

HC judge

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High Court additional judge was brought to light by a person none other than the president of the Bar association, the president may look into the issue himself and ask the chief justice to find out the truth," he added.

Supreme Court Bar Association President Barrister Rakanuddin Mahmud, who brought the allegation against the judge, said: "I have gone public with the truth. If I were in his position, I would have resigned immediately."

He indicated that he was not planning to move any petition against the judge now.

Another senior lawyer expressed utter disgust at what he termed 'free fall of judges' morality."

"A judge with a past of corruption before appointment will naturally indulge in unbridled graft afterwards," he said, referring to allegations of misappropriation of the Bar association fund when he was one of its office-bearers.

When the government was finalising his appointment, the Bar association protested the move, but their words fell to the deaf ears as he was loyal to the main ruling party, he said.

Explaining the circumstances of the judge's appointment, he said when the lawyers launched agitation against the superseding of

senior judges by fresh appointees and non-confirmation of additional judges despite the chief justice's recommendations in March, the man in question called a convention to oppose them as a pro-government lawyer.

In the next month, he was appointed additional judge.

"This sort of appointment is destroying the dignity of the High Court," he said.

A tirade of corruption allegations against lower court judges rang loud in recent years, but Roka's charge against a High Court judge shocked the nation.

"It's a blotch on the image of the High Court and the judiciary would take a long time to come clean," said a lawyer.

It is the second allegation of corruption against a sitting judge in the three decades of the High Court's history.

A judge was accused of taking bribe from deposed president HM Ershad in the sensational cassette scandal. The judge then resigned after the allegations were raised officially.

The civil society believes the allegation has lent weight to the lawyers' demands for keeping the judiciary free from political influence and maintaining total transparency in the recruitment process.

BNP leader, newsman reject diplomatic jobs

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) leader and a senior journalist have refused a government offer to join press counsellor post at diplomatic missions abroad saying the post is disgraceful for their position.

Instructed by prime minister recently, information minister asked Ehsanul Kabir, information and research secretary of the BNP, to join counsellor (press) post lying vacant with deputy high commission in Kolkata while journalist Gias Kamal Chowdhury was offered the same at high commission in Pakistan, official sources said.

However, both outright rejected the offer terming the post as 'too low and dishonourable'. Information Minister Tariqul Islam admitted the making of the offer and its refusal, sources added.

"I am grateful to the government for the offer but I want to say that I am not fit for the post," an apparently annoyed Kabir told The Daily Star yesterday.

Meanwhile, many journalists commented that requesting Chowdhury a press counsellor post with the rank and status of a deputy secretary is shocking because he served as economic minister at high commission in London with the rank and status of a joint secretary during BNP's last tenure.

Both posts remained vacant since the BNP-led alliance government ascended to power and recently a move has been taken to make political appointment to the posts.

'Criminal' dies in police custody

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Body of an accused criminal was found dead in Koyra Police Station custody in Khulna yesterday.

Abdul Hamid Sana, an accused in fake money possession case, allegedly committed suicide by hanging from ceiling while in police custody Wednesday night, police said.

There was no mark of injury in Sana's body while he was sent to Khulna for autopsy, Habibur Rahman, police super of Khulna, said yesterday.

He was arrested on September 28 with 20 fake currency notes of Tk 500. He was placed on a four-day remand on September 29 and was scheduled to make a judicial confession to the court yesterday. He was also arrested last year for keeping fake notes and was on bail, police added.

A three-member committee headed by Additional Deputy Magistrate Abdul Malek has been formed to probe Sana's death in police custody.

Sources in the jail said that Sana died due to police torture.

Arifa

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Arifa was abducted on August 31 by an Indian smuggler from her frontier Naodanga village home in Fulbari upazila of Kurigram apparently over a business dispute with her father Aiyub Ali.

After a protracted uncertainty over the procedure of her repatriation, a court of West Bengal's frontier Kutchbihar two days ago ordered the Indian authorities to hand her over to Bangladesh's deputy high commission in Kolkata for her return home.

The Border Security Force (BSF) of India in a prompt action rescued the baby girl and arrested her abductor immediately with the help of Kutchbihar police on a request by Bangladesh Rifles (BDR).

River meet

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tions. Explaining why the JRC New Delhi round lunched for hours, Sethi said the river-interlink issue was critical for both countries and needed clarification from both sides. "That is why we needed such a long time to work out a consensus."

"The taskforce has not made any recommendation. After it does so, we might discuss the issue with Indian states concerned and other countries if necessary," Sethi said.

On reports on some Indian states complaining that they were not consulted on the project, the minister said, "That's not true. The project has not taken any shape yet. We will discuss with them once it is ready."

He pointed out that there were long discussions on the share of waters of Teesta and other rivers.

India raised the issue of repairs of the banks of the Muhuri River and Bangladesh said it would take up the issue with the appropriate authorities for an early decision.

The issue had also land bound-ary problems that need to be solved. The JRC Delhi round ended with a consensus that Bangladesh's concern over the Indian \$200 billion water diversion project was included in the agreed minutes of the meeting and India might discuss with Bangladesh when the project takes shape.

Health DG makes more surprise visits, 5 staff transferred

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Director General (DG) of health directorate Prof. Mizanur Rahman paid surprise visits to some hospitals and upazila health complexes in Bogra and Sirajganj yesterday and took action against five for being absent from duty.

The five are a professor of dermatology, an associate professor of ear, nose and throat (ENT), an assistant professor of biochemistry and two lecturers at Shaheed Ziaur Rahman Medical College in Bogra. They have been transferred to other hospitals.

While visiting Mohammad Ali Hospital in Bogra, the DG found all medical officers and consultants present. He expressed satisfaction and thanked the civil surgeon of the district.

He also found all doctors on duty at Raiganj upazila health complex in Sirajganj and Sherpur upazila health complex in Bogra.

Meanwhile, the health directorate yesterday issued a clarification on a report headlined '24 of 28 docs shunted out for absence', published in the front page of The Daily Star

Thursday.

The clarification said the director general made a surprise visit to Shaheed Suhrawardy Hospital and not National Institute of Cardiovascular Diseases (NICVD). The DG found 28 senior consultants, medical officers and junior consultants absent from duty at the outpatient department. So, it is not correct that 24 doctors out of 28 doctors were punished for not being present on duty during his visit to the hospital from 8:35 to 8:56 in the morning.

The health directorate also said the DG sought immediate action against the absentees from the health minister and ordered transfer of four senior consultants, 15 medical officers and nine junior consultants. They were transferred to different hospitals in Dhaka, Chittagong and Rajshahi divisions.

Meanwhile, steps have been taken to fill up the vacant posts in the hospital. All posts of medical officers were immediately filled up but the posts of junior and senior consultants are yet to be filled up, health directorate sources said.

Nukes in the making

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Korea has already developed one or two nuclear weapons and that reprocessing the fuel rods will yield enough plutonium for around six more within months.

Three days of talks in Beijing in late August aimed at defusing the year-long stand-off, bringing together the two Koreas, China, Japan, Russia, and the United States, ended inconclusively.

Washington has insisted that North Korea scrap its nuclear weapons drive before it will consider offering the Stalinist state concessions including economic and security benefits.

Despite optimistic signals this week from Japanese and US officials about the possibility of a new round of talks, North Korea said it had little faith in the process.

"As far as the resumption of the

six-way talks is concerned, the DPRK did not make any promise with anyone at the Beijing talks and the same holds true even after the talks," it said.

The nuclear crisis erupted last October when Washington said the North Koreans had admitted to running a nuclear program based on enriched uranium in violation of a 1994 nuclear freeze accord.

The pact collapsed after North Korea expelled UN nuclear inspectors and began to revive its moth-balled nuclear plants to protest a US halt to fuel oil supply for the energy-starved state.

North Korea claimed it had begun reprocessing more the spent fuel rods to make weapons-grade plutonium in April just prior to a first round of six-way talks. In June, it said the process was almost completed.

US and South Korean officials said they had no way of verifying the claim although South Korea's intelligence chief said in July that evidence pointed to reprocessing of "a small portion" of North Korea's stockpile of spent fuel rods.

In mid-July the White House said North Korea had informed the United States that it had completed reprocessing. Again, Washington and Seoul said they were unable to confirm the claim.

Meanwhile, a senior South Korean official on Thursday played down North Korea's threat to pull out of six-way talks on its nuclear programme, describing Pyongyang's tough rhetoric as a negotiating tactic.

Vice Unification Minister Cho Kun-Shik voiced optimism that North Korea was still interested in a fresh round of six-nation talks on ending the 11-month staff over its nuclear weapons drive.

"Through direct and indirect contacts with North Korean officials, I believe the North is willing to continue dialogue. I see their threat as a negotiating tactic," he said.

3 US soldiers

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Command said in a statement.

The fatal attacks commenced at five pm with a bomb blast that left one soldier dead and two wounded in Tikrit, 175 km north of Baghdad.

Major Josslyn Aberle, of the 4th Infantry Division, said the soldier was killed by an "improvised explosive device", which more and more is the weapon of choice for guerrillas in their war of attrition against the US-led coalition occupying Iraq.

It was the greatest number of US deaths in combat in a day since three soldiers were killed on September 20.

Khaleda

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The delegates thanked the premier for her government's support and co-operation in observing various religious festivals, including Durga puja, peacefully.

They expressed satisfaction over the government steps to ensure law and order during their religious festivals. They also thanked the ministers, leaders and workers and the people for their role in celebrating festivals peacefully.

The delegates also informed Khaleda that this year highest ever 17,500 puja 'mandaps' were set up across the country. They expressed their gratitude to the government for providing grants and co-operation for making the festival a success.

Awards will be up for grabs to the best-decorated puja 'mandaps' this year, they told the PM.

The delegation included Dhirendranath Saha, MP, Ranabir Roy Chowdhury, Ganesh Halder, Kartik Chandra Thakur, Paritosh Chakraborty, Pulak Kishore Chaki, Apurba Kumar Das, Amalendu Das, Advocate Swapan Sarkar and Mangal Chandra Chanda.

Prime Minister's political secretaries, Haris Chowdhury and Mosaddek Ali, were present.

Liakot placed on remand

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Listed top criminal Liakot Hossain Hawlader was taken on a four-day remand yesterday.

Rapid Action Team (Rat) of police arrested Liakot under Section 54 of the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC) and produced him along with his two operatives -- Sohag and Badal -- before the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court, Dhaka at 4:30pm yesterday.

His bodyguard Sohag and driver Badal were put on a three-day remands each.

Requesting remand, police said 11 criminal cases are pending against Liakot. He is also a chargesheeted accused in the Malibagh killings on February 13, 2001.

Rat arrested Liakot and his two henchmen at Dhanmondi on Wednesday as they were going to collect toll from a businessman.

Later, police also arrested his close associates Ali Hossain alias Jibon, Kamal Hossain and Gazi Shamim Ahmed in raids on different hideouts.

Liakot took up to student politics in 1975. He was then a member of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL). He used Sergeant Zahurul Haq Hall of Dhaka University as his den for nearly a decade, police said.

Liakot got involved in crime at the fog end of the '80s and got involved in smuggling, snatching tender and extortion. He also became the ringleader of a gang in which his younger brother Hannan, one of the most wanted 23 criminals of Dhaka, was the second man. Liakot was also the ringleader of the infamous 'Five Star' group.

He was arrested thrice during the Awami League rule. He was arrested by the Ramna police in 2000 when he went to snatch tender schedules from the Matshya Bhaban. Liakot was also declared wanted in all state programmes by the then prime minister Sheikh Hasina.

Liakot was also arrested during the Ershad regime and was in jail from 1985 to 1990. He was however released during the mass movement against Ershad in 1990.

The home ministry announced a reward of Tk 1 lakh for his arrest. Immediately after the announcement, Liakot fled to India.

Kolkata police arrested Liakot, his second-in-command Arman Khan and four other criminals at Kolkata New Market area on November 19, 2002 with two Italian-made 9mm pistols.

JCD man assaults Biman security Man in Ctg

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Staffers at Biman's Chittagong office pass days in constant fear, as a contractor, reportedly an activist of the ruling BNP's student front, assaulted several of them over the last few months.

Sources alleged Akbar, popularly known as Kana Akbar, of the Jatiyatadbadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) assaulted Iqbal Hossain, in charge of security of Biman office at Sholoshahar in Chittagong, on Wednesday in the latest of a series of attacks.

Iqbal lodged an official complaint with the authorities, including the managing director and general manager of Bangladesh Biman yesterday, sources said.

The Biman officials also complained to Civil Aviation Secretary Shafiqul Islam, who was on a visit to Chittagong yesterday. The secretary assured them of action against Akbar, also a contractor of Biman, the sources said.

"Akbar was talking to two others sitting on the sill of a window of our guardroom. He shouted abuse at me and beat me, as I asked him to sit in our guestroom," Iqbal told The Daily Star by phone.

Akbar has long been intimidating Biman staffers and threatened them with death or dire consequences, the Biman officials alleged.

The cadre attacked the junior supply officer of Biman, Farid Ahmed, on June 29 this year leaving him without eyesight. Earlier, he assaulted Biman Canteen Manager Humayun and misbehaved with present and former Biman managers, they alleged.

"We are worried," said one of the officials. Biman Manager (security) Moklesur Rahman said the civil aviation and tourism ministry was informed about Wednesday's incident.

The general secretary of JCD Chittagong city unit, Ahmedul Haq Chowdhury Rasel, said, "Akbar is no longer an activist of the party."

Cop threat

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nessed the incident, they said.

Some policewomen tore down the clothes of Nasima near the Saarc Fountain on the hartal day while she was demonstrating along with other fellow leaders and activists.

Nasima while addressing the press conference brushed aside the government's claim that her clothes were torn down by her fellow party activists. She described the incident and said at least 15 policewomen surrounded her and started beating her with clubs when they reached the Saarc Fountain.

"Nazma Hossain Baby, a leader of the Mohila League, helped me when my clothes were torn down by the policewomen," she said.

Nobel literature

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give interviews himself.

"It's exciting news, he really deserves it," Mulligan told Swedish news agency TT.

Coetzee is the sixth South African to win a Nobel Prize, and the second to win the Literature Prize 12 years after fellow South African Nadine Gordimer took home the prestigious award.

A fundamental theme in his novels is his country's former apartheid system, which in his view "could arise anywhere", the jury said.

Although Coetzee's name had circulating in the feverish run-up to Thursday's announcement, Syrian-born poet Adonis had also been seen as a strong contender for the award, which kicks off the season of Nobel prizes.

Next week will see the awards made for outstanding contributions in the world of science and economics, ending in Oslo on October 10 when the winner of the Nobel Peace

Body formed to probe killing of rly guard

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Bangladesh Railway (BR) yesterday formed a two-member committee to probe the killing of railway guard Bhashan Chandra Aich.

The committee comprising Abdur Razzak Bhuiyan, deputy chief traffic manager of the BR (East), and Iqbal Hossain, commandant of Railway Security Force (Sadar), was asked to submit its report within a week, railway sources said.

Meanwhile, M. Mokhesur Rahman, general manager of the BR (East) and other officials visited the slain guard's residence at Goshaidanga and assured the family members that the BR would provide all out support to them at its earliest.

Assailants strangled Aich on the Dhaka-Chittagong inter-city train, Turna Nishita Wednesday night.

Al-Qaeda

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foreign elements who were most likely involved in attacks against coalition forces in Afghanistan."

There was "a great possibility" that the al-Qaeda suspects were the people involved in attacks that killed a US soldier in Shkin on Monday, Sultan told reporters in Angkor Adda.

"There are all possibilities some of these people might have been involved in these actions. I would say there is a great possibility."

He said the suspects had crossed from Shkin area.

"When these people escaped (Shkin area) they came and took refuge in this area. They were trapped by our people."

Hundreds of al-Qaeda fugitives have taken refuge in South Waziristan district since late 2001, according to local human rights activists.

Afghan officials have repeatedly pointed to South Waziristan as the source of attacks by resurgent Taliban fighters.

The army would not give details of how many troops were deployed or how many al-Qaeda suspects they were mobilising against.

Some 25,000 troops are deployed to hunt al-Qaeda fugitives in the seven tribal districts hugging the 1,250 km northwest border with Afghanistan.

The Taliban regime was toppled in a US-led campaign launched after the September 11 attacks blamed on al-Qaeda.

Pricing policy

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But, there are speculations that the government might defer the implementation of the new tariff regimes for some time apprehending public reactions as over 5 percent rise of prices, mainly for gas, will take place under the policies.

The WB, however, thinks that the new tariff regimes do not imply an increase in price levels, prices could go up or down, stay consistent upon developments on the international market.

"Furthermore, these regimes would be made transparent so that the public is aware of the reasons underlying price changes," said the World Bank.

It has also mobilised a grant equivalent to \$100,000 to support the energy ministry in the introduction of the new tariffs. The grant assistance, provided by the Italian Trust Fund, would finance technical requirements, equipment and training to support the introduction.

The donor agency has also stressed holding open workshops in which the stakeholders, the public and media would be informed of the new pricing regimes and their implementation.

In petroleum sector, within the framework of the Development Support Credit, the new regime was to provide that the price of each product would be based on international spot, plus freight, insurance, port fees, handling, storage, transportation and taxes.

The first adjustment was expected on July 1, with provision for prices being revised periodically.

Prize will be announced.

Coetzee's breakthrough came in 1980 with the novel "Waiting for the Barbarians". His international heavyweight status was confirmed three years later when he was awarded Britain's Booker Prize for "Life and Times of Michael K".

He became the first author to be awarded the Booker Prize a second time, for "Disgrace", in 1999.

His novels are characterised by well-crafted composition, pregnant dialogue and analytical brilliance, the jury said.

But it also called 63-year-old Coetzee "ruthless in his criticism of the cruel rationalism and cosmetic morality of western civilisation."

In addition to novels, Coetzee has also published translations and worked as a literary critic.

John Maxwell Coetzee was born in 1940 in Cape Town. His background is both German and English. In 2002, he moved to Australia where he is attached to the University of Adelaide.

Despite his string of international awards, Coetzee is known to live in solitude and even declined to travel to London after making history by being twice awarded the Booker Prize.

One killed in road mishap

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A taxicab ran over an orderly of the Parliament Secretariat in front of Tejgaon Police Station yesterday.

Abdul Malek, 40, got fatally injured at around 4:00pm.

The victim was rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) where he died soon after the admission. The body was sent to the hospital morgue for autopsy.

2 trampled to death by wild elephants in Rangamati

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangamati

Two people were trampled to death by wild elephants at Jouthokhamar in Banghalaha union in Rangamati district on Wednesday night, the district administration said.

Montu Dev, 38, died on the scene and Sui Mu Ching Marma, 50, died on the way to the upazila health complex when the marauding herd rampaged through the village in the night.

Talking to this Correspondent, local Deputy Commissioner Dr Jafar Ahmed Khan said he directed the upazila nirbahi officer to visit the area.

He said frequent such attacks by the beasts in recent months panicked the locals.

Mirza Abbas

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headline "Unprecedented salute indeed" that read: "Lawyers, court officials and litigants at a metropolitan magistrate's court were surprised when Magistrate Khandker Fatema Begum stood up and saluted Minister for Housing and Public Works Mirza Abbas, yesterday (September 28) as he appeared there as plaintiff of a defamation case."

Following the news item, the magistrate issued a notice stating that the news was false and sought the name and address of the reporter concerned.

Cancer hospital

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addition, because patients have to repeat doses over a period of weeks or months, many lose patience and return home without completing their treatment."

An NICRH employee said that "many of the drugs are also sold outside by hospital staff in nearby drugstores. Ironically, patients who are supposed to get them free buy the same drugs. Such theft is very common, since anti-cancer drugs fetch high rates."

Prices of anti-cancer drugs at drugstores close to the hospital range from Tk 500 to Tk 10,000. The shops stock the most commonly prescribed drugs, often offering patients enough drugs for an entire course of treatment and charging for them all in advance.

Most of the storekeepers denied purchasing stolen drugs from the hospital and said they rely on smugglers for supplies.

Nargis Amin from city's Uttara is another patient who has to purchase anti-cancer drugs from outside the hospital: "I have not received a single injection for my

treatment. I have to buy every dose and doctors, nurses and wardboys often advise us to buy the drugs from drugstores which they recommend."

Professor A M M Shariful Alam, Director of NICRH, said, "Yes, it is true that the supply of drugs at NICRH is insufficient. Different patients receive different

protocols for treatment of cancer but we do not always have enough supplies of all drugs, which is why patients do not get complete treatment."

He said he should have authority to order drugs in order to ensure that supplies were adequate. Supplies from the central medical stores and depot (CMSD) were not consistent with need.

The CMSD Director, Brigadier General Abul Kalam Azad, instructed Abdul Matin, who is in charge of drug distribution, to provide information about the supply of anti-cancer drugs to NICRH, but when contacted by The Daily Star, Matin refused to do so. He also refused to comment on allegations of regular theft of drugs from the CMSD store.