

Sarwar takes office in absence of ex-mayor

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

Newly elected mayor of Barisal City Corporation (BCC) Majibur Rahman Sarwar took office yesterday in absence of former mayor Ahsan Habib Kamal.

This raised a question who handed over the charge.

Ahsan Habib Kamal is in Dhaka now. Sources close to him said he was not invited on the occasion.

They said as per rule the new mayor is to take over charge from his predecessor in writing.

But Sarwar said, "Absence of anybody can not hamper taking over charge and the entire process has been done according to rules".

He also said the former mayor and all former commissioners were invited to attend the function.

Sarwar came to the BCC office at noon and was warmly greeted by officials and employees at the entrance.

Addressing the gathering, Sarwar said his first duty will be to take stock of the assets and liabilities of BCC. The accounts will be audited by a government auditor and if any discrepancy is found steps will be taken against any defalcator, he said.

He attended office after a milad mahfil.



Relatives recover the body of one of nine Iraqi soldiers in Hilla, south of Baghdad on Monday, who were killed when their truck came under a US missile attack during fighting between coalition forces and soldiers loyal to President Saddam Hussein.

FBI arrests son of former Iraqi diplomat

REUTERS, New York

The son of a former Iraqi diplomat in New York was accused on Monday of acting as an agent of the Iraqi Intelligence Service, according to a federal complaint filed in Manhattan federal court.

Raed Rokan al-Anbuke, also known as Raed al-Anbuge, allegedly bought a miniature camera for an Iraqi intelligence officer and provided Iraqi intelligence with information about Iraqis living in the United States, according to the complaint.

The 28-year-old son of Rokan al-Anbuke, the former deputy permanent representative to the Iraqi Mission to the United Nations, had been in custody since March 25 on immigration charges because he overstayed his visa, officials said.

Federal law requires individuals acting as agents for foreign governments to register with the Attorney General of the United States, which al-Anbuke failed to do, according to the papers filed.

Al-Anbuke is expected to appear in court on Tuesday. He faces up to 10 years in prison if convicted of the charges.

Al-Anbuke was led from FBI offices in New York to US District Court in handcuffs late Monday afternoon accompanied by four US government agents.

AL gives student activists pen and books, BNP gives arms: Hasina

MD ALIMUZZAMAN and HASAN JAHER TUSHER from Tungipara, Gopalganj

Leader of the Opposition in Parliament and Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina yesterday asked members of her party's student wing to practise politics based on ideals and to acquire knowledge to bring about a qualitative change in student politics.

"We need well-educated workers who will lead the nation in future and build a Bangladesh dreamt by Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman," she said.

Hasina was inaugurating a two-day extended meeting and training workshop of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) at Tungipara Auditorium in

'Occupiers must end humanitarian crisis in Iraq'

UNB, Dhaka

Russian Federation has said the administration of "occupation forces" has to solve present humanitarian problems in Iraq.

The recent meeting between leaders of France, Germany and Russia held at Saint Petersburg stressed that under the Geneva Convention "it is the anti-Iraq coalition forces that must bear all responsibilities regarding the solution of humanitarian issues."

Spelling out Russia's official position on Iraq, the Russian Embassy in Dhaka yesterday said that the Russian Federation presumed that the primary objectives in Iraq are post-war restoration, transition to peaceful life and settlement of humanitarian issues.

About weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, it said President Vladimir Putin categorically stated that international inspectors should return to Iraq.

"Without them, any possible findings of the weapons of mass destruction in Iraq cannot be considered legitimate," a press release

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Top 'criminal' held with arms at Raozan

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A notorious 'criminal' from Raozan was arrested with firearms at Hathazari on Monday night.

Police said Abdul Aziz, 30, was an accused in many cases that include murder, abduction, looting and robbery.

Police sources further said Abdul Aziz was a known criminal of Raozan area and was being patronised by two top leaders of the BNP and the Awami League till his arrest.

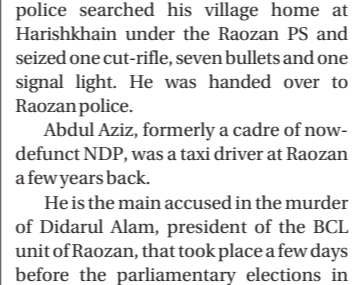
Acting on information from the Raozan Police Station, a police team of the Hathazari PS, led by its Officer-in-Charge (OC) Mahfuzur Rahman, installed some checkpoints along the Raozan-Hathazari road.

It was around 7.30pm on Monday when the taxi carrying Aziz and two of his associates reached the Hathazari bus station and was intercepted by the team. Facing police action, the criminals tried to escape arrest. However, police managed to arrest Aziz and one of his associates, Shahabuddin.

Later, acting on the statement of Aziz, police searched his village home at Harishkhain under the Raozan PS and seized one cut-rifle, seven bullets and one signal light. He was handed over to Raozan police.

Abdul Aziz, formerly a cadre of now-defunct NDP, was a taxi driver at Raozan a few years back.

He is the main accused in the murder of Didarul Alam, president of the BCL unit of Raozan, that took place a few days before the parliamentary elections in October 2001.



Bomb attack kills BPC leader in Rupsha

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Four unidentified miscreants killed a leader of the outlawed Biplobi Communist Party at Icegati under Rupsha upazila at 11.00am on Monday.

Masum Dhali, 38, was killed in a bomb attack. Witnesses said two powerful bombs were hurled on him and he died on the spot.

Sirajul Islam, 28, a mechanic of the lathe-machine factory, where the attack took place, was seriously injured.

Cousins of Masum Dhali and BCP armed cadres Shoab Dhal and Aliar Dhal were gunned down allegedly by BPCP armed cadres on April 15 last year at Durjani Mohal under Rupsha thana.

Masum was murdered when a bombing operation was on from Sunday night to arrest outlaws and other criminals from Rupsha, Terokhedha and Digholia upazilas.

More than 100 persons have so far been arrested on various charges, but only four of them are suspected as outlaws belonging to underground parties.

Four drown in trawler capsized

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Four persons died when a trawler capsized on Monday midnight in Chukurki river of Dakop upazila in Khulna district.

Their dead bodies were recovered early yesterday morning.

According to police and witnesses, the trawler which was bound for Bajua from Chalna sank after being caught in a severe nor'wester at about 11.30pm on Monday.

The dead have been identified as Santosh Kumar De, 57, Jinnat Ali Khan, 45, Abul Kalam Sheikh, 30, and Ledu Mia, 32.

Businessman rescued, kidnapper held in Ctg

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Detective police rescued abducted businessman Hazi Mohammad Hanif from an abandoned farm house at Jalialapara under Bakolia thana on Monday night.

Hanif was abducted from Khatunganj Saturday evening. The captors had demanded Tk one crore ransom for his release.

Within an hour of the rescue, local people caught one of the abductors--Ramzan Ali, 26-- along with a revolver from a place near the farm house and handed him over to police.

Ramzan Ali confessed to being involved in the abduction.

Md Hanif in a statement before the court of Metropolitan Magistrate Shafiqul Islam Khan yesterday also identified Ramzan as one of the abductors.

An abduction and an arms case were filed against Ramzan with Kotoali and Bakolia thanas respectively. He was produced before court, which placed him on five days' remand.

Hanif told the court that he was tortured at the farm house and guarded by five armed men including Ramzan. He named the rest four as Mahabub, Alamgir, Solaiman and Babul.

Meanwhile, hearing on remand of the three businessmen arrested on Sunday in connection with the abduction was not held yesterday following an appeal by the plaintiff. It will be held today.

The three are C&F agent Samiuddin, Md Khairul Bashar alias Lalu and Md. Belal, businessman.

CMP Commissioner Shahidullah Khan said charge sheet of the case will be prepared within seven days and godfathers behind the abduction will be identified.

The business community in Khatunganj and adjoining business hubs submitted memorandum to the CMP Commissioner yesterday demanding steps to check reoccurrence of such incidents and warned of strike for non-compliance.

The CMP commissioner said another police camp will be set up at Khatunganj soon.

Last year, another businessman -- Hazi Monir -- was abducted from Khatunganj for ransom.

Before submitting the memorandum, the businessmen held a meeting at Khatunganj and formed a 31-member Khatunganj-Chaktai-Asadgonj-Amir Market-Korbanigonj Businessmen Welfare Association with Jamal Ullah as its convener to ensure security of businessmen in the area.

Plan to repatriate workers from ME to be dropped

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

With the Iraq war almost over, the government is to wrap up preparations for the repatriation of expatriate Bangladeshis from the Middle East.

The activities of the 19-member taskforce, headed by State Minister for Expatriate Welfare and Overseas Employment Mohammad Quamrul Islam, will also be closed very soon, according to sources.

About 3,400 Bangladeshis came back home from Kuwait since the March 20 invasion of Iraq, the taskforce sources said.

The taskforce had been prepared to repatriate at least two lakh Bangladeshis from the Middle East. The Haji camp

near Zia International Airport was also kept ready for emergency shelter of the returnees.

The taskforce had also requested the United Nations (UN) body, International Organisation for Migrant (IOM), to help Bangladesh in repatriation work. The IOM had also taken preparation to provide necessary assistance in this regard.

"Although the taskforce will be in operation till the end of this month, there will be no further regular weekly meetings," said a member of the force.

The task force was formed about three months back. Besides regular weekly meetings, there were two national level meetings chaired by Foreign Minister M Moshed Khan and

LGRD Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan. Around 1,500 Bangladeshis who had been here on leave, went back to Kuwait. The government, however, had stopped sending fresh workers to Kuwait and Jordan during the war.

The government spent Tk 44,700 for the expatriates who had come back because of the war. About 149 expatriates were given special coupons for travelling locally. Tk 300 as pocket money was given to those who had come home empty handed, according to sources.

The task force comprised of representatives from the ministries of home, foreign affairs, civil aviation, tourism, religious affairs, works and other government agencies related with the issue.



Activists of the Samajtantrik Chhatra Front demonstrate in front of Eden Women's College in support of a strike to protest harassment of the college students.

Student strike at Eden College

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Classes and academic activities were disrupted at the Eden Girls' College yesterday on the first day of a three-day student strike called by the Progressive Students Alliance (PSA), an umbrella of left-leaning student fronts.

The PSA called the strike demanding punishment to Chhatra Dal leaders who attacked their activists, compensation for the victims and security of students at college hostels.

The alliance activists gathered in front of the college gate at 8:00am chanting slogans and carrying posters and placards.

The leaders at a rally held later in the day alleged that the Chhatra Dal activists vandalised their hostel rooms and ousted them from the hostel.

They regretted that the college administration did not take any punitive measure against the guilty, rather termed the alliance leaders outsiders.

The PSA leaders also alleged that the college administration did not take any step to resolve the problem.

The leaders threatened tougher movement if the authorities did not pay heed to their demands.

Medicines seized at ZIA

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Customs seized 'undeclared' medicines worth about Tk12 lakh from a passenger and arrested him at the Zia International Airport (ZIA) yesterday.

The passenger, Khorshed Alam, returned home by an Emirates airways flight from Jeddah. He was handed over to the Airport Police Station.

A customs team seized 16 types of medicine from his suitcase, briefcase and other luggage.

The arrested person was working at a fabric shop in Riyadh and brought the medicines to profit from the sale of those, customs sources said.



Customs officials display contraband medicines worth about Tk 12 lakh seized from a passenger on an Emirates flight yesterday at the Zia International Airport.

UN meet put off over fatal flu fears

AFP, Bangkok

A key regional United Nations ministerial symposium scheduled for late April in the Thai capital has been postponed amid concerns over the deadly SARS virus, UN officials said yesterday.

The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia-Pacific (UNESCAP) said it would hold its 59th meeting in two parts, agreeing to postpone indefinitely the session that was to include ministers from dozens of countries, including those affected by Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome

(SARS).

"We consulted with our 61 country members, and they were divided as to whether to postpone or to continue," David Lazarus, chief of the UN Information Service in Bangkok, told AFP.

"We are going ahead with the first part, while the second (ministerial) part is being postponed," he said.

"It was not only because of SARS, but the global and regional uncertainties and security reasons," he added.

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