

Blair's top aide Campbell quits



Alastair Campbell

AFP, London

Alastair Campbell is resigning as British Prime Minister Tony Blair's powerful director of communications and strategy, Downing Street announced yesterday.

"He obviously will continue to work for few weeks, but yes, he has announced his decision to leave to the prime minister," a Downing Street spokesman told the news agency.

Campbell has been a central figure in the ongoing judicial inquiry over a controversial September 2002 intelligence dossier on Iraq and weapons of mass destruction

and the apparent suicide in July of weapons scientist David Kelly.

Reuters adds: British trust in Blair has plunged over the suicide of a weapons expert tragically caught up in a bitter dispute between the BBC and the government over war in Iraq, an opinion poll showed yesterday.

And British voters were not alone in pouring scorn on an embattled government which has been put under a harsh spotlight by a judicial inquiry into the death of Kelly.

After watching Blair's Thursday appearance at the inquiry, legendary Washington Post reporter Carl

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Hasina says Govt not allowing people to speak against misrule

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League President Sheikh Hasina yesterday blamed the ruling BNP for not allowing people to speak against lawlessness.

"The persons wanting to speak against its misrule and repression were killed," Hasina said citing the killing of Khulna city AL president Monzurul Imam as an example.

The government does not even allow the opposition party to speak in parliament, alleged the leader of the opposition in her speech at a discussion meeting, organised by Bangladesh Krishak League marking the 28th death anniversary of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

Hasina also accused the leader of the House of preventing her from speaking in parliament.

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Lone mortuary refrigerator at DMCH out of order for long

MOHAMMAD SHAHEEN MOLLAH

The lone mortuary refrigerator at Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) has remained out of order over the last 11 months, affecting autopsies.

About 20 bodies are laid out on the corridor a day, polluting the air and the nonfunctioning of the refrigerator has hit the preservation of bodies that need identification.

The authorities say the hospital cannot keep a body more than 24 hours in summer and hand the unidentified bodies later to the Anjuman Mufidul Islam, a charity, for burial.

"It becomes difficult even for relatives to identify the bodies of their loved ones 24 hours after death as they get deformed fast unless preserved in a refrigerator," said Sekander Ali, popularly known as Ramesh, in charge of the DMCH morgue.

"It also happened that the bodies were handed over to the Anjuman Mufidul Islam for burial before the relatives reached hospital," he said.

Habibuzzaman Chowdhury, a forensic department assistant, said the postmortem of some bodies has become all but impossible because of fast decomposition. "If the bodies are not well preserved, it takes forensic experts more time to carry out autopsies," he said.

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Workers at the mortuary of Dhaka Medical College Hospital show the lone refrigerator that has remained out of order for the last 11 months, affecting autopsies.

Literacy rate caught in confusion

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least five different sets of data -- four government and one non-government -- on literacy rate are available in the country, giving rise to widespread public confusion.

Official sources, however, strongly defended the government

statistics.

The non-government data were accurate, claimed those who prepared it.

According to Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics (BANBEIS), the literacy rate is 48.7 per cent among children, aged seven and above and 62 per cent among those, aged 15 and above.

But Jahanara Begum, adviser to the prime minister on primary and mass education, said at a recent function on release of a survey report of Education Watch (EW), a non-government organisation (NGO), that the literacy rate among seven-year-olds and above is 62.66 per cent and the percentage is 54.80 for people aged 15 and more.

Sixty-five per cent of the population can read, write and do easy maths, Jahanara added.

Khondokar Mosharrar Hossain,

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Biman to replace ATPs, F-28s on domestic routes

M ABDUR RAHIM

Biman Bangladesh Airlines has decided to add three new aircraft to its fleet on domestic routes, replacing 'risky' advanced turbo props (ATPs) and 'ageing' F-28s.

Biman kept its plan open-ended: the three new planes -- ATR72-500s or Dash 8-Q400s -- may be leased initially and purchased later.

According to another plan, three F-

28 and two ATP aircraft may be traded in for the new planes in a deal with other parties.

The balance will be adjusted between Biman and the parties concerned in the second option of the plan that a high official of Biman called was at a rudimentary stage.

Asked why Biman is thinking of expensive leasing, he said it does not have the capacity to pay the money at a time.

The decision was taken at a meeting of Biman board of directors, comprising the state minister for civil aviation and tourism, two lawmakers, prime minister's principal secretary, finance secretary, civil aviation and tourism secretary, Biman managing director and chairman of Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh.

Made by European Aeronautics Defence and Space (EADS) Company, a subsidiary of Airbus Industrie, Avions D Transport

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Clarification

The High Commission of India in a clarification on a report, "BSF kills two Bangladeshis", published in The Daily Star on August 6, said the Indian Border Security Force (BSF) opened fire on three Bangladeshis when they ignored a warning call and threw a locally made bomb and a sharp-edged weapon at the troops.

The commission said it sent the newspaper report to the authorities in India for investigation and the

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4 Harkatul Jihad members held in Noakhali

UNB, Noakhali

Police arrested eight people, including four members of the outlawed Harkatul Jihad, in Companiganj Upazila on Thursday night.

The arrested Harkatul Jihad members are Abdur Razzak, 40, Abdullah Al Mamun, 45, Morshed Alam, 30, and Dr Faridul Haq, 55.

They recently attacked leaders and workers of Islami Chhatra Majlis while they were returning from a meeting at Bashurhat Baro Mosque in the upazila.

Police arrested the eight after a case was filed in this connection.

DOWN TO EARTH Boom in city's real estate industry

ASM NURUNNABI

Dhaka City is currently undergoing widespread transformation in terms of its building infrastructure. At the moment, we are passing through a phase in which high-rise is the buzzword in structural engineering. Old low-rise buildings in many important localities are being pulled down to give place to high-rise structures. The vigorous publicity for real estate business today is one of the most noticeable aspects of the advertisements that come on the print as well as

electronic media and has come to be regarded as the mainstay of the advertising industry.

The boom in the construction of high-rise buildings and the high-pitched publicity associated with it may give the impression that the country's economy is spiralling. However, the basic question often asked by concerned citizens is whether these high-rise buildings serve the housing needs of the people belonging to the low-income bracket, who constitute a signifi

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Police camp in Tala besieged for 'torture' of student leader

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

The activists of the Workers Party yesterday besieged Khalishkhali police camp in Tala upazila for allegedly arresting and torturing a student leader.

Sources said Khalishkhali camp-in-charge Sub-inspector (SI) Tariqul Islam arrested Sufal Aych, joint secretary of Bangladesh Chhatra Moitry Tala upazila unit, suspecting him as an activist of the outlawed Purba Banglar Communist Party Thursday night and tortured him severely. He was later admitted to Satkhira General Hospital.

The activists of the Workers Party along with agitating people led by the party leader and Union Parishad Chairman Sabbir Hossain, besieged the police camp and demanded Sufal's release and removal of the SI.

Officer-in-charge of Tala Police Station Matiar Rahman rushed to the spot and assured the agitating people that action will be taken against the SI if he is found responsible.



PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Call it a service? Water-filled pitchers are up for sale in front of a public toilet in the New Market area yesterday. Cashing in on the increasing demand for water in summer, lessees sell tap water from the unhygienic public toilets installed by the Dhaka City Corporation.

True democracy needed to fight corruption, violence: Dr Kamal

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Eminent lawyer and President of Gano Forum Dr. Kamal Hossain yesterday called upon all progressive political parties and the people to be united to build a truly democratic country.

Corruption, nepotism, violence and politics of vengeance have become deep-rooted in the society with the backing of successive ruling parties. Unity of all is a must to reverse this disastrous situation, he said.

Speaking at a meeting in the city to mark the 10th founding anniversary of his party, Kamal recalled the unity of the people during the Liberation War and the subsequent movement against autocratic rule in the 80's. He regretted the failure to maintain such unity.

Only a truly democratic order could end the chaotic situation prevailing in the country, the Gano Forum chief observed.

He said many charge-sheeted

criminals escape punishment as administration is run keeping political considerations in view. Had the judiciary been separated from the executive, such practices would not have existed, he added.

Criticising the government for repeatedly taking time to separate the judiciary from the executive, Kamal said this was a violation of the Supreme Court's directive. He also blamed the government for creating controversy over appointment of judges in the highest court.

Kamal called upon the lawyers regardless of their political views to come forward to uphold the dignity and credibility of the Supreme Court as the last resort of the people to seek justice.

About the unrest at different public universities, Kamal said appointment of vice chancellor on political consideration is responsible for this.

Workers Party President Rashed Khan Menon said at the meeting the

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Road accidents kill 8 in Dhaka, N'ganj

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Eight people were killed and 30 others were injured in separate road accidents in Dhaka, Narayanganj yesterday.

Of them, two were killed in Dhaka and the rest in Narayanganj.

In Dhaka, two people were killed in separate road accidents in Shyamoli and Farmgate yesterday. Kafil Uddin, 30, son of Jalal

Ahmed, was crossing Mirpur Road near Shyamoli when a minibus knocked him down at about 12:30pm.

Sayed, a young man, rushed him to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) where the doctors declared him dead. The body was sent to the hospital morgue for autopsy.

Police seized the bus and arrested its driver Mohammad

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