

Stay alert to any threats

PM to army

UNB, Rajshahi

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday asked the Bangladesh Army to remain always ready to unitedly face any internal and external threats for protecting the constitution and the sovereignty of the country.

She was addressing the National Standard award ceremony of four battalions of Bangladesh Infantry Regiment (BIR) of the army in Rajshahi Cantonment.

The PM conferred the award upon the 7th, 8th, 9th and 10th Bangladesh infantry regiments in recognition of their excellence, hard practice and dutifulness.

Hasina said the army has always extended their cooperation to the government in serving people. "I firmly believe the army will stand by people whenever needed during the tenure of the present government."

She thanked the army members for playing a significant role in upholding the democratic process by performing their duty sincerely in the 11th parliamentary election.

The PM also expressed her gratitude to the country's people for giving the scope to her party to form the government for the fourth and third

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Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at an event for handing over the national flag to four battalion commanders of Bangladesh Infantry Regiment of the army in Rajshahi Cantonment yesterday.

PHOTO: PID

Bangladesh among Asia's top 10 'generous' countries

ZAID KALAM

Bangladesh stood ninth among its Asian neighbours in an international ranking of generous countries.

With an overall score of 31 percent, the country has been ranked 74 in the world and fourth in South Asia in the CAF World Giving Index 2018 prepared by British organisation Charities Aid Foundation (CAF).

Indonesia was found most generous in the world scoring 59 percent. The other countries that made it to the top 10 are: Singapore, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Mongolia, Nepal, Republic of Korea, Thailand and Philippines, according to the CAF index.

However, Bangladesh was seventh in the table of top 10 countries where people help a stranger. The CAF index includes data from 146 countries that was collected throughout 2017.

"With as many as 2.4 billion people set to join the world's middle classes by 2030, it is crucial that we ensure that the groundwork is put in place to support and encourage a mass engagement in

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Ducsu polls campaign kicks off

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for liberation war affairs secretary post, nine each for science and technology affairs secretary and common room and cafeteria affairs secretary posts, 11 for international affairs secretary post, eight for literature affairs secretary post, 12 for cultural affairs secretary post, 11 for sports affairs secretary post, 10 for student transport affairs secretary post, 14 for

social services secretary post and 86 will vie for member posts in the Ducsu election.

The authorities on February 27 published a primary list of candidates, disqualifying seven aspirants.

Among them, five candidates -- VP post contender Abdullah Ziyad, GS post seekers Umme Habiba Benzir and ARM Asifur Rahman, and member post aspirants Ishat Kasfia Ira and

Shafayet Hasnain Sabit -- have regained their candidacy after applying for a review.

Key areas of the campus including Madhur Canteen and Teacher-Student Centre (TSC) were buzzing with hundreds of students talking about the coming election.

Activists of Bangladesh Chhatra League were seen hanging banners in different places of the university, seeking

vote for their panel and distributing leaflets among the students.

The Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal leaders also went to different dormitories to seek votes, while the independent candidates and contenders from leftist student organisations and the platform for quota reformists were also seen campaigning.

Candidates can campaign from 10:00am to 12:00pm every day for

the election, for which, a supplementary voter list will be published tomorrow.

A total of 18 DU halls will go to polls on March 11, which would be the first election at the university in 28 years. The central union has 25 posts and each of the hall unions has 13 posts.

There are an estimated 43,000 voters at DU.

Suspected drug trader killed in 'gunfight'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

A suspected drug dealer was killed yesterday allegedly in a "gunfight" with police in Kalibari area of Mymensingh city, police said.

The dead, Lalu Mia, 45, was a resident of city's Krishtapur Baganbari area.

"On information that a group of narcotics was trading drugs in Kalibari Puratan Godaraghat area, a police team

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2 projectiles found

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and we seized the items for investigation.

"Procedure is underway to send the projectiles for forensic test. We are trying to collect experts' opinions to identify which type of firearms the bullets were fired from," Inspector Rajesh said.

Asked about the audio conversation between the pilot and the control tower, he said, "We have collected the conversation to verify some information."

The official refused to make further comment over the matter.

According to the airport and police sources, the pilot contacted the control tower regarding the hijack at 5:29pm. In the 11-minute-long conversation, the pilot briefed the control tower mentioning an inside situation and

requested action. The conversation ended at 5:40pm, said the sources.

Polash apparently tried to hijack the flight on Sunday, forcing an emergency landing at Shah Amanat International Airport.

All 148 passengers were evacuated safely and the cabin crew were also safe.

Polash was killed afterwards in an eight-minute operation by the paramilitary unit. However, the gun held by the hijack suspect was found to be a toy gun later.

Debabrata Sarker, technology assistant at Shah Amanat International Airport, filed a case on Monday night with Patenga police. The case says the suspect was seen carrying suspicious objects during the hijack bid 15 minutes after the plane took off from Dhaka.

Spending on metro must be justified

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report on the 17km southern metro rail line-5 organised by the Dhaka Transport Coordination Authority (DTCA) at a city hotel.

The people, cost and quality must be taken into consideration for an urban public transport facility like a metro rail, as it is meant for the future generation, he said.

The ADB financed the \$1 million pre-feasibility study, said DTCA officials.

Khandakar Rakibur Rahman, executive director of DTCA, echoed Prakash's views and said, "The implementing agency of the metro rail scheme should be careful about spending the loan money because this is public money."

"In view of untold public suffering, we also have to be alert about the traffic management plan during construction of a metro rail," he said.

Md Anisur Rahman, a DTCA traffic engineer and project director of the pre-feasibility study on the 17km southern section of metro rail line-5, said that it took them ten months to complete the study.

This part of the metro rail will have 15 stations stretching from Gabtoli to Dasherbandi, according to the pre-feasibility report.

The metro line will comprise of 12.5km underground route and the

HIGHLIGHTS

- Construction of 17km metro-5 south begins in four years
- To be completed by 2030 at a cost of \$3.063-billion
- Will comprise 12.5km underground line, 4.4 km elevated
- Line to have 15 stations
- 20km metro-5 north will have 14 stations
- To be completed 2027 at a cost of Tk 35,000cr

rest will be elevated, according to the report.

The construction of the \$3.063-billion project will begin in 2022 and be completed by 2030.

The under-implementation metro rail-5, considered to be the backbone of Dhaka city's east-west public transport connectivity, is the third among five recommended in the revised Strategic Transport Plan.

With the physical progress of the country's maiden 20km metro rail line-6 already visible across the capital city, implementation of line-1 is underway with physical construction expected to begin by the middle of this

year.

The 20km maiden metro rail costs Tk 22,000cr, of which Tk 16,600cr is a loan from the Japan government.

Pre-feasibility of the 20km northern section of the metro-5 stretching from Hemayetpur of Savar to Bhatara was financed by Jica and done last year, Anisur said. The appointment of a consultant for the detailed design is underway.

Dhaka Mass Transit Company Limited, implementing agency of metro rail projects, has to carry out feasibility and detailed design for the southern section of metro-5 before implementation.

THE ROUTE

In the light of the revised Strategic Transport Plan, metro rail line-5 is one of five recommended for a metro network to cover Dhaka city's master plan area, including the city core and fringe areas.

The study team leader Akio Okutsu, while presenting the report findings, said the route alignment of the southern section of metro rail-5 goes along Mirpur road from Gabtoli, across Darrussalam (Technical), Kalyanpur, Shyamoli, College Gate, Asad Gate, west Panthapath, Karwan Bazar, Hatirjheel, Tejgaon, Niketan, west Aftabnagar, central Aftabnagar, east Aftabnagar and ends in Dasherbandi.



BNP leaders Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir, Moudud Ahmed and Abdul Moyeen Khan arrive at the BSMU to visit Obaidul Quader.

PHOTO: STAR

Quader battles for life

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examined him after they had been flown in.

Quoting doctors, AL presidium member Faruk Khan told The Daily Star around 8:30pm that Quader's condition "seemed to have slightly improved".

President Abdul Hamid, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and Speaker Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury and many cabinet members and lawmakers visited him at the hospital.

He was taken to the Intensive Care Unit at first and then moved to CCU as his condition deteriorated, Prof Ahsan said.

Doctors found blockages in three of his arteries and Quader felt better for around two hours after one of the blockages was removed, Prof Ahsan said.

But his condition deteriorated again as his blood pressure fell sharply. He has also uncontrolled diabetes and electrolyte imbalance.

When the PM visited him after 4:00pm, Quader opened his eyes partially.

During the president's visit a little later, Quader opened his eyes and could move his feet a bit.

There was a preparation to fly him to Singapore. But Prof Ahsan around 6:00pm told reporters that Quader was still in a critical condition although his condition improved a little.

Taking him abroad will depend on the arrangement of the hospital where he would be admitted to, said Prof Ahsan.

"Permission may be given to take him abroad only if there are skilled doctors and staffers and necessary arrangement in case of complexity on the way," he added.

After Quader was admitted to the BSMU, a large number of AL leaders and activists went there.

His family members also went to hospital. A 19-member medical broad was formed for his treatment.

Graft plagues civil aviation

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that only the preferred companies got the work. They show estimated price several times the actual price. As a result, low-quality equipment is bought at two to three times the rate," said the report seen by The Daily Star.

Some among the Biman top brass and the board of directors have direct or indirect partnership in these firms, according to the report.

"Bangladesh Biman lost several thousand crores of taka as a result of the influence of these intermediary companies," it said, adding that the national carrier had to replace new engines of aircraft worth several thousand crores as the authorities did not consider overhaul earlier.

The probe further found that tenders are invited at such a time when good companies do not have any stock of aircraft. "As a result, Biman had to take lease of low-quality aircraft at higher rates from the companies preferred by the dishonest quarters."

Internal as well as government audit teams raised numerous objections about the matter, but the objections remained unsettled every year, the report said.

In case of maintenance and overhaul, officials and board members award the work to their preferred organisations and loot hundreds of crores of taka, it added.

"Ground service is one of the most corrupt sectors at Biman Bangladesh

Airlines.... Every day several million takas are collected from different airlines for ground service. In reality, it was found that different airlines do most of the job of ground service with their own logistic service. But the Biman could not provide minimum service as per the contracts."

As a result, many foreign airlines have become reluctant to operate in Bangladesh, while many stopped their operation altogether in Dhaka, the report said.

Other corruption by Biman includes showing less weight of goods in import and export, not adjusting extra baggage charge and providing low-quality food to passengers.

Contacted, Biman spokesperson Shakil Meraj said they showed "zero tolerance" for corruption. "We will take proper action if we receive any specific allegation against any officials and employees of Biman like we did in the past."

He, however, could not provide any details about what action they took against whom and when.

In the CAAB, the biggest corruption takes place in construction and development work sector.

"There are allegations that compromising quality of the work, contractors and engineers misappropriate money," it said.

There are some honest engineers in CAAB, but they are deprived of promotion due to the influence of dishonest officials, the ACC found.

The report said sub-standard shops have mushroomed at Shahjalal International Airport, by giving monthly bribe to dishonest officials of both CAAB and the ministry.

It was also found that retired officials who worked at the CAAB on deputation are appointed as consultants instead of experienced consultants.

'BIMAN BETRAYING THE NATION'

Biman has incurred loss for most of the years since its inception in 1972. In 2007, the army-backed caretaker government turned Biman into a public limited company in efforts to make it a profitable venture.

At the moment, it operates in 15 international and seven domestic routes with its small fleet of 13 aircraft, seven of which are on lease.

Last year, its loss stood around Tk 201.47 crore, the state minister for civil aviation told parliament last week.

Irregularities and corruption in Biman have been on the news for many years.

Amid widespread allegations of anomalies, the House committee on civil aviation in 2010 had formed a five-member parliamentary sub-committee which found corruption involving Tk 700 crore in purchase and maintenance of aircraft and equipment of Biman in 18 years since 1992.

The committee also found corruption in Biman's other sectors that include ticketing, money recovery, signing contracts and hajj operations.

In 2011, another parliamentary sub-

committee headed by AL MP Mujibul Haque found there was no accountability in Biman, besides having "serious" corruption and irregularities.

It also said Biman's top officials were involved in irregularities in leasing an aircraft, Boeing 770-400, ignoring the interests of the national flag carrier.

The parliamentary standing committee on civil aviation and tourism ministry had formed a three-member sub-committee to probe the alleged irregularities in the leasing procedure.

Moyeen Uddin Khan Badal, a member of the parliamentary body, at that time said they found irregularities in taking lease of an aircraft. "The top officials of Biman totally ignored the interest of Biman while leasing the aircraft."

In a rare case, immediate past Civil Aviation Minister AKM Shahjahan Kamal late last year blamed top Biman officials for its loss.

The minister also slammed the Biman management for various irregularities.

"Why this theft and robbery? It is tantamount to.... betraying the nation," he said.

The ACC made 19 recommendations to address corruption. These include forming purchase committee with local and foreign experts, fixing condition of lease, analysing records of procurement to find out the magnitude of corruption.