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Bangladesh belongs to people of every faith

Says army chief at Janmashtami rally

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief of Army Staff General Waker-Uz-Zaman yesterday reaffirmed that Bangladesh belongs equally to people of all religions and communities, stressing that the armed forces will always stand beside citizens to safeguard peace, security, and harmony.

He made the remarks while addressing devotees at the inauguration of the central Janmashtami rally at Dhakeshwari Temple in Dhaka.

Joining Waker as guests of honour were Chief of Naval Staff Admiral M Nazmul Hassan and Chief of Air Staff Air Chief Marshal Hasan Mahmood Khan.

Additionally, Major General Md Moin Khan, General Officer Commanding (GOC) of the 9th Infantry Division, was also present at the event in Palashi intersection.

Extending greetings on the occasion, Waker thanked the Bangladesh Puja Udjapan Parishad and the Mohanagar Sarbojanin Puja Committee for inviting



FROM LEFT... Chief of Naval Staff Admiral M Nazmul Hassan, Mohanagar Sarbojanin Puja Committee President Jayanta Kumar Deb, Chief of Army Staff General Waker-Uz-Zaman, and Chief of Air Staff Air Chief Marshal Hasan Mahmood Khan light a lamp, inaugurating the Janmashtami celebrations at Palashi intersection in the capital yesterday.

DEATH OF NEWBORN

Cruel toll of ambulance syndicate

Suspected ring leaders include chauffeur of Shariatpur civil surgeon

JAHID HASAN, Shariatpur

A syndicate run by the civil surgeon's chauffeur and a government ambulance driver has long gripped Shariatpur's ambulance services -- and last Thursday, its greed allegedly claimed the life of a newborn.

Acting on a tip-off, the Rapid Action Battalion arrested Sabuj Dewan, 28, son of the civil surgeon's chauffeur Abu Taher, in an operation at Bera Chikundi village under Palong Union Parishad of Sadar Upazila early yesterday morning.

Both Taher and Sabuj are accused in a case filed with Palong Model Police Station yesterday by the newborn's father Nur Hossain Sardar, 32, an electrician from Dhaka.

Sabuj was handed over to Palong Model Police Station and later sent to jail by court order, said Officer-in-Charge Helal Uddin. Police have sought a 10-day remand to interrogate him while efforts continue to apprehend the remaining suspects, the police officer said.

Five arrested over Sada Pathor looting

2.5 lakh cft stones seized in Sylhet Sadar, 2,500cft in Gowainghat

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Police yesterday arrested five people over the looting of stones from the Bholaganj Sada Pathor tourist site in Sylhet's Companiganj upazila, following a case filed by the Bureau of Mineral Development (BMD).

The arrestees are Mohammad Kamal, 45, and Md Abu Sayeed, 21, from Kalairag village; Md Abul Kalam, 32, from Nazirgaon village; and Iman Ali, 28, and Jahangir Alam, 35, from Lachu Khal village in Companiganj, police said.

On Friday, Md Anwarul Habib, director general of the BMD, filed the case with Companiganj Police Station, accusing around 1,500 unnamed people of involvement in the looting.

Police then raided several areas and arrested the five suspects, said Uzayer Al-Mahmud Adnan, officer-in-charge of the police station.

According to the case statement, since August 5 last year, miscreants have been illegally extracting stones worth hundreds of crores of taka from the government-gazetted quarry area, as reported by several national media outlets.

The statement also noted that the identities of those directly involved had remained unconfirmed until now.

Meanwhile, a taskforce recovered around 2.5 lakh cubic feet of stones during drives at crusher mills and houses in Dhopagul area of Sylhet Sadar upazila.

Upazila Nirbahi Officer Khoshnur Rubaiyat led the drive. Contacted, she said, "Acting on a tip-off, the taskforce carried out raids. We found the stones buried under sand near homesteads in Mohalldhi village and hidden inside crusher mills.

1,760 aid seekers killed in Gaza since late May

Says UN; report says Israel in talks to resettle Gazans in South Sudan

AGENCIES

The UN human rights office said that at least 1,760 Palestinians had been killed while seeking aid in Gaza since late May, a jump of several hundred since its last published figure at the beginning of August.

"Since 27 May, and as of 13 August, we have recorded that at least 1,760 Palestinians have been killed while seeking aid; 994 in the vicinity of GHF (Gaza Humanitarian Foundation) sites and 766 along the routes of supply convoys. Most of these killings were committed by the Israeli military," the agency's office for the Palestinian territories said in a statement.

On August 1, it reported 1,373 deaths of aid seekers.

The update came as Gaza's civil defence agency said at least 25 people were killed by Israeli fire yesterday.

Meanwhile, Gaza's Health Ministry yesterday said at least eleven people, including a child, died in Gaza due to starvation in the past 24 hours.

The latest figures bring the total number of hunger-related deaths in the territory to 251, Director-General of Gaza's Health Ministry Munir al-Bursh told Al Jazeera.

- At least 25 more killed amid intensified offensive
- 11 deaths from starvation reported in last 24 hours
- Qatar, OIC, 31 Arab countries condemn Netanyahu's 'greater Israel vision'

He said that 40,000 infants in the territory were suffering from severe malnutrition amid critical food shortages caused by Israel's war and restrictions on aid into Gaza.

On Wednesday, the chief of staff of

Election will be held as announced

Says home adviser

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Home Affairs Adviser Lt Gen (retd) Jahangir Alam Chowdhury yesterday ruled out any possibility of changing the election timeframe announced by the chief adviser.

"The chief adviser has spoken. None of us has anything to add beyond that. The election will be held in the month [February] he announced," Jahangir told reporters after visiting Mohammadpur Krishi Market in Dhaka.

"We don't need to pay attention to what others are saying. Some parties may try to resist," he said, adding that the people will ultimately decide.

"Once people decide to vote, no one will be able to stop them," he added.

Jahangir also urged educated citizens to take the lead in setting examples of discipline in society.

"You are the most

Costs, deadlines of two projects to overrun

Tipped to get nod at today's Ecneec meeting

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

The costs of two projects -- one aimed at promoting environmentally sustainable surface water supply in Dhaka and the other for building mini stadiums in upazilas -- are likely to double their original estimates.

The deadlines for the projects, taken up by the previous government, may also be extended by up to eight years in today's meeting of the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council.

The devaluation of local currency alone increased the estimated cost of Dhaka Sustainable Water Supply Project by around 42 percent or Tk 1,186 crore. When the government approved the project back in September 2013, the dollar traded for Tk 82. Now, it is more than Tk 120.

Apart from the depreciation of the taka, changes in the pipeline route and design may contribute to a 25 percent rise in the estimated cost. Delay in interest payment is another reason for the cost overrun, documents show.

The original cost of the project, which began in January 2014, was Tk 5,248 crore, of which Tk 3,499 crore was provided by the Asian Development Bank, documents show.

The cost now may rise to Tk 10,973 crore, with Tk 6,739 crore expected to come from development partners.

The project, which was taken up with a view to reducing dependence on the groundwater extraction and utilising surface water sources, was supposed to be completed by December 2019. Dhaka WASA, the implementing agency,

Ctg-Dhaka fuel pipeline inaugurated

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Chattogram

The Chattogram-Dhaka fuel oil pipeline project was officially inaugurated (commissioned) yesterday.

Power, Energy and Mineral Resources Ministry's Adviser Muhammad Fouzul Kabir Khan inaugurated the project at a ceremony held at the main installation (MI) point of the pipeline in Patenga, Chattogram, around 11:00am.

According to officials of Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation (BPC), the 250-kilometre pipeline will save about Tk 200 crore annually in fuel transportation costs once regular supply begins. The pipeline will mainly transport diesel to Dhaka.

Project officials said that with the pipeline in operation, transporting 50 lakh litres of diesel from Patenga to Dhaka's Godnail will now take only 12 hours, compared to 48 hours by river route earlier.



Palestinians amid the debris after an Israeli strike on a school sheltering displaced people in Gaza City yesterday.

Stop pushing unnecessary tests, drugs

Law adviser urges doctors

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Law Adviser Asif Nazrul yesterday urged healthcare providers to refrain from unethical practices, including prescribing unnecessary medical tests and medicines, under the influence of pharmaceutical company representatives.

He also urged the authorities of hospitals, clinics and diagnostic centres to invest more in doctors, nurses and other healthcare staff to improve the quality of services.

Meanwhile, Sayedur Rahman, special assistant to the chief adviser for the health ministry, urged them not to seek undue profit, but rather to aim for a reasonable return on their investment.

They were speaking at the inaugural session of the annual general meeting of the Bangladesh Private Hospital, Clinic and Diagnostic Owners Association at the Shaheed Abu Sayed International Convention Centre.

Nazrul said he had received several general complaints about health services, one of them being that doctors do not listen properly and start writing prescriptions after hearing only a few words from the patient.

Citing patients who sought treatment abroad, he said doctors there listen to patients properly, which instils confidence.

