

PM declares BGB a ‘3-dimensional force’

Govt plans to recruit 15,000 troopers in phases

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday declared Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) a three-dimensional force after the induction of two helicopters, Bir Shreshtha Nur Mohammad and Bir Shreshtha Abdur Rouf, into it.



“We’re celebrating the Mujib Borsho. In this Mujib Borsho, BGB got two helicopters. This is indeed a matter of pride. I’m declaring BGB a three-dimensional force,” she said.

The prime minister said this while addressing a programme for inducting two MI-17IE helicopters into the Air Wing of BGB.

The event was held at the BGB Headquarters, Palkhona. The PM attended it virtually from her official residence Gono Bhaban.

She asked the BGB personnel to keep

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PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

A potter lays out earthen pots to dry in Kamrangir Char on the outskirts of the capital, before they go into an oven. These pots are usually used for storing yoghurt, and sell for Tk 7 to 8. The clay for these come from Barishal and transporting each truckload costs Tk 12,000. While plastic containers are used increasingly for storing and packaging food, many still prefer earthen pots for sweets. The photo was taken recently.

DETAILED AREA PLAN

No more unplanned buildings in Dhaka

Says LGD minister Tajul Islam

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

LGRD Minister and convener of Dhaka’s Detailed Area Plan (DAP) cabinet committee Tajul Islam yesterday said no one will be allowed to construct buildings illegally and in an unplanned way.

The minister came up with the statement while talking to reporters after the first meeting of the newly-formed cabinet committee for review of DAP – and 15th overall -- at the ministry of housing and public works.

Tajul Islam said new buildings will have to be constructed in Dhaka considering issues including keeping the capital a livable city, civic amenities, planned infrastructure and geological and environmental issues.

Replying to a query, the local government minister said a sub-committee would be formed with all the institutions including the city corporations.

Earlier at the meeting, Tajul Islam said an action plan will be formulated to make Dhaka a livable, humane and sustainable city. Mentioning the challenges of implementing the action plan, he said it was possible to present a modern city if all the members of the newly-formed committee and concerned persons work united and discharge their duties with neutrality, courage, honesty and dedication.

The minister said the committee would work to build a livable and scenic city keeping in view other important issues including residential, commercial, hospital, school-college, sports ground, utility service, communication system and shopping mall according to a proper plan.

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‘Take steps for our return’

Qatar-bound migrant workers urge govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Qatar-bound migrant workers -- who remain stranded at home amid the coronavirus pandemic -- yesterday urged the government to take steps for their return to workplaces, saying their re-entry has been denied by the Gulf country.

Forming a human chain in front of Jatiya Press Club in the capital, some 30 Qatar-bound migrant workers said about 12,500 of them are currently stuck at home for months since the coronavirus pandemic forced air communication suspension between Bangladesh and Qatar early this year.

They called upon Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen and Expatriates’ Welfare Minister Imran Ahmad to take diplomatic efforts to ensure their return to the Gulf country soon.

The migrants, who were employed at different private companies in Qatar, said about 95 percent of their residence permits in the Gulf country now expired.

Besides, their online applications for re-entry permit to Qatar were not accepted in past three months. As a result, the prospect of their job opportunities in the Gulf

country has become uncertain, they added.

They further said without income they and their family members were passing days in economic hardship.

Migrant worker Meraj Hossain said some even remained stranded for about a year now without income opportunities at home. “Amid this, we are seeking attention of the authorities concerned to help us return to Qatar,” he said.

He said workers who were employed under private companies in Qatar did not get the re-entry permit even though the Qatar government started giving such permission to Bangladeshi workers few months ago.

As per Qatar government’s announcement, anyone can get the re-entry permit, applying online, he said. “We have been applying for the past three months but not a single permit was issued. We don’t know, why?”

He said they would take to the street again if their problem is not solved.

Another migrant worker Sarwar Alam Khokon said despite economic hardship, many of them did not seek financial support from the government or other organisations.

ARMS, NARCOTICS CASES

Erfan Salim on five-day remand

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Mohammad Erfan Salim, son of Dhaka-7 lawmaker Haji Salim, and his bodyguard Zahidul Mollah, have been placed on a five-day remand each in four cases filed under the arms and narcotics control acts.

Dhaka’s Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Md Kaisarul Islam yesterday placed Erfan and Zahidul on a three-day remand each in two cases under the Arms Act filed with Chawkbazar Police Station on October 28.

Besides, Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate Satyabrata Sikder placed them on a two-day remand each in two cases filed under the Narcotics Control Act filed with the same police station the same day.

The courts passed the orders after Md Delwar Hossain, an inspector of Chawkbazar Police Station, and also the case’s investigation officer, produced them before the courts with a 28-day remand prayer in four cases. The defence, however, submitted four petitions seeking cancellation of the remand prayers on grounds that during the drive law enforcers “tortured their clients and family members”. Police filed the cases only to harass them, the defence added.

Police during a drive on October 27 seized five bottles of foreign liquor and a pistol with two rounds of bullets from Erfan, while 406 pieces of yaba pills and a pistol with four rounds of bullets from Zahidul.



PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR

The area surrounded by railing used to be a pond, which was renovated in 2018, with a budget of Tk 70 lakh. However, as can be seen, the pond has been filled by Sylhet City Corporation, wasting huge amounts of money and violating laws.

Pond filled after spending lakhs for renovation

DWOHA CHOWDHURY, Sylhet

Sylhet City Corporation (SCC) recently filled a pond in the city’s Raynagar area, which was renovated spending lakhs in 2018. The authorities claimed that they did so to prioritise locals’ demand and undo a mistake made by the contractor. But environmentalists said no matter what the reasons may be, they violated law and wasted a huge sum of public money.

Renovation of the pond, owned by Sonarpara Mosque, was planned with a budget of around Tk 70 lakh, according to SCC.

Construction of guard-wall and railing started in February, 2018, which costed Tk 40 lakh, and Tk 30 lakh was budgeted for excavation.

While excavating, the contractor made a mistake by digging too deep, which eventually wrecked parts of the guard-wall along the adjacent road, and damaged nearby buildings.

SCC Chief Engineer Nur Azizur Rahman said, “As it was the contractor’s fault, and the mosque authorities decided to build a market there, we ordered the contractor to fill the pond.”

“We understand that Tk 40 lakh got wasted. However, the excavation charge of Tk 30 lakh will not be paid to the contractor. We had to take the decision considering all grounds,” he said.

Although the city authorities claimed that the mosque committee and locals asked the corporation to fill the pond, they denied it, saying it was decided by

SCC.

They also pointed to faulty low-grade renovation work by the previous councillor, Dinar Khan Hasu, who allegedly grabbed the tender from the original contractor.

This correspondent could not contact Dinar, as he now lives abroad.

Advocate Shah Shaheda Akther, regional coordinator of Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association, said, “The city corporation should be more alert regarding waterbody conservation. By filling that pond, they violated all related laws of environmental protection.”

According to Section-6 (E) of Bangladesh Environment Conservation Act 1995 (amended in 2010), no public or private pond can be filled without permission of Department of Environment (DoE).

But DoE in Sylhet confirmed that SCC did not take any permission from them.

Abdul Karim Kim, general secretary of Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon, Sylhet chapter, said, “Not only did they violate environmental laws, but also wasted public money in the name of development.”

“They filled the pond to cover up their misdeeds. Legal steps should be taken against the city corporation,” he said.

Emran Ahmed, director of DoE in Sylhet, said, “I just came to know that they filled a pond, which is prohibited by law. I’ll look into the matter and will take legal steps.”

BNP leader Mir Nasir sent to prison upon surrender in graft case

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday sent BNP leader and former state minister for civil aviation Mir Mohammad Nasiruddin to jail on his surrender in a corruption case in which he was sentenced 13 years’ imprisonment.

Judge SM Ruhul Imran of the Special Judge Court-2 of Dhaka passed the order after his lawyer Masud Ahmed Talukder submitted a petition for sending Nasir to jail in the case.

Earlier, on October 27, his son Mir Mohammad Helaluddin was sent to jail after his surrender in the same case in which he was sentenced to three years’ in jail.

Earlier on November 19 last year, the High Court upheld a lower court verdict that sentenced Mir Nasiruddin to 13 years’ jail and his son Mir Helaluddin to three years’ jail in the corruption case.

The court also ordered the duo to surrender before the trial court within three months after the trial court receives the certified copy of its verdict.

On July 4, 2007, an anti-graft tribunal sentenced Nasir to 13 years for committing two corruption offences and Helal to three years for abetting his father.

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Home for Harijans

44 families get flats from Barishal City Corporation

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barishal

Forty-four cleaners of Barishal City Corporation, who are from Harijan community, have received flats from the local government agency.

BCC Mayor Serniabat Sadiq Abdullah inaugurated the flat handover programme in the city’s Amir Kuthir area yesterday.

Expressing gratitude, the cleaners said they have been keeping the city clean for over a hundred years, but had no standard accommodation.

Cleaner Nayon from Amir Kuthir Harijan Colony said a total of 48 families live there. “We demand such flats for rest of the families too.”

BCC sources said the six-storey “BCC Sebok Colony” building is going to accommodate 44 families out of the 48.

Talking to The Daily Star, Sumon Das, president of Harijan Oikya Parishad, thanked the PM for providing the cleaners with new homes.

Uttam Kumar Bhakta, a Harijan leader, said, “The city has at least 700 families from Harijan and Dalit communities in five Harijan colonies. They are living in inhumane condition. We seek such flats for all of them.”

BCC Executive Engineer Abul Bashar said construction of three such buildings under a project -- BCC Sebok Colony -- at the city’s Kawnia and Amir Kuthir Harijan colony started in 2015-16 fiscal at Tk 22 crore with an aim to provide residential support for 150 Harijan families in three phases.

In the first phase, 44 families were accommodated in Amir Kuthir area. The rest will get flats once the other buildings are completed in Kawnia.

Each of the 477.75 square feet flats has two bedrooms, a dining room, one kitchen and toilet. Each building also has a common space, he said, adding that residents will only have to pay utility bills. Out of the total 396 BCC cleaners, 246 are from Harijan community, said the authorities.

At the flat handover event, Mayor Serniabat told journalists that through this initiative living standards of the Harijans will improve.

Rapist gets life term after 16yrs

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

A rapist got life-term imprisonment in Rangpur yesterday, 16 years after the incident.

However, he was absent at the court.

The convicted is Rezwan Ali of Kalupara village of Rangpur’s Badarganj upazila. He was a neighbour of the victim.

Women and Children Repression Prevention Tribunal-2 Judge Md Rokonzaman delivered the verdict at a crowded courtroom. The court also fined Rezwan Tk 1 lakh.

According to case statements, the victim, who was a housewife and mother, was staying home alone, as her rickshaw-puller husband used to work in Dhaka.

On the night of March 2 in 2004, when the woman came out of the house, Rezwan caught and raped her.

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Resume tidal river management in country’s southwest

Speakers at webinar urge govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a webinar yesterday said resumption of the government’s tidal river management project in Southwest Bangladesh was required to help people come out of persisting waterlogging situation there.

Besides, round-the-year dredging of rivers and creating canals in coastal areas to ensure timely high and low tide, and managing riverbed sedimentation are important to reduce waterlogging, they said.

NGO-based initiative Uttaran along with The Daily Star and Bangla daily Samakal organised the webinar on “Emergency Support and Anticipated Effort for Southwest Coastal Bangladesh”.

Speakers said due to waterlogging, hundreds of thousands of people, especially women, children, and elderly, in southwestern districts of Jashore, Khulna, and Satkhira have to suffer, as many of them contract water-borne diseases each year.

Uttaran Director Shahidul Islam said the government continued its TRM project, a unique management of tidal rivers, till 2012. There was no waterlogging in the area as long as the project continued. It was stopped due to a “social cause” in Bilkapalia area, he said.

Shahidul said now due to waterlogging, locals in Southwest Bangladesh suffer for six to eight months a year.

In some areas, waterlogging persists throughout the year, he said, adding annually about 10 to 15 lakh people suffer immensely because of waterlogging there. He also said waterlogging forced many people to migrate, either temporarily or permanently.

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PHOTO: RAJIB RATHAN

Eleven-year-old Riazul Islam is trying his best to support the family, selling children’s clothes at Chattogram city’s Chawkbazar area. The child, who has studied till fourth grade, lost his father when he was only three, and his mother had to take care of the household from then on. But after the pandemic hit, finances took a turn for the worse, forcing little Riazul to start carrying this huge responsibility on his shoulders.

Narcotics control, madrasa edu bills placed at House

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

“Narcotics Control (Amendment) Bill, 2020” was placed at Jatiya Sangsad yesterday, dropping the provision of setting up separate narcotic control tribunals to pave the way for competent courts to try narcotic-related crimes.

Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal placed the bill which was sent to the respective parliamentary standing committee for further scrutiny.

The committee was asked to submit its report before the House within seven working days.

The bill was brought to have a provision of holding trial in the courts having the jurisdiction for quick disposal of narcotics cases and easing the backlog of huge drug-related cases.

It was supposed to form necessary number of Narcotics Control Tribunals in line with article 44 of the existing Narcotics Control Act 2018.

But the Law and Justice Division cannot set up any Narcotics Control Tribunal yet or cannot entrust the tribunal’s responsibility with any additional district judge or sessions judge for administrative reasons.

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