

Army chief Gen Aziz meets his US counterpart

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Army chief General Aziz Ahmed and United States of America's army Chief of Staff General James McConville have discussed elaborately on strengthening the mutual cooperation between the two forces.

The two generals held the meeting at United States, said a statement of ISPR.

General Aziz also exchanged views with the military adviser of UN peacekeeping mission and under secretary generals.

His visit is expected to play an important role in increasing the number of Bangladeshi UN peacekeepers, conducting peacekeeping missions properly, and ensuring the country's participation at the policymaking level of the missions, the statement added.

General Aziz left Dhaka for the United States on January 29, following an invitation from the US army chief.

General Aziz discussed regional security and mutual defence cooperation at the US Office of the Secretary of Defence for Policy, South and Southeast Asia during the visit, ISPR also said.

He also visited various defence structures and training facilities of the US army.

The army chief will return home on February 12.



Chief of Bangladesh Army General Aziz Ahmed discusses matters of bilateral interest with US Chief of Army Staff General James C McConville, during his ongoing visit to the USA. General Aziz left Dhaka on January 29 on an invitation from his US counterpart, and is set to return on February 12.

PHOTO: ISPR

484 killed in road crashes last month

Says Road Safety Foundation; most incidents on highways

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least 484 people were killed and 673 injured in 427 road accidents across the country in January, according to a report of Road Safety Foundation.

Of them, 168 were killed in 159 motorcycle accidents, said a press release yesterday.

The release also stated seven people were killed, four injured and six were missing in four waterway accidents while 14 died and six were injured in 11 railway accidents.

Road Safety Foundation has prepared the report on the basis of information of seven daily newspapers, five online portals and electronic media.

According to analysis of the Road Safety Foundation, 153 accidents (35.83 percent) occurred on highways; 107 (25.05 percent) on regional roads; 97 (22.71 percent) and 59 (13.81 percent) incidents occurred on roads in villages and towns respectively and 11 (2.57 percent) at other places.

The statistics said most of the accidents happened in Dhaka division -- 128 people died in 112 road accidents.

Unfit vehicles, reckless driving, unskilled drivers and not following traffic rules are among the reasons behind the accidents, the report said.

BNP programme means terrorist acts, sabotage

Says Obaidul Quader

BSS, Dhaka

Awami League General Secretary and Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader yesterday said BNP is again carrying out its evil attempts to launch violence in the name of political programme after failing to gain people's support.

"BNP's programme means launching sabotage and terrorist acts. If BNP carries out violence in their programmes, their evil acts will be dealt with in an iron hand," he told a regular press conference on contemporary issues at his official residence on parliament premises.

To BNP, Quader said, fair elections means giving guarantee of the party's win. When BNP was in power, they ruined democracy again and again, he said.

The AL general secretary said BNP formed Oikya Front before the previous parliamentary elections and that Front was for sharing power among the parties of the alliance.

He said the Front leaders have lack of trust and confidence in one another and the "success" of the front was to suspend one another from the alliance.

"BNP is again taking initiative to form Jatiya Oikya Front now. Actually, the purpose of forming such an alliance is sharing power among the parties under the cover of national unity," he said.

Mentioning different achievements of the AL government, the minister said Bangladesh is marching towards prosperity under the leadership of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and political stability is prevailing in the country while the country's economy started rebounding

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RALLIES IN SIX CITIES

BNP hits back at Quader

UNB, Dhaka

BNP yesterday criticised Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader for his remarks on its planned rallies in six cities, saying the ruling party starts "shaking" when it hears about the opposition's programmes.

"Obaidul Quader and his party men start shaking when they hear about any rally of opposition parties as the facts started coming out of Pandora's box," said BNP senior joint secretary general Ruhul Kabir Rizvi.

Speaking at a press conference at the party's Nayapaltn central office, he said AL has failed to ensure good governance.

On Friday, BNP's defeated mayoral candidates announced to hold rallies in six cities protesting what they said vote fraud in the elections to Dhaka, Chattogram, Khulna, Barishal and Rajshahi city corporations.

Reacting to such programmes of the party, Quader said BNP is trying to destabilise the country by creating unnecessary tension, and warned of tackling it with an iron hand if the opposition tries to resort to violence.

Rizvi said their mayoral candidates in six cities announced to hold rallies to protest election irregularities and mount pressure on the government to hold the polls in a neutral and credible manner.

"This is the democratic way. Why does Obaidul Quader sense a threat here?"

He alleged that the ruling party general secretary's threat has exposed the current government's "repressive and authoritarian" rule.

"His (Quader) remark has proved once

again that Awami League has never learned the democratic culture, tradition and liberal attitude that are essential for a vibrant democracy," the BNP leader alleged.

He also said there is no point of issuing a threat to BNP as the government's "misdeeds" are gradually getting leaked.

Stating that holding rallies is constitutional and democratic right of political parties, Rizvi said no political leader can issue a threat to resist such programmes.

PROTEST PROGRAMME MONDAY

BNP yesterday announced a countrywide protest programme for Monday to mark the third anniversary of the imprisonment of its Chairperson Khaleda Zia in a graft case.

Rizvi declared the programme at the press conference.

"February 8 will mark the third anniversary of the jailing of our leader Khaleda Zia. On this day, BNP will hold protest rallies in all districts and metropolitan cities across the country, including Dhaka," he said.

On February 8, 2018, Khaleda was sent to Old Dhaka Central Jail after a lower court sentenced her to five years' imprisonment in Zia Orphanage Trust graft case. The High Court later doubled her five-year jail term.

Khaleda was found guilty in another corruption case the same year, though her party claims both cases are politically motivated.

Amid the coronavirus outbreak, the government freed Khaleda from jail for six months through an executive order suspending her sentences on March 25 last year, and later extended it by six months.

'This park lost everything that made it special'

Commercialisation leaves Ctg's Biplab Udyan barren of nature



PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

This doesn't exactly look like a public park where people come to walk and jog, but it is what Biplab Udyan has become. This photo was taken last Friday.

ARUN BIKASH DEY, Ctg

A long-time regular at the port city's Biplab Udyan, former schoolteacher Tarapada Ghosh has been maintaining strict quarantine since the start of the pandemic. What he saw when he finally decided to go to the park on Wednesday astonished him.

According to Tarapada, the park, owned by Chattogram City Corporation (CCC) and located in the city's Sholoshahar Gate-2 area, has become a shadow of its former self, owing to over-commercialisation.

"I was not ready to see the park in such a battered state. What has the authority done in the name of development?" he exclaimed.

"I don't think it can be called a public park anymore -- it has become a means for profit-making," said the resident of Nasirabad Housing Society.

When this correspondent visited the park, he could see Tarapada's point. As a leisurely space for the city's residents, the park should provide a couple of things for visitors' recreation: ample sitting arrangement, security -- especially after sunset, and sufficient greenery.

But none of these were adequately available at the park. There's only a few places where people can sit, no boundary walls for security, and no garden or much greenery.

However, what the park does have are

shops, lots of them. At one stretch of the park, a total of 20 shops stand in a row, mostly selling fast-food. Sitting spaces for the shops' customers eat up a big chunk of the park's space.

"This park has lost everything that made it special," the regret was clear in Tarapada's voice.

Built in 1979, Biplab Udyan is one of only four parks with free access for the city's residents, who have become agitated at its current operating model. "It's not a park anymore. It's been turned into a food court," visiting Bijli Barua said.

Park authorities said the shops were built recently and were constructed with permission.

According to sources, the process started on November 28, 2018, when CCC signed a contact with two private organisations for the park's development. The contractors were quick to build shop-spaces and rent them out for a fat advance, CCC sources told this correspondent.

Amid all of this, the development of the park remains illusive, they said.

"A public park should not have been handed over to private organisations. Once in the hands of business people, it's normal that they would prefer profit over public service," opined Dr Mahfuzur Rahman, convener of Public Health Rights Protection Committee, Chattogram.

This correspondent contacted

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BFUJ ON AL JAZEERA TRANSMISSION IN BANGLADESDH

One faction seeks ban

UNB, Dhaka

Leaders of a faction of Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalists (BFUJ) have demanded a ban on the transmission of Qatar-based Al Jazeera television channel in Bangladesh and condemned its "yellow journalism".

Its president Molla Jalal and secretary general Abdul Majid in a joint statement on Friday called upon all journalists of the forum to raise their voices against the anti-Bangladesh conspiracy.

The BFUJ leaders said the TV channel has always been playing a role against Bangladesh, protecting the interest of a particular anti-state quarter and engaged in tarnishing the image of the country abroad.

They said the television channel has allegedly tried to make the war criminals' trial process controversial in the international arena. The channel created confusion over the number of Liberation War martyrs, claiming the number is only 300,000 to 500,000, they said.

Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, Jordan and Egypt have already banned the transmission of the television channel for its alleged involvement in inciting violence and extremism in these countries, said the leaders.

Another opposes it

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A day after one faction of BFUJ demanded a ban on the transmission Al Jazeera television channel in Bangladesh, another faction of the same organisation issued a statement expressing their shock at the demand.

The statement said the leaders of BFUJ and Dhaka Union of Journalists (DUJ) could not believe that such a demand could come from an organisation involved with the welfare of journalism.

It said the demand to ban Al Jazeera was vehemently opposed by the chairperson of BFUJ M Abdullah and secretary general Nurul Amin Rokon, as well as chairperson of DUJ Kader Gani Chowdhury and its general secretary Md Shahidul Islam.

"Our main mandate is to protect free speech, and independent media," said the statement. Demanding that a media organisation be banned because of what they published is an oppressive stance to take, it added.

The faction of journalists also said if a foreign media outlet is publishing false news, the truth should be published by domestic journalists.

If there is any controversial element in the report by Al Jazeera, then journalists should investigate and present the truth, it stated.

'BOYCOTTING ILIAS KANCHAN'

Nirapad Sarak Chai protests Shajahan Khan's remarks

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Nirapad Sarak Chai yesterday protested and condemned the alleged threat of boycotting its chairman Ilias Kanchan by transport leader and lawmaker Shajahan Khan.

In a statement, the road safety platform said Shajahan Khan, acting president of Bangladesh Road Transport Workers Federation, at a programme of federation's Rajshahi regional committee on Friday spread falsehood and used indecent comments against Ilias Kanchan.

Shajahan, also a ruling party lawmaker, threatened to boycott the actor turned road safety crusader, reads the statement.

The government has enacted Road Transport Act-2018 in consultation with stakeholders concerned and the prime minister and road transport and bridges minister asked all to create awareness about the new law.

"So the indecent comments against Nirapad Sarak Chai's Chairman Ilias

Kanchan is not acceptable at all," reads the statement.

The organisation thinks that if any driver, encouraged by the comments of Shajahan Khan, drives recklessly and causes someone's death in road accident, then Shajahan Khan has to take responsibility of the death along with the driver, reads the statement.

If any case is filed regarding the accident, Shajahan Khan would be a co-accused, because he cannot avoid responsibility, it added.

In February last year, Ilias Kanchan filed a Tk 100 crore defamation case against former shipping minister Shahjahan Khan.

The statement said Shajahan Khan mentioned about the case in his Friday speech where he said Ilias Kanchan rather will face trial under the case.

"Nirapad Sarak Chai considers it [Shajahan's comment] as tantamount to the contempt of court," reads the statement.

Shajahan Khan could not be reached over phone for his comments.



Jamal Uddin, a businessman from Cox's Bazar, rests along with his wife on a floor mat at Chattogram Medical College Hospital (CMCH), as he waits for his turn to get dialysis at the hospital. The couple said they started off from home at 3:30am and reached the hospital at 9am. however, their dialysis would not begin for another 12 hours. Dialysis is a medical procedure required by patients of kidney failure on a regular basis, and it is quite expensive at most places. The dialysis service at CMCH has started not long ago, and has already gained popularity because of low cost and good treatment. However, some attention to patient service in the non-medical areas could go a long way for people like Jamal Uddin. The photo was taken around noon yesterday.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN