8 percent GDP growth in the current fiscal year, on the basis of dynamism in investments and productive activities in the first half of the fiscal.

It said imports have recovered from growth sluggishness of the past couple of years. The current account balance has turned from surplus to deficit, from pick up in imports mainly of capital machinery and production inputs.

The BB governor said the welcome trend of recovery in the first half of the fiscal boosted hopes that the FY2015 GDP growth would significantly exceed the projections.

"When the economy was leaping forward, it hit the barricade [political unrest]. Everybody needs to keep in mind that economic advancement is connected with the fate of crores of working class people and the growing number of entrepreneurs," said the governor.

Deputy Governor Shitangshu Kumar Sur Chowdhury said investors took "a wait-and-see approach" in the first four months of the current fiscal year.

"In the following two months, investors had started to come back with plans to invest, shaking off their concerns. But the political situation took a sudden turn and dampened their enthusiasm," he said.

Bangladesh's economy has been doing remarkably well in the last one decade, but the latest spate of political

unrest has put a brake on it, preventing the country from tapping its full economic potential, the MPS states.

The ongoing blockade, longest since 1996, began on January 6 after the government denied the BNP and its allies permission to hold rallies to protest at the 2014 parliamentary elections they had boycotted.

The blockade is costing the country over Tk 2,277 crore every day, according to Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry, a leading trade body.

Govt to deploy 12,000 Ansars

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announced the blockade on January 5, according to the Fire Service.

Under the circumstances, the road transport and bridges ministry yesterday held an inter-ministerial meeting with representatives from all ministries concerned, law enforcement agencies' and vehicle owners' association.

Shipping Minister Shajahan Khan, Railways Minister Mazibul Hoque, State Minister for Home Asaduzzaman Khan

Kamal, State Minister for LGRD and Cooperatives Moshirur Rahman Ranga, Inspector General of Police AKM Shahidul Haque and directors general of Rapid Action Battalion, Special Branch of police, and Ansar and VDP attended the meeting with Obaidul Quader in the chair.

At the meeting, ministers and high-ups of the law enforcement agencies stressed the need for creating mass awareness against subversive acts and asked the

people's representatives to play their due role to resist violence.

The meeting decided on beefing up security for smooth movement of passengers and transportation of goods on highways, waterways and railways. Representatives of the local government bodies will assist the administration in this regard, said Obaidul.

Steps regarding the safety of the SSC examinees on their way to exam halls will also be taken, said the minister.

Obaidul Quader said the government was considering compensating owners of damaged vehicles.

Fifteen transport workers were killed in the violence during the blockade while 326 vehicles were torched and 500 others vandalised, said the minister.

Earlier, Bangladesh Railway deployed 8,328 Ansar and VDP members at 1,041 vulnerable points across the country to safeguard rail tracks and keep the train communication normal.