

Coast Guard to have its own manpower

Home minister tells the force's 26th founding anniversary event

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has plans to make the Bangladesh Coast Guard (BCG) an independent force as they will have their own manpower.

Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal made the announcement yesterday while addressing the 26th founding anniversary of BCG at the force headquarters in the capital's Agargaon as chief guest.

The minister said, "Currently, there are around 4,000 members in the force. Once they have their own manpower, they will be able to serve in the force permanently."

He said all the necessary steps have been taken to modernise the Coast Guard.

According to sources, all the military officers of BCG now come from Bangladesh Navy on deputation. Only some civil staffers including drivers and clerks are recruited directly for BCG.

The minister said, "Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina felt the need for Coast Guard in 1994 when she was in the opposition. She introduced a bill in the parliament, which was the beginning of the Coast Guard's journey."

He also spoke about various steps being taken to modernise the BCG, including a training centre at Patuakhali.

"Four weapons vessels have been attached to the Coast Guard. Four more will be added soon. If necessary, an air wing will be added to the force along with all kinds of logistical support," he said.

Regarding the prevention of drug smuggling, Asaduzzaman said they have not failed at all in this regard.

Border Guard Bangladesh is guarding the land border, but there are some places where it takes around two days for the BCG to move from one outpost to another, he said. "We are working to build roads along the border in those areas," said the minister, adding that choppers have been

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Sgt Zahurul Haque's 52nd death anniversary

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Today is the 52nd death anniversary of Shaheed Sergeant Zahurul Haque.

Zahurul, an accused of Agartala conspiracy case, was killed by Pakistan military on February 15, 1969, said a press release.

Following the killing, the movement demanding unconditional release of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and other arrestees in the case got a momentum.

On the day of his killing, students of Dhaka University renamed Iqbal Hall to Shaheed Sergeant Zahurul Haque Hall.

After the independence of Bangladesh, the Chattogram base of the Air Force was also named after him.

Mosquito menace on the rise

Dhaka residents take it upon themselves as authorities' efforts not adequate; experts for integrated vector management system

MATHEWS CHIRAN

With the mosquito problem of Dhaka becoming more and more menacing, residents are having to strengthen their defences against the insects, and many complain that the city corporations' measures to control mosquitoes are not effective in their areas.

Although the city corporations are working throughout the year spraying larvicide and adulticide, stagnant water bodies and lack of proper monitoring at the field level are rendering many efforts ineffective, opined experts.

Residents of new and old wards have similar complaints and are seeking more permanent solutions from the city corporations.

A resident of newly-added ward-36 of Badda under DNCC, Shafikul Islam, said, "Mosquito problem is unbearable here. As soon as evening comes, lighting up a coil is a must. Or else you can't go two minutes without a mosquito biting."

"Every once in a while mosquito repellent is sprayed in the area with the fogging machine. But that doesn't seem to be doing much at all," he complained.

Residents of nearby areas including Notun bazaar and Nodda have similar experiences.

In the old DNCC ward-14 under Shenpara area lives Nobel Ronald, who echoed Shafikul's remarks on the fogging repellent's ineffectiveness.

"We have to keep our doors and windows shut at all times. We have to use aerosol or coil daily. At times there are swarms of mosquitoes in the area and that makes it difficult to concentrate on work or academic activities," said a disappointed Nobel.

Dhaka South City Corporation ward-71 resident AL Arafat said, "This being new ward, we feel neglected. Mosquitoes are everywhere. If you go outside after evening and stand for a few minutes at any shop, mosquitoes will swarm on



STAR FILE PHOTO

you. Coils, nets, aerosols, all types of defence is necessary to keep the mosquitoes away."

DNCC ward-39 secretary Nesar Ahmed Russel said, "In our ward, we have 13 mosquito workers and two supervisors. The number of workers is inadequate for the size and population of the ward and we need double the manpower we have."

"Supervising workers is difficult unless they are followed closely at all times. Besides, the workers have to walk and carry machines weighing around 25 kg, which slows down the process of spraying pesticides," he said, adding that larvicide spraying time is between 8-11am and adulticide fogging time is 4-5pm.

There are 123 species of mosquitoes in Bangladesh, of which two types are dominant -- Aedes and Culex. The breeding season of Culex is between late November and March, while Aedes aegypti, the species responsible for causing Dengue, breeds between March and November, especially during the rainy season.

Jahangirnagar University Professor and Entomologist Kabirul Bashar opined that an integrated vector management (IVM) system is mandatory to control the mosquito problem. The system has four elements -- environmental control, biological control, larvicide and adulticide.

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DEATH OF WAHIDA SC grants bail to husband

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Appellate Division of the Supreme Court yesterday granted bail to Mohammad Asif, who was sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment by a tribunal in a case filed over the death of his wife and Rajshahi University student Wahida Sifat in 2015.

The apex court also allowed Mohammad Asif to move an appeal before this court challenging the High Court verdict that scrapped the tribunal's judgment and ordered it (tribunal) to hold retrial of the case.

A four-member bench of the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court headed by Chief Justice Syed Mahmud Hossain passed the order following a leave-to-appeal petition filed by Asif challenging the HC verdict.

There is no legal bar for Asif to get released from jail following the SC order, his lawyer Md Munsurul Hoque Chowdhury told The Daily Star.

He said the apex court passed the order on the grounds that there is no eyewitness of the incident of Wahida Sifat's death, and two kinds of post mortem reports were submitted to the trial court in connection with her death.

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Shut down all coal-fired power plants near Sunderbans

Bapa reiterates in 15-point demand on Sunderbans Day

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Poribesh Andolon (Bapa) yesterday placed a 15-point demand, which includes closing down all under-construction coal-based power plants near Sunderbans and stopping industrialisation at sensitive areas to save the largest mangrove forest in the world.

Bapa came up with the demand at a webinar titled "What should we do to save Sunderbans and the demands" to mark "Sunderbans Day".

This year, the slogan of Sunderbans Day was "Save Sunderbans, Save Bangladesh".

Placing the 15-point demand, Bapa President Sultana Kamal said to save the country, there is no alternative but to save Sunderbans.

She demanded the government take immediate measures to stop encroachment of waterbodies, canals and rivers surrounding Sunderbans in the name of industrialisation.

Sultana Kamal also demanded immediate actions to stop setting fire at different parts of Sunderbans and bringing perpetrators -- including smugglers, grabbers and a section of employees of forest departments -- involved in such heinous activities to book.

Bapa in its 15-point demand said the government should take immediate measures to stop all coal-based powerplant projects at Rampal, Taltoli and Paira areas, and other red-category projects, which will destroy the forest and rivers of Sunderbans.

Bapa suggested that the government might set up large scale wind and solar-based power plants in those areas. Sultana Kamal, also a human rights activist, hoped that Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will reconsider her government's various measures, which will destroy Sunderbans' eco-biological diversity.

Abdullah Harun Chowdhury, an environmental activist and a professor of Khulna University, said soil quality in Sunderbans has deteriorated due to presence of chemicals

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DNCC WORKSHOP

Management of fecal sludge crucial to save waterbodies: speakers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

To save canals, rivers and waterbodies in Dhaka, fecal sludge management is very important and authorities should take immediate steps for its proper management, said speakers at a workshop yesterday.

"Seventy-one percent household latrines directly or indirectly (85 percent in slums) discharge to open drains, leading to pollution of lakes and canals within the city," said Prof Dr Mujibur Rahman of Buet in his online presentation, held at a city hotel.

Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC) organised the workshop on sewerage management where representatives of Rajdhani Unnayan Karttripakkha (Rajuk), Wasa, Department of Environment, architects, planners and NGOs took part.

Prof Mujibur said instead of constructing septic tanks, households in Dhaka often directly connected their toilets to storm drainage systems, although only rainwater is supposed to go through the system.

"Many septic tanks and soakaways do not work in Dhaka because of low soil infiltration capacity. Septic tanks in most households suffer from design and construction inadequacy, resulting in shorter hydraulic detention time and consequently less sludge deposition in the tanks," said Mujibur.

He suggested to procure land for fecal sludge treatment immediately by authorities concerned, and taking initiative to construct, rehabilitation or retrofitting of septic tanks.

Giving a timeline to city dwellers to construct their own septic tanks or soakaways, DNCC mayor Md Atiqul Islam -- who chaired the programme -- said they have served a public notice to construct own septic tanks in every building by March 31, otherwise city corporation will take action.

He said the condition of lakes and canals are extremely polluted due to the sewage that fish cannot survive in these.

"We want to make all the lakes -- Gulshan, Banani, Baridhara and Uttara -- lakes of clean water where fish will be able to survive; for this, we are urging the government to hand those over to us," said Atiqul.

Speaking as chief guest, LGRD minister Md Tazul Islam said there are 39 canals in Dhaka city and if it is possible to develop those after recovering from encroachments, Dhaka will be a city like Italy's famous Venice.

About the lake handover issue, the minister said he has already given instruction to authorities concerned to take necessary steps, and more work will be done in this regard to hand over those if necessary.

Managing director of Wasa Taqsem A Khan said they will construct five sewage treatment plants along with a network of pipeline within 2027, following the sewage master plan which was prepared in 2014.

After constructing those plants, 90 percent areas will come under sewerage network while 10 percent more will need for on-site sewage systems, he said.

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Household waste stinks up port city

CCC's door-to-door garbage collection programme in shambles

ARUN BIKASH DEY, Ctg

Dumping of domestic waste just outside households in the open is ruining Chattogram's city's environment, but it would be unfair to blame residents of the port city alone.

Rather, for reasons related to urban management, this kind of indiscriminate waste dumping becomes a compulsion for them due to the unavailability of better solutions.

For one, the conservancy workers i.e. waste management staffers tasked with waste collection, do not visit households every day. To make it worse, street dogs, cats, and crows fiddle with and spread the trash around, creating an unclean and unhygienic atmosphere throughout the city.

During a recent visit to different areas -- including KB Aman Ali Road at West Bakalia, Rahattar Pool Ujir Ali Shah By-lane, Surson Road, Askar Dighir Par and DC Road areas -- this correspondent saw that domestic waste wrapped in polythene bags were kept on roads or just in front of houses, which were then spread around by local animals.

Ujir Ali Shah By-lane area's Ali Hossain could not suppress his frustration. "CCC conservancy workers used to come to our house every day. But since the onset of the pandemic, the number of visits has come down to thrice a week," he said. "From January, they've been coming twice a week."

"I don't know whether CCC has cut down on staffers," said Ratul Barua, a resident of the Teachers' Training College area at KB Aman Ali Road. "Earlier, authorities removed dustbins in a bid to collect wastes from door to door. But with conservancy workers coming twice or thrice a week -- as if almost at their whim -- where exactly do we go with our trash?"

Sources told this correspondent that CCC started the door-to-door waste collection programme on January 2017. To this end, it distributed over 9,00,000 bins to the city's households so that waste can be kept there until conservancy workers come pick it up.

To ensure the programme's success, over 2,000

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Pahela Falgun and Valentine's Day were two of the last occasions that were left untouched by the pandemic in 2020, but with another rotation of the planet, people have landed in a celebration that requires one added accessory: a mask. Many sported face masks in the customary yellow colour of spring, though few remembered to keep it on at all times. The photo was taken yesterday at Chattogram city's Aambagan area.

PHOTO: RAJIB RATHAN

5 killed, 4 injured in road accidents

STAR REPORT

Five people died and four were injured in road accidents across the country in the last two days.

In Sylhet, a truck driver and helper died after their vehicle plunged into a canal below Damri bridge at Darbath area of Jaintiapur upazila early yesterday morning.

The deceased are Ebadur Rahman Khokon (27) of Bandarhati village and Rasel Ahmed (35) of Naljuri Paschimpara area in Gowainghat upazila.

"At around 6am, the sand carrier truck plunged into the canal. Both the driver and helper died on the spot," said Shawkat Ali Jowardar, sub-assistant director of Fire Service and Civil Defence in Sylhet. Bodies of the deceased were sent to MAG Osmani Medical College Hospital for autopsy.

Meanwhile in another truck accident at Nawabganj upazila of Dinajpur, the driver was killed and his helper was injured after the vehicle skidded off of the road. The deceased is Ahad Ali (40), said police.

Police said that the coal-loaded truck was going to Panchagarh from Jhinaidih. As it arrived in Motihara in Nawabganj upazila, the driver lost control of the vehicle and fell into Tulshiganga river at around 6am yesterday.

Upon information, rescuers of Fire Service and Civil Defence rushed the injured to a local hospital, where doctors declared the driver dead. The helper was undergoing treatment, said police.

In Pabna, at least two were killed while three others were injured as a speedy microbus carrying the five hit a stranded lorry at Dashuria in Pabna-Rajshahi highway near the Pabna Sugar mill on Saturday night.

The deceased are Md Jahangir Hossain (58) and Monwar Hossain Ronju (55). Officer-in-Charge of Ishwardi police station Md Asaduzzaman said the microbus carrying five passengers was going to Dashuria. When they arrived near Pabna Sugar Mill, the driver lost control of the steering and hit a stranded lorry at about 10:30pm.

BHALOBASHAR AHAR A different kind of Valentine's

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Chattogram Metropolitan Police yesterday arranged meals at a restaurant for 200 underprivileged children from ten schools and madrasas as part of an initiative called "Bhalobashar Ahar", organised marking Valentine's Day.

The initiative was supported by Navana Group and KDS group and was implemented by CMP and Jatri Chhawni, a social platform in Chattogram.

Deputy Commissioner (North) Bijay Basak of CMP introduced this initiative. He said, "We shared our love with the children who are not privileged enough to afford restaurant meals."

"We also gave them school supplies, stationery, chocolates and food marking Valentine's Day. The children were very happy and we were happy to see their smiles," he said.

Ehtesham Hossain, student of a local school called Nogar Ful, said, "Police members showed their care for us and gave us gifts too. I feel very special."