

Azerbaijan troops on the edge of Karabakh stronghold

People in Stepanakert 'hiding' in basements

AFP, Yerevan

Azerbaijani troops are on the edge of Nagorno-Karabakh's separatist stronghold of Stepanakert, prompting residents to hide in basements in fear, a rebel envoy told AFP yesterday.

"The situation in Stepanakert is horrible, Azerbaijani troops are all around the city, they are on the outskirts and people fear Azerbaijani soldiers could enter the city at any moment and start killings," separatist spokeswoman Armine Hayrapetyan said.

Hayrapetyan, who represents the separatist government's information centre in Yerevan, said Stepanakert and other parts of Nagorno-Karabakh have lost most basic services since Baku's lightning offensive to



Migrants wait to disembark from a Spanish coast guard vessel, in the port of Arguineguin, in the island of Gran Canaria, Spain yesterday. Pope Francis yesterday arrived in the French port city of Marseille for a two-day visit focused on the Mediterranean and migration, and bringing a message of tolerance amid bitter debate over how Europe manages asylum seekers. PHOTO: REUTERS

China's recent military movements 'abnormal'

Says Taiwan, flags amphibious drills

REUTERS, Taipei

Recent Chinese military movements around Taiwan were "abnormal", the island's defence minister said yesterday, flagging amphibious exercises in addition to drills Taipei has observed in the province facing the island.

Taiwan has reported an increase in such activity during the past week, as dozens of fighters, drones, bombers and other aircraft, as well as warships, have operated nearby.

China, which views democratically governed Taiwan as its own territory, has in recent years carried out many such drills around the island, seeking to assert its sovereignty claims and pressure Taipei.

"Our initial analysis is that they are doing joint drills in September, including land, sea, air and amphibious," Defence Minister Chiu Kuo-cheng told reporters at parliament. The "recent enemy situation is quite abnormal", he added.

The comments came after an unusual statement from the defence ministry on Thursday that it was keeping watch on Chinese activities near Dacheng Bay in the

southern province of Fujian, facing Taiwan. This is an area where Taiwan security sources say China performs landing drills.

China has not said anything about the drills around Taiwan, and its defence ministry did not respond to two requests for comment.

Chiu said releasing the information about Dacheng Bay was in line with his ministry's principle of keeping the public informed.

China carried out landing drills in Dacheng Bay in September last year and the year before that, said Chieh Chung, a military researcher at Taiwan's National Policy Foundation think tank.

Those exercises featured civilian ships with equipment practising "dockless unloading", to simulate a situation in which they might need to land after port facilities are knocked out of action or destroyed, Chieh said.

However, China would be hard pressed to carry out a frontal, amphibious invasion

of the island, given geographic difficulties, a senior US defence official told Congress on Tuesday.

Last week China also dispatched more than 100 military ships for regional exercises in areas such as strategic waters in the South China Sea and off Taiwan's northeast coast, a regional security official told Reuters on condition of anonymity as they were not authorised to speak to the media.

China traditionally performs large-scale exercises from July to September, Taiwan's defence ministry has said.

Earlier yesterday, the ministry said it had detected 24 Chinese military aircraft entering Taiwan's air defence identification zone during the previous 24 hours, with at least 17 crossing the median line of the Taiwan Strait, according to a map it published.

The median line used to serve as an unofficial barrier between the two sides until China's air force began regularly crossing it last year.



recapture the ethnically Armenian enclave.

"No electricity, no gas, no food, no fuel, no internet and telephone connection," Hayrapetyan said. "People are hiding in basements."

Armenian separatists agreed to lay down their arms in the face of clashes that they said killed 200 people.

They held an initial round of Russian-mediated integration talks with Azerbaijani representatives on Thursday.

"We have so many casualties, dead and wounded people," Hayrapetyan said, without providing details.

The separatists said yesterday they were negotiating the withdrawal of their troops from the disputed enclave.

International pressure has mounted on Azerbaijan to re-open the only road leading to Armenia, dubbed the Lachin Corridor, so that supplies and people can move in and out.

The fighting has been marked by abuses on both sides and there are fears of a new refugee crisis among Nagorno-Karabakh's estimated 120,000 ethnic-Armenian residents.

Session jam dashing

FROM PAGE 12

University teachers evaluate scripts and prepare tabulation as part of their job responsibilities."

He also said they have been working on the automation of the tabulation system.

SHORTAGE OF TEACHERS AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Teacher shortage and poor infrastructure – shortage of classrooms, teachers and labs – are common problems, affecting the quality of education in all the seven colleges.

The DU authorities in September last year formed a committee to enquire about the current state of education in the seven colleges. A member of the committee, on condition of anonymity, said Suhrawardy College has the worst situation of all. The situation is almost similar at Kabi Nazrul Government College, he added.

THE AIM OF QUALITY EDUCATION Educationists believe the DU authorities have more to do to address the issues that have arisen.

"The DU authorities have not taken any significant initiative to resolve the crises and ensure quality education in the colleges," said Siddiqur Rahman, former Professor of Dhaka University's Institute of Education and Research (IER).

As these are tertiary-level educational institutions, the DU

AL 'peace rally'

FROM PAGE 12

government, as per party insiders.

They, however, think the BNP's movement will lose momentum once the election schedule is declared, as there is no way to jeopardise the election once the election commission takes charge.

Thus, the party has issued strict instructions to party men to actively participate in all the upcoming programmes.

"You've been working hard, I am urging you to continue that hard work for the next 40 days," AL Organising Secretary Mirza Azam told an extended meeting of the Dhaka city (north) AL on Thursday.

US to back PM

FROM PAGE 12

"US Bangladeshi cooperation on the [Rohingya] response is a powerful example of the partnership between the United States and Bangladesh."

Meanwhile, Washington on Thursday announced that it would provide \$74 million to support Rohingya refugees and their host communities.

Including this, the US assistance since August 2017 for those affected by the crisis in Myanmar, Bangladesh, and the region has crossed \$2.2 billion, said a statement issued by the State Department.

This funding provides life-sustaining support to nearly 1 million Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh, many of them survivors of a campaign of genocide, crimes against humanity, and ethnic cleansing, and 540,000 members of Bangladeshi communities that generously host Rohingya refugees, it said.

Khaleda Zia

FROM PAGE 12

including arthritis, diabetes, kidney issues, liver problems, and heart diseases for a long time, said the medical board.

On September 12, the government extended the suspension of Khaleda's jail sentence by six more months with the same two conditions as before – she would not be able to go abroad and she would have to receive treatment in the country.

Khaleda was freed from jail on March 25, 2020, after the government suspended her jail sentence for six months. She was released during a time when the world was grappling with the pandemic.

The BNP chief landed in jail on February 8, 2017, after being sentenced to five years' imprisonment by a special court in Dhaka in the Zia Orphanage Trust graft case.

On October 30, the following year, the High Court enhanced her punishment to 10 years after dismissing her appeal.

The former prime minister was convicted by another special court in Dhaka in the Zia Charitable Trust corruption case on October 29, 2018. She was sentenced to seven years' imprisonment by the court.

Measures not enough to check waterlogging

FROM PAGE 2

Experts say a comprehensive and sustainable drainage network is urgently needed for a lasting solution.

Rainwater should naturally flow into water bodies and open and underground drains should also carry water to canals that lead to the rivers, they said.

"The drainage system in Dhaka city is inadequate. Even normal rainfall exceeds its capacity, let alone a rainfall of 113 millimeters, which is quite substantial," Prof Md Mujibur Rahman, a teacher of civil engineering department at Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology, told The Daily Star.

Additionally, the drainage system's design is not up to the mark. It

explains why the storm drainage capacity is overwhelmed due to various types of waste. All these reasons contribute to clogging the system, he stressed.

"If we can free all the canals from encroachments and re-excavate them properly, water will flow away quickly," Prof Mujibur said. He suggested modernisation of the drainage system should be done after taking into consideration the changes in the weather pattern.

Currently, Dhaka has a network of 2,211 kilometres of drains, with 961-km in the south and 1,250-km in the north part of the city.

When WASA looked after the canals, efforts primarily focused on open drains. However, the ongoing

efforts by the city corporations encompass both canals and drains, requiring substantial financial allocation, said sources at the DSCC and DNCC.

DSCC Mayor Sheikh Fazle Noor Taposh said infrastructure was developed in 136 locations in the last 3 years at a cost of Tk 225 crore from their own funds.

"Of those locations, sewerage infrastructure was developed in 103 places," he said.

DNCC Mayor Atiqul Islam claimed that the situation has improved significantly because of various measures they have taken.

"Even if it rains heavily, water does not collect anywhere for a long time as before," he said.

Extend LDC trade benefit

FROM PAGE 1

graduation, border requirements, and safeguard measures, would be helpful.

The UK is the third largest apparel export destination for Bangladesh. The country exported RMG products worth \$5.02 billion to the UK in 2022-23 fiscal year, which was 11.78 percent higher than the previous fiscal year.

Faruque said in the past decade Bangladesh has made significant strides in ensuring the safety, well-being and empowerment of the RMG workers.

The RMG industry is progressively transitioning towards greener and cleaner production methods, with an impressive 202 Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certified green factories, he added.

This commitment to sustainability has made Bangladesh's RMG sector one of the most compliant and trusted industries globally, the BGMEA chief said.

We are not worried

FROM PAGE 1

politics. We requested them to refrain from such activities. They have given us assurances," he said.

He said Bangladesh has already been addressing the concerns that the US has, including accountability of Rab.

"We have communicated these and other areas of cooperation [with the US government]," he added.

The state minister also hoped that the opposition parties will not engage in violence now that the US has begun enforcing the visa policy. "We have seen that the opposition parties in the past resorted to serious level of violence. Now we can see that the opposition party leaders are coming under the US visa policy."

On the European Union's decision not to send a fully-pledged election observation team, he said Bangladesh will welcome any alternative observers from the EU. "We are open and will welcome any other options."