

Shakeup in bureaucracy

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government transferred a number of senior officials, including 12 joint secretaries from different ministries, divisions and corporations in the last two days.

Major changes are expected in the administration as the current set-up has failed to carry out its responsibilities as per the desire of the government.

Sources said performance of the government officials during the last 15 months would be the criterion for their posting.

The BNP-led alliance government, after assuming power on October 10, 2001, recast the administration through transferring over 3,000 officials at different levels of the bureaucracy.

During the mass transfer, a good number of officials were moved from one place to another for a number of times within the first six months.

Since the recast, concerned policymakers of the government and a section of top officials monitored the situation closely. Now the decision to bring about further changes is apparently being taken as many of the officials failed to live up to the government's expectations.

According to the sources, the government has prepared a list of nearly 200 deputy and joint secretaries to be transferred soon. Besides, some additional and full secretaries are also expected to be transferred.

The government yesterday gave new postings to three newly promoted additional secretaries in

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DMCH employees threaten strike

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Employees of the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) yesterday threatened to go for an indefinite strike from today protesting police assault on employees.

Sources said, three policemen had allegedly beat up sweeper Abu Taher, 30, when his floor mops touched them while sweeping the veranda of ward No. 32 at about 7.30am.

Taher had requested the policemen to move so that he could do his job. But the cops responded by telling him to clean the place later, witnesses said.

At one point in the resulting argument, the policemen beat him up. They also beat up ward master Monirul Islam, head gardener Motaleb, ward boy Zahir and employee Abdur Rashid when they came up to Taher's aid, the employees claimed.

In an instant protest, employees of the hospital brought out procession.

Later Karmachari Samannaya Parishad, a platform of hospital employees, convened a meeting condemning the incident and demanding punishment.

At the meeting, the employees threatened to go for an indefinite strike unless action was taken

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Results of 22nd BCS exams on pages 10,11

CNG crisis to drag on as supply plan hits snags

SHARIER KHAN

A quick solution to the CNG crisis facing vehicles in the city is not possible, as a major project to lay pipelines for gas supply has hit snags.

The Clean Fuel Project (CFP), designed to speed up conversion to gas, has fallen behind schedule.

The delay is likely to hold up disbursement of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) funds for the project.

This in turn will delay installation of new public sector CNG refuelling stations and new gas pipeline network around the city.

Besides, Petrobangla experts forecast a gas supply shortfall in the capital this summer that will severely affect existing gas refuelling facilities.

Due to a projected sharp demand rise in power plants this summer, the gas supply and its pressure would fall significantly, they said.

CNG-run vehicles are already facing acute gas crisis with only 11 filling stations in the city. Some 3,000 autorickshaws have recently been added to the city's CNG-run fleet because of the ban on two-stroke three-wheelers.

Long queues of three wheelers

at these stations are everyday scene. According to the CNG drivers, refuelling could take between two to ten minutes at different stations depending on gas pressure.

"The existing gas pipeline network does not allow any unified pressure in the city," said a Gas Transmission Company Ltd (GTCL) source. "Nor does it allow further expansion of CNG refuelling facilities. In fact, the existing ones are facing severe difficulties. A 15-minute refuelling job took about an hour when the cold wave was severe (which affected gas flow)."

But even in such a situation, the government is going slow on the

Clean Fuel Project.

The ADB conditions say three affiliates of Petrobangla — Titas Gas Transmission and Distribution Company Ltd. (TGT DCL), Ruptarita Prakritik Gas Company Ltd. (RPGCL) and Gas Transmission Company Ltd. (GTCL) — should be made fully autonomous.

The government was supposed to approve the project concept papers (PCPs) submitted by these three companies by December 31. But the PCPs remain stuck with the

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PHOTO: STAR

Women voters queue up to elect their representatives to the Union Parishad at the Bailtali Rahmania Forkania Madrassah at Chandanaish in Chittagong yesterday.

Two more killed in UP election violence

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two more died in violence in Narsingdi and Noakhali on Tuesday pushing deaths in the Union Parishad (UP) polls to eight.

Incidents of violence, intimidation and rigging were also reported from many places yesterday, the fifth day of the staggered polls that began on Saturday. So far, polling was held in 744 out of 4228 local councils.

On Tuesday night, a chairman candidate's brother was beaten to death by supporters of his rival in Dighirpur village in Panchdona in Narsingdi Sadar upazila.

Police and witnesses said sup-

porters of Tofazzal Hossain beat up Amir Hossain, younger brother of his rival Monir Hossain, when he went to the village on a campaign. Amir died while three of his associates were critically injured.

In Noakhali, one Sheikh Farid died when police fired to disperse trouble mongers in Sandalpur Union. Thirteen others were wounded in the incident.

Two each in Munshiganj, Nakhali and Pabna and one each in Natore and Narshingdi have been killed since the election began on January 25.

Our Mymensingh correspondent adds, voting was postponed in two centers in Jahangirpur Union

Parishad of Nandail upazila as some unruly young men snatched ballot papers in the noon.

Witnesses said the unruly youths stormed into Kismot Bonagram High School and Dholapata non-Government Primary school centres and snatched the ballot papers, prompting the presiding officers to suspend voting.

Violence also took place at Awiapar Howlapara Madrassah centre in Achargaon where police fired in the air to restore calm.

In Thankurgaon, two people were injured in a clash during the polling at Chourangi Bazaar centre in Haripur upazila Tuesday.

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Autorickshaws to go metered in two days

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

CNG-run autorickshaws without meters could ply the city roads for two more days with Friday being the government-fixed deadline.

Officials of the Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA) said that the three-wheelers without meter would not be allowed to ply from Saturday and that proper steps would be taken to enforce this.

Sources however mentioned that a number of such three-wheelers have not yet installed meter. Four companies are now distributing meter for these autorickshaws and another is likely to be permitted by the BRTA to do so.

The government is yet to decide

whether the 2,500 Mishuks have to install meters or not. The 'calibration' of these three-wheelers is different and it needs meter different from that of CNG-run auto-rickshaws.

Deputy Commissioner of traffic department of the Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) Abu Musa Md. Fakhru Islam Khan said the government also plans to ban Mishuks in the rickshaw-free roads in the city as these three-wheelers do not have route permit to ply on those roads. But a decision in this regard is being delayed due to the transportation problem now.

He suggested that the BRTA fix the fair rate for Mishuks.

Meanwhile, there are allegations of

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Indian commandos stationed at border

Dhaka again asks Delhi to stop push-ins

SHAIKH NAZRUL ISLAM from Jessore

The Indian Border Security Force (BSF) has reinforced its strength on the border with commando troops, as Dhaka once again asked New Delhi to stop push-in attempts.

Dhaka also instructed the Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) to be on alert to resist any push-in.

The BDR yesterday proposed a flag meeting with the BSF and is waiting for a reply.

Meantime, Director General of BDR Major General Jahangir Alam yesterday visited different BDR camps, international check posts

and BDR outposts on Jessore border. He asked troops to be on alert to foil any push-in.

As a goodwill gesture, the BDR chief offered a packet of sweets to the BSF Sector Commander of Khulna Col. Anwar Ibne Noor and Commanding Officer of Jessore Battalion Lt. Col. Monirul Alam accompanied the BDR chief.

In another development, the BDR foiled a BSF attempt to push in a small group of Indian nationals at Jhenidah border. The BSF has reportedly assembled several hundred people at Bongaon area in India to push them into Bangladesh.

In a statement, the foreign minis-

try yesterday said the government believes that 'relationship between the two neighbours should be viewed from a larger perspective and in a manner that enhances the prospect of greater mutually beneficial cooperation.'

"Apart from humanitarian dimension, such attempts have also introduced an element of unwarranted complication with potentials to impede various steps both India and Bangladesh may take together for further improving and strengthening their many faceted bilateral relations," the statement added.

SHAZNEEN CASE

Cross-examination of Shehzi ends

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Cross-examination of Shahzreh Haq Shehzi, fourth prosecution witness in the Shazneen case and sister of the victim, by lawyers of all the six accused ended yesterday.

Judge Kazi Rahamat Ullah of the Second Special Tribunal for Prevention of Women and Children Repression, Dhaka, then adjourned the hearing till today.

Lawyers of three of the accused — Hasan, Minu and Parvin — cross-examined Shehzi for about three and a half hours yesterday.

Earlier, she was cross-examined by lawyers of the three other accused Shahidul Islam alias Shahid, Shaniram and Badal.

Shehzi told the court yesterday that Shahid was taken to the place of occurrence on September 27,

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MiG-29 purchase Hasina, six others face graft charges

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and six others yesterday were charged with graft in the MiG-29 purchase scam case.

The six are former Air Force chief Jamaluddin Ahmed, former defence secretary Syed Yusuf Hossain, former Army chief Mustafizur Rahman, Air Commodore (rd) Mirza Akhter Maruf, former Joint Secretary Mohammad Hossain Serniabat and Unique Group Managing Director Nur Ali.

Bureau of Anti-Corruption Inspector (BAC) Abdullah Al Zahid submitted the chargesheet to the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court (CMM), Dhaka, which showed 40 persons prosecution witnesses.

A case filed with the Tejgaon Police Station on December 11,

2001 charged that Hasina along with four top defence officials caused the public exchequer count Tk 700 crore (\$123 million) in loss in the purchase of eight MiG-29 fighter jets. Charges against Brigadier General (retd.) Iftekhari-Ul-Bashar and former Deputy Secretary Hasan Mahmood Delwar were dropped on ground of insufficient evidences.

Later, charges were brought against the former army chief, the air commodore, the former joint secretary and the businessman as the enquiry suggested their involvement in the scam.

Earlier, the investigation officer asked for court permission to arrest Hasina and four others and an attachment of their movable property.

The High Court granted former Air Chief Jamaluddin Ahmed and ex-secretary Syed Yusuf Hossain ad interim bail.

'71 crackdown a political blunder: Musharraf

BSS, Dhaka

Pakistan President General Pervez Musharraf has once again expressed his regret about the military crackdown in 1971 describing it as a political blunder.

General Musharraf expressed the regret when outgoing Bangladesh High Commissioner to Pakistan Ailumul Haque made a farewell call on him on January 15 in Islamabad, a foreign ministry press release said yesterday.

It quoted the Pakistan president as terming the 1971 tragedy traumatic, unfortunate, a political blunder and myopic vision on part of the then West Pakistani leaders.

The Pakistan leader had earlier regretted the 1971 atrocities during his visit to Bangladesh in July 2002.

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STAR MAGAZINE

With the advent of cable TV we have access to a huge number of channels. But what are the effects of being exposed to these channels? On us, on our children? Read the cover story of Star Weekend Magazine tomorrow (Friday).

Bush promises UN fresh evidence against Iraq

Powell to present US case on Feb 5

AFP, Washington

President George W Bush promised to produce new evidence against Iraq in a bid to convince wary allies that Baghdad is flouting UN demands to disarm, earning a cautious welcome from Russia yesterday.

In his State of the Union address to Congress late Tuesday, Bush also threatened to unleash the full force of the US military to oust Iraqi President Saddam Hussein from power.

US Secretary of State Colin Powell is to go to the UN Security Council on February 5 to present "information and intelligence about Iraq's illegal weapons programmes, its attempts to hide those weapons from inspectors and its links to terrorist groups", Bush said.

The United States has been under growing international pressure to work through the United Nations and give weapons inspectors in Iraq more time to carry out their work before going to war.

Initial reaction to Bush's decision to return to the UN to strengthen its case against Iraq was positive, with veto-wielding Security Council members France and Russia saying they would give Washington a fair hearing.

"We are ready to listen and analyse attentively the

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PHOTO: AFP

President George W Bush (C) is applauded by Vice President Dick Cheney (L) and Speaker of the House Dennis Hastert (R) after delivering his State of the Union address before a joint session of Congress Tuesday night at the US Capitol Building in Washington, DC.

US attorney gen 'to do all' for fair treatment of Bangladeshis

UNB, Dhaka

US Attorney General John Ashcroft has assured Foreign Minister Morshed Khan that he would do all he can to ensure that Bangladeshis are treated fairly by US immigration officials and do not undergo undue harassment.

The assurance came at a meeting with Khan at the attorney general's office in Washington Tuesday afternoon. Ambassador Syed Hasan Ahmad and senior officials assisted the foreign minister, according to an official message released by the Foreign Ministry yesterday.

Khan rushed to the US capital soon after the US administration announced the inclusion of Bangladesh in the list of 24 predominantly Muslim countries whose citizens will be photographed and fingerprinted while entering the United States.

The foreign minister informed the US attorney general that he had not come to ask for the withdrawal of Bangladesh's name from the list. But since there is a precedent of withdrawal of Armenia from the list, the US administration should consider withdrawing Bangladesh's name also as it is seriously affecting bilateral trade and investment.

Khan requested John Ashcroft to consider giving amnesty to undocumented Bangladeshis who are living in USA and contributing positively to

the US economy. They are law-abiding, peace-loving, hardworking and none has any record of terrorist activities to date, so their cases deserve special consideration, Khan added.

Ashcroft said that in calling for special registration, the US is simply replicating Europe, and added that by the year 2005 the Congress has called for having comprehensive plans for monitoring entry and exit of all foreigners. The old monitoring system was not effective in keeping track of entry or exit of foreigners, he said.

Khan had a busy schedule during his six-day visit and met a number of top US leaders and officials including Secretary of State Colin Powell, Deputy National Security Advisor at the National

Security Council Steven Hadley, Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz and Deputy Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security Gordon England.

Besides, he met a number of US Congressmen including Joseph Crowley, Rush Holt, Jim McDermott, James P Moran, Gary Ackerman, Chris Van Hollen and Senator John McCain, and Bangladesh community leaders in Washington and New York.

The US leaders agreed with the foreign minister and said they fail to understand why a friend and ally like Bangladesh has been included in the list for special registration.

They assured that they would use their good offices to ensure that Bangladeshis are not harassed.

	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
Jan 30		5-43 pm
Jan 31	6-41 am	

Prayer Timings		
Jan 30		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-45	6-15
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-15	4-30
Maghrib	5-50	5-55
Esha	7-15	7-45

Source: Islamic Foundation