

BTTB cell phone

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responsive afterwards.
The launch of the BTTB's cell phone project is heading for a month's delay following the writ petition.

BTTB Chairman SATM Badrul Hoque said the court has given its verdict in favour of the BTTB. "We will do our best to minimise the delay caused by the writ petition and try to maintain the launch schedule as far as possible," he told The Daily Star yesterday.

He said, "The financial offers of responsive bidders were opened yesterday but we were behind schedule by one month after the Chinese company went to the court."

The BTTB in its plea said the process of floating tenders of the mobile phone project was conducted in a very transparent manner.

Though the litigation delayed the process, the BTTB remains optimistic about launching the project by next June.

Judge appointment
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Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Moudud Ahmed refused the SCBA president by telling the BBC last night that there is no hard and fast rule under which judges of the Appellate Division must be appointed on the basis of seniority.

"It is only our tradition but there are instances that judges of the Appellate Division have been appointed ignoring the seniority status," said the law minister.

Terminating the consultation with the SCBA as illogical, Moudud Ahmed said that such kind of consultation has no constitutional basis.

Promotion list
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press secretary since his posting as a deputy secretary.

He has been elevated as the joint and additional secretary within a year.

Deputy Commissioner of Dhaka Syed Nakib Muslim, who was promoted as joint secretary, is expected to be posted as the private secretary (1) to the premier.

Other officials who were elevated as additional secretaries include divisional commissioners AHM Abul Kashem, Mia Mustaq Ahmed, Nazrul Islam of Dhaka, Rajshahi and Sylhet and Additional Divisional Commissioner of Dhaka Mohammad Abdul Alim Khan.

Private secretaries to the local government, rural development and cooperatives, agriculture, jute, textiles and commerce ministers Sharful Alam, Ayub Miah, Habibullah Majumder, CQK Mushtaq Ahmed and Elias Ahmed were promoted as joint secretaries.

Besides, Shahidul Haq, director at PMO, Humayun Kabir and Arfan Ali at Cabinet Division, AKM Helaluzzaman, Mohammad Mohsin and Khandaker Rashedul Haq at the establishment ministry and consulting commissioners of Dhaka, Kusthia, Barguna, Habiganj, Chaprainawabganj, Tangail, Jamalpur and Madaripur were also made joint secretaries.

Highly placed sources at the PMO said new postings of the officials closely associated with the present government were already finalised and they would be given fresh postings by the next week.

Earlier, it was decided that the promotion and new postings would be given at the same time, but because of some complexities things did not take shape as planned, they added.

Hired hitman
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Shukur said three powerful handbombs were exploded followed by several rounds of fire from sawn-off .303 rifles.

The killers made good their escape on foot in two groups along the Mirzapur Road and Baitypara, Shukur said.

"Five others of the squad left the city soon after the murder and I took shelter in a house at Mahirkhola of Toopara," the OC quoted Shukur as saying.

Police said Shukur is a professional killer of the outlawed PBCCP-J. He was involved in the murders of Rampal BNP leader Aslam and two others in June last year.

Rajib Sarder, Shirin Sultana and Shukur Gazi, three of the seven arrested in connection with the killing, were placed on a three-day remand for questioning (with effect from Tuesday). A special group of intelligence officers are quizzing Shukur to know the names of the men behind the killing.

Meanwhile, the two sons of Imam, Rumi and Jami, yesterday refused once again to implicate the BNP-Jamaat alliance in the killing without specific evidence.

They said they demand arrest of the killers and the plotters and their exemplary punishment.

Speaking at a crowded press conference, Rumi and Jami reiterated their appeal not to make the murder of their father a political issue and requested people not to indulge in vandalism in the name of protest.

Former state minister Talukdar Abdul Khaled MP, former whip Mostafa Rashid Shuja, former MP Mannujar Sufian and president of the district AL Sheikh Harun-ur-Rashid attended the press conference.

SC asks BTRC to decide on ETV licence in 90 days

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Appellate Division of the Supreme Court yesterday gave Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) 90 days to dispose of the application of the Ekushey Television (ETV) for licence.

Earlier on August 20, the High Court (HC) Division directed the BTRC to dispose of the issue within 30 days.

Challenging the HC order, the government attorney filed a leave to appeal petition with the Appellate Division. The government also sought a stay on the HC verdict. But the Appellate Division did not entertain the government petition, though it extended the HC deadline to 90 days from 30 days.

Meanwhile, the ETV's lawyer Dr. Kamal Hossain challenged the authority of government attorney to stand in the court for the BTRC, as it is an independent autonomous body. Advocate Abdul Matin Khasru assisted him.

The ETV, the first private terrestrial TV channel that broke years of state monopoly in the electronic media, was shut down following a Supreme Court verdict on August 29 last year that declared its licence illegal after 28 months on the air.

The government seized the ETV equipment on the heels of the verdict.

Two get life for rape

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal.

The Speedy Trial Tribunal, Barisal yesterday sentenced two to life imprisonment and fined each of them Tk 20,000 for abducting and raping a woman.

Judge Md Abdul Qudus Mia handed down the judgement in the absence of the two convicts, Abdul Rashid Mia and Mostafa Biswas.

In case of their failure to pay the fine, the two will have to serve two more years in prison.

The other two accused in the case, Ruhul Amin Shah and Faizul Huq Mia, were acquitted.

According to prosecution, Abdur Rashid Mia and Mostafa Biswas abducted Sheuli Begum, wife of Abul Kalam Sardar of West Salla village under Uzipur Police Station on September 15 and took her to Dhaka.

They then raped her, tried to engage her in prostitution and smuggle her out of the country.

The victim was rescued on October 25 last year and a case lodged against the four.

AL hartal

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ance of left-leaning parties.
Police said some 5,000 law-enforcers including paramilitary Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) would be deployed in the city today to maintain law and order during the hartal hours.

Police dispersed a big pro-hartal procession brought out from AL headquarters at Bangabandhu Avenue last evening. Some people from the procession reportedly damaged some cars near the Paltan intersection.

Addressing a rally in the city yesterday, opposition leader and AL President Sheikh Hasina called upon AL leaders and activists to make today's hartal a success, braving all "government-sponsored atrocities".

"This hartal is to protest political killings and absence of peaceful and congenial social atmosphere," she said, adding that the strike will show that people want the present government to step down.

WB report

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agencies about Tk 4,500 last year from each firm.
Moreover, firms have to pay speed money for utility connections.

For gas connection, a firm has to pay about Tk 1 lakh, for electricity Tk 30,000 and for telephone connection Tk 11,000.

The WB reports that more than half the firms surveyed said corruption is a major obstacle to their growth.

It said the firms received frequent visits from the customs and tax departments – a total of about 17 a year. And dealing with each visit can be very costly.

"More than one-third of the firms report using facilitators to help with regulatory issues, at an average annual cost of more than Tk 600,000," it said.

"These costs are measured not just in terms of fees and payments, but also in terms of the firms' resources needed to satisfy inspections," notes the report to be released next month.

The survey said most firms experience about 250 days of power outages and surges a year, which take toll on their production cost.

"On average, firms report losing more than three per cent of their production due to problems from the electricity grid," the WB report notes.



PHOTO: STAR

Lawyers of the Supreme Court gather on the court premises yesterday calling upon lawyers to unite against killings, violence and anarchy.

146 top brasses

All the promotees have been made officer on special duty (OSD) and posted to the establishment ministry until fresh postings.

In the elevation, officials of the 1973 batch, the most senior batch in the administration, were left out in the cold like on the past two occasions, despite qualifying for promotion.

Official said only 13 officials of the 1973 batch were promoted as additional secretaries, when most of the 1979 batch got a lift.

They said the 1977 and 1979 batches were given top priority in promotion to the posts of additional secretary.

Some senior and eligible officials broke down in tears seeing their names omitted from the lists of promotees despite fulfillment of all the criteria for elevation.

"The promotion to both posts were made on political considerations when many eligible and qualified professionals were dropped from the list without citing any reason," said a high official, requesting anonymity.

The government promoted some additional secretaries to joint secretary on June 13 last year when 174 officials were elevated.

In the current promotion, officials of other cadres were largely ignored like in the past. Only 31 of them found slots on the list crowded by 115 administrative cadres.

Forty-nine officials were promoted as joint secretaries against nearly 60 vacant posts.

Around 20 eligible officials fulfilling the criteria set for the promotion were ignored because of the alleged reports of having relations with the past Awami League government or having relatives and close friends in the party ranks.

Seventy-three administrative officials easily outnumbered their 24 colleagues from other cadres for additional secretaries.

Ninety-seven officials were elevated as additional secretaries against fewer than 50 vacant posts.

Highly placed sources said a

section of mid-ranking officials at the Prime Minister's Office and the establishment ministry played the key role in the selection of promotees and they were 'completely' driven by 'political considerations.'

The influential quarter also dropped some officials from the list out of their 'personal jealousy'.

"Although the government set criteria with specified marks for promotion, it did not follow its own policy," a senior official said.

"Even the officials who topped the merit lists in the BCS (Bangladesh Civil Service) examinations were not given promotion. Merit, professional excellence and track record – nothing was considered."

Sources said Kazi Aminul Islam and Mosharrar Hossain, who stood first and second on the combined merit list of 1981 BCS examination, were ignored due to promotion.

The reason for dropping Aminul and Mosharrar may be linked to their service as private secretaries to former deputy minister for food Dharendra Devnath Shambhu and finance minister Shah ASM Kibria respectively under the past Awami League government.

The senior official felt such selection and promotion of hand-picked officials would trigger rancour in the civil administration.

"The government should immediately reconsider the cases of eligible officials who have been ignored in today's promotion."

However, most officials felt that the coalition government is doing justice to the civil servants by resolving the promotion logjam created over the years.

The government in the last two years gave promotion to 493 senior assistant secretaries, 174 deputy secretaries, 49 deputy secretaries and 97 joint secretaries.

Besides, a large-scale promotion was given to some other cadre officials including policemen.

Peshawar Test

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the Pakistan bowling to sword and batted for nearly four hours to set the best partnership record for Bangladesh for any wicket.

Interestingly, the previous best partnership was also shared by the two when they crafted a 131-run second wicket stand against South Africa at Chittagong in April this year.

The partnership was broken in the seventh over after tea when Bashar was adjudged leg before to an incoming ball from right arm fast bowler Shabbir Ahmed.

"The ball came low and I thought it was going down the leg," said a content Bashar after the day's play.

Bashar, who scored his 14th half-century, also said the sweltering heat of Peshawar didn't bother him.

"Karachi was more humid. The wicket was also much better than Karachi and the ball was coming on to the bat," he said.

In his 238-minute vigil at the crease, Bashar, whose fifty came off 82 balls in 117 minutes, faced 167 balls and hammered nine sweetly-timed hits across the rope.

Javed, one of the three batsmen in Test history to have carried their bat through on debut, smote 16 boundaries in his 286-ball knock.

Ashraf, the 19-year old right hander who scored 114 on his debut against Sri Lanka in September 2001, curbed his aggressive instincts yesterday and kept his cool in 96-minute stay in the wicket. He hit three boundaries.

In contrast, it was a frustrating day for Pakistan, who lost their previous two Test matches in Peshawar against Zimbabwe and Sri Lanka.

None of their bowlers could looked threatening to the

3 drown in boat capsized

UNB, Brahmanbaria

Three people, two of a family, drowned when a boat capsized in the river Titas near Bhairabnagar in Nabainagar Upazila yesterday.

Survivors said the boat, carrying some 45 passengers, sailed for Bidyakut from Bhairabnagar and sank in the river as it was caught by a strong current at noon.

They said most of the passengers swam ashore.

The bodies, recovered at about 5:30pm, were identified as Shahana Khatun, 35, wife of Abul Kashem, and her daughter Noor Jahan, 8, of Bhairabnagar village, and Junayed Hossain, 3, son of Fariduddin of Kurighar village.

Two other passengers, including Salahuddin, son of Abul Kalam of Bhairabnagar village, were still missing. Rescue operation was on to recover the missing people.

Hartal paralyses normal life in Khulna

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Normal Life was paralysed in Khulna city yesterday, the first day of 48-hour hartal, enforced by Greater Khulna Development Action Co-Ordination Committee (GKDACC), to press home its several demands.

Pickets ransacked eight shops at station road at about 9am.

Transports were off the roads and production in mills and factions remained suspended.

Financial transactions were not reported from any state-owned and commercial banks in the city. Thin attendance was reported in govt, semi-govt and autonomous bodies.

No classes were held in the educational institutions including the Khulna university.

2 more top Ctg cops transferred

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Two more police officials of Chittagong district were transferred in another reshuffle yesterday.

Assistant Commissioner (Port) Hafiz Akhter was moved to Patiya circle and Assistant Police Super (ASP) Sirajul Islam of Hathazari circle was transferred to Gouranadi circle in Barisal, a police headquarters memo said.

ASP Rezaul Kabir of Gouranadi circle was transferred to Sitakunda circle while ASP Nazrul Islam of Gaibandha replaced the ASP of Hathazari circle.

Meanwhile, SM Sabbir Ali took over the charges of Chittagong Metropolitan Police (CMP) commissioner and Mahbubur Rahman joined as police super of Chittagong district replacing Shahidullah Khan and Motiur Rahman respectively.

AKM Mahfuzul Haq who is to replace additional deputy inspector general of Chittagong police is yet to take over.

Mars encounter

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up in the observatory's grounds.
The last time Mars came nearer was around Sept. 12 in 57,617 B.C. when it passed about 34.62 million miles away. If you miss it this time you'll have to wait 284 years for another such close encounter.

But while Mars came the closest it has been to Earth since the Stone Age, man's long-held dream of landing on the planet remains as far away as ever.

The red planet has always fired the human imagination.

Mars was the god of war in Roman mythology and the planet made good copy for early sci-fi fiction, such as Ray Bradbury's "Martian Chronicles." When Orson Welles broadcast "The War of the Worlds," HG Wells' story of a Martian invasion, many of his radio listeners were terror-stricken.

Fortune tellers, looking for clues in the sky to the future of an uncertain world, say that little good is likely to come from Wednesday's close encounter.

IGP loses heart

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being held by his abductors.
The IGP's pessimistic observations came during his visit to Fatikhchhari yesterday when a local Union Parishad Chairman Shahjada Rabiul Hossain Miah urged him for more police reinforcements there to speed up operations to rescue Jamaluddin.

However, the IGP reaffirmed his belief that the abducted businessman is alive and being held hostage at Fatikhchhari.

"As per available information, I believe Jamaluddin is still alive," he said while talking to a group of journalists at the upazila.

"The rescue operation would be strengthened with new guidelines and plan of action," he added without elaborating.

But unlike on Saturday when he gave a 48-hour deadline to rescue Jamaluddin that expired without making any headway in the matter, this time he declined to announce any fresh deadline for rescue.

Businessman Jamaluddin, also a BNP leader, was abducted from Chittagong's busy Chawkbazar area over a month ago.

Human wave washes over worshippers

39 killed, 125 injured in Indian religious festival

REUTERS/AP, Nasik (India)

Throngs of pushing Hindu pilgrims toppled a bamboo fence, causing a stampede at a religious festival yesterday, that killed at least 39 people, mostly women.

The tragedy happened when pilgrims pushed and shoved along a narrow lane to a bathing pond on the banks of the Godavari river at Nasik in Western India to cleanse their sins.

"I saw many people being crushed in front of my eyes," sobbed Sumana Mahashinde, barely able to speak as she waited outside a hospital for injured relatives.

"My 60-year-old mother-in-law was pushed and people stamped on her. She died on the spot. It was very difficult for us to get out of the crowd carrying her."

One witness said several bodies were trapped in a huge pipe routing muddy water from the fast-flowing Godavari through the Ramkund bathing pond. More than 150 people were injured.

The town's mayor, Dashrath Patil, said 39 people were killed – 26 of them women – and at least 125 people were injured. Two of the injured were police officers, he said.

The bamboo fence, held together by ropes, was meant to direct traffic and funnel the crowds toward the river. Thousands of impatient pilgrims pushed into it, and the barrier collapsed, sending people spilling to the ground, survivors said.

"People, even women, were pushing forward. Due to the weight of the crowd, people started falling

down," said Lalji Mistry, a 35-year-old pilgrim who escaped the crush. "Old women were crying, 'Take me out. Help me.'"

Chhagan Bhujbal, deputy chief minister of Maharashtra state, said some 50,000 people were behind the barrier when it fell and pilgrims fell.

"People at the back just began walking on them and that's how the stampede happened," said Bhujbal. "It was a tragic accident."

Ambulances, their sirens wailing, rushed to the area as rescue workers urged the crowd to give way so the injured could be taken to hospitals.

After the stampede, tens of thousands of pilgrims continued worshipping at the festival area, which is spread across dozens of acres.

"Many don't know what's going on. They are still worshipping," said Mistry.

The Kumbh Mela festival is held every 12 years, timed in connection with alignments of the Sun and Jupiter.

But Wednesday also marked the day Mars passed closer to Earth than any time in the past 60,000 years, which many astrologers around the world believe means disaster.

The tragedy at Nasik, about 125 miles northeast of Bombay, came just two days after India's financial capital was hit by two bombs planted in taxis, killing 51 people.

Stampedes are not uncommon at major Hindu religious festivals, which can attract millions of worshippers.

FBCCI chief

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voters.
Kamaluddin Ahmed of Cox's Bazar Chamber of Commerce and Industry was elected first vice-president and Abul Quasem Haider of Bangladesh Sewing Thread Manufacturers' and Exporters' Association vice-president of the country's apex trade body.

Earlier, two candidates – Mintoo and Abdul Matlub Ahmad – submitted nomination papers for the post of president in the second phase of the biennial election.

Although Matlub did not withdraw from the race, he refused to take part in the election, protesting the method of casting of votes – by raising hands.

Kamaluddin was unanimously elected first vice-president as his lone rival for the post Mr. Nasir Hossain of Faridpur Chamber of Commerce and Industry withdrew in the last minutes.

Haider defeated Mohammad Ali of Bangladesh Re-rolling Mills Association to become vice-president. Haider, chairman of Youth Group, secured 23 votes while Ali, incumbent vice-president, got 10 votes.

The Mintoo-led leadership will take office at the annual general meeting of the FBCCI on September 8.

The 24 elected and 14 nominated directors met yesterday to elect president and two vice-presidents.

The new electoral system adopted in line with a statutory regulatory order (SRO) issued by the commerce ministry does not have any guidelines on the method of casting votes for electing president and vice-presidents. So, the FBCCI Election Board Chairman Anisuzzaman gave three options – hand-raising, secret balloting and picking a winner through consensus.

As 26 out of 38 directors were in favour of voting by raising hands, the election board went for it.

But Matlub walked out of the board room, the venue of the election, protesting the method. He asked his panel members to follow him but none responded. He however came back to participate in the

election of vice-presidents.

Later, his panel members left the election venue when Mohammad Ali lost to Abul Quasem Haider in the vice-presidential race. They chanted slogans against the election board chairman, terming him a 'lackey' of the government.

Talking to newsmen later, Matlub, chairman of Nitul Group, said he did not participate in the election as the 'hand-raising' method of voting is an undemocratic one. He however accepted the results and assured all help to the new leadership.

Mintoo, who was also president of the FBCCI for 1998-2000 term, said his prime job would be to concentrate on capacity building of the highest trade body. The Multimode Group chairman, Mintoo, also said he would utilise his past experience to make the trade body a facilitator of trade and commerce and help it play a greater role in this field.

In the first tier of the election, the Mintoo-led panel bagged 11 directors out of 12 in the chamber group and one out of 12 in the association group. The Matlub-led panel got one in the chamber group and nine in the association group. And A Rouf Chowdhury-led panel got the rest two in the association group.

Man gunned down at Hatirpool

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Assailants gunned down a young man at Hatirpool yesterday.

Police recovered the bullet-riddled body of Monir, 30, from Hatirpool at about 8:15pm last night. He was shot in the head and his hands and legs were broken.

Police also recovered a cell phone and a telephone index from the victim's pocket.

The body was sent to Dhaka Medical College Hospital morgue for autopsy.

Dhanmondi police had no clue to the motive behind the killing.

No case was filed till 9:30pm yesterday.

Another terrorist camp

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der guards fired 35 bullets.
Earlier, a pred