

Addl Attorney Gen Rezaque wants to quit

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Additional Attorney General Abdur Rezaque Khan yesterday sought 'release' from his office following a newspaper report on his continuing in the job despite reaching retirement age.

"I've sent a letter to the law secretary through the attorney general for releasing me from my office as the newspaper has raised the question regarding my age," Rezaque Khan told The Daily Star last night, adding he is now 68 plus.

Although the retirement age for a judge of the Supreme Court is 67, it is not clear whether it would be applicable too for an advocate getting appointment as a government attorney.

Article 64 of the Constitution says the President shall appoint a person who is qualified to be appointed as a judge of the Supreme Court to be Attorney-General for Bangladesh and shall hold office during the pleasure of the President, and shall receive such remuneration as the President may determine.

Nothing has been said in the Constitution about the retirement age or about the additional attorney generals.

Rezaque Khan told this correspondent that he has brought attention of the law ministry to the matter and would continue in his duty until government response.

"Mentioning that I have crossed 68, I've asked for taking appropriate

2 criminals killed in 'crossfire'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two criminals -- one in the capital and the other in Faridpur -- were killed in incidents of "shootout" between their accomplices and members of the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) early yesterday.

Acting on a tip-off, Rab-4 members arrested Abdur Khaleq Sikander, 40, chief of a gang of robbers, in the city's Gabtoli area on Sunday.

A resident of Bangram in Keraniganj, Khaleq was an accused in seven cases filed with Keraniganj and Savar police stations in Dhaka and Zajira Police Station in Shariatpur.

During interrogation, Khaleq told the Rab personnel that some of his associates were waiting at Dipnagar Balur Math in Mirpur. The Rab members set out for Dipnagar at about 2:20am, taking Khaleq with them.

When they reached there, Khaleq's cohorts opened fire on the law enforcers, forcing them to retaliate.

According to a Rab press release, Khaleq received bullets during the 'shootout' and died instantly.

His body was sent to Dhaka Medical College and Hospital (DMCH) for an autopsy.

Rab recovered one pistol, one magazine and five bullets from the spot.

Khaleq's sister Ayesha Begum alleged that her brother was innocent and a jhut (garments byproducts) trader.

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Desco, Power Grid Co to offload 25pc shares by May

JASIM UDDIN KHAN

Dhaka Electric Supply Company (Desco) and the Power Grid Company of Bangladesh (PGCB) will offload their 25 percent stake in the share market by May 15, 2006 with a view to bringing dynamism in the capital market and to enhance accountability in government utility providing agencies.

Desco and PGCB, two power division entities of the government, will join the sluggish capital market by releasing 3.2 million shares of Desco and 9.1 million shares of PGCB.

The Investment Corporation of Bangladesh (ICB) will manage the issue to bring the companies into

the market through direct listing rules, the first of its kind in Bangladesh, sources said.

The decision was taken in a high level meeting at the power ministry held yesterday with State Minister for Power Iqbal Hasan Mahmud in the chair.

Desco has Tk 127 crore worth of total issued shares and PGCB has a total worth of Tk 364 crore, of which 25 percent will be offloaded.

The shares of those companies will be offloaded through direct listings with both Dhaka Stock Exchange (DSE) and Chittagong Stock Exchange simultaneously by May 15 at Tk 100 face value of each share.

Ten percent of the offloaded

shares will be released in the first month to avoid possible devaluation of the shares.

Market experts however are questioning the deadline saying that the companies will not be able to complete all the formalities before May 15. It will take some more time for completing all necessary documentation, they said.

The initiative is a part of the government's broader goal for giving all power generation, supply and transmission entities a corporate shape, a participant in the meeting said.

Senior officials from the Ministry of Finance, Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC),

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SAFETY SECONDARY... Workers erect a huge billboard on the roof of a building near Asad Gate in the city yesterday with hardly any safety gears on.



The fishing cat cubs recovered in Panchagarh on March 16 died yesterday as the authorities did not take the animals in their custody.

Rare fishing cat cubs die in captivity

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

Caught from the wilderness, the two fishing cat cubs yesterday died at Atoaree upazila of Panchagarh due to negligence of the authorities concerned.

The cubs were caught from a hole in a tree in Dangirhat of the upazila on Thursday.

Locals informed Panchagarh Deputy Commissioner (DC) and the local livestock department

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EDEN COLLEGE Students still agitate to end 'seat business'

DU CORRESPONDENT

Despite removal of the embattled principal of Eden College, general students of the college and different student bodies yesterday continued to demonstrate demanding acceptance of their other demands.

Principal Firoza Begum was removed and made officer on special duty (OSD) on Sunday in the wake of unrest at the college.

The students had earlier put forward a six-point demand that included resignation of the principal, an end to the murky business over seats at the college hostels and punishment of Jatityabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) cadres involved in recent attacks on the demonstrating students of the college.

Chhatra Sangram Parishad, a combine of opposition backed student organisations, will go on with their earlier scheduled strike at educational institutions across the country tomorrow to press the demands.

Liaqat Sikdar, president of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL), which leads the parishad, said they are sticking to their strike programme to realise the five other demands.

Pritilata Sangsad, a platform of Eden College students, has announced a weeklong demonstration programme that included a rally on Dhaka University campus on March 23, human chain at Muktagong on March 25 and sit-in in front of the administrative building of the college on March 27.

Meanwhile, Mohila Awami League yesterday protested the recent attack on students of the college.

When contacted yesterday, Vice Principal of Eden College Jahan-e-Gulshan, now acting principal, said punitive action will be taken against those involved in the attack on students and illegal practices concerning hostel seats after the probe committee formed earlier submits its report.

The committee will resume its work when the college reopens on March 30.

TECHNICAL TERMS FOR KARNAPHULI DREDGING PROJECT Last minute changes drive away bidders

SHARIER KHAN

A last moment amendment to technical specification for a Tk 125 crore dredging project for the Karnaphuli river under the shipping ministry drove away four of the six selected bidders, conveniently leaving the scheme to two of them.

Sources said while the project's bid opening was scheduled for yesterday, the shipping ministry on March 14 abruptly informed the six short-listed bidders about change of a technical specification on the method of piling required for dredging the river.

Consequently, four of the short-listed bidders could not tailor their financial and technical proposals. The remaining two -- China Harbour of China and MT Hojgaard of

Denmark-- have submitted their proposals.

China Harbour has given two financial offers -- the first one asking for a cost of Tk 253 crore, and the alternative at Tk 215 crore. Hojgaard on the other hand made an offer of Tk 422 crore.

A politically powerful lobby had been pushing the ministry to award this deal to the Chinese company.

The sources pointed out that the shipping ministry previously awarded contract for the Tk 331 crore New Mooring Container Terminal Project to China Harbour two years ago. The project was scheduled for completion by December last year but the company is still delaying its job on various pretexts.

The dredging project is required

for ground preparation for the new Karnaphuli bridge project, which is also set to go to a Chinese bidder. The communication ministry is spearheading that project.

Initially, the dredging project that includes riverbank protection and improvement of navigability, was estimated to cost Tk 76 crore. The shipping ministry, without taking approval of the Executive Committee of National Economic Council (Ecneec), increased the budget of the scheme to Tk 125 crore on ground of 'additional construction work'.

Prior to floating the bid, the ministry hinted to the bidders that the cost of dredging could be increased up to Tk 180 crore. It

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Woman, grandson killed in wall collapse

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

An elderly woman and her grandson were killed yesterday as a wall collapsed on them at Manikhar village in Tala upazila.

The victims are Aysha Khatun, 45, wife of Abdur Rauf, and Azizur Rahman, 8, son of Abdur Karim.

Police and family sources said the victims were sitting beside the house of Abdur Karim when the wall collapsed, killing them on the spot.

AUG 17 BLASTS Govt asked to produce Rahman, Bangla Bhai in Bogra court

UNB, Bogra

Additional District and Sessions Judge's Court here yesterday asked the government to produce captured JMB leaders Abdur Rahman and Siddiqui Islam alias Bangla Bhai before it on June 5 in connection with the August 17 bomb blasts case filed in the district.

Militants exploded seven bombs in the district on August 17 as part of their serial bombings across the country.

Other accused in the case are Waliullah, Gulam Kibria, Mamun-ur-Rashid and Abdur Razzak alias Hasan. Of them, Hasan is in custody while others are still at large.

Bangla Bhai's victims want govt's apology

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Over 50 family members of the victims of Bangla Bhai atrocities yesterday called on the government to apologise for the 'state-sponsored jungle rule' in the north-west of the country.

The locals of Puthia, Durgapur, Bagmara of Rajshahi, Atrai, Raninagar of Naogaon and Naldanga of Natore at a public rally in Shaheb Bazar last evening also demanded compensation for losses

of lives and properties suffered at the hands of Jagrata Muslim Janata, Bangladesh (JMJB) operatives.

Writer-journalist Shahriar Kabir was the chief guest at the meeting organised by Ektattur Ghatak Dalal Nirmul Committee.

Language Movement veteran Abul Hossain chaired the meeting addressed among others by Workers Party politburo member Fazle Hossain Badsha, city Awami League (AL) General Secretary AHM Khairuzzaman Liton, Professionals Alliance Council

President Dr Sayed Shafiqul Alam and Nirmul Committee leader Quamruzzaman.

Statements of some victims and witnesses were recorded on video on Miapara Library premises.

Taking part in the meeting, the locals alleged a section of the police and district administration aided and abetted Bangla Bhai in various acts of violence against the villagers. They had overlooked repeated complaints by the victims and their families.

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Car-bomb makers' cell busted in Kashmir

4 rebels killed

AFP, Srinagar

Indian troops shot dead four militants in Kashmir and arrested five others allegedly involved in making and setting off car bombs in the main city of Srinagar, the army said yesterday.

The four were killed during two separate gunbattles in northern Kupwara district and southern Poonch district early Monday, said army spokesman Colonel Hemant Juneja.

He said the fighting erupted when troops ringed two hideouts in the forest areas of the two districts bordering Pakistani Kashmir.

Meanwhile, the army and police in a joint operation arrested five members of the dominant rebel group Hizbul Mujahedin in Srinagar.

"The five were involved in preparing and detonating car bombs in Srinagar," an army statement said.

This month there have been two car bomb explosions in Srinagar that injured over a dozen Indian soldiers and a few civilians. Hizbul claimed both attacks.

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Iraq war enters 4th year with more deaths

AP, Baghdad

Suspected insurgents marked the third anniversary of the US-led invasion of Iraq yesterday with roadside bombings that killed at least seven policemen, and authorities reported finding 10 more bullet-riddled bodies dumped in the capital, one of them a 13-year-old girl.

The violence took up where it left off Sunday when at least 35 people died.

One of the roadside bombings Monday, just a few hundred yards from an Interior Ministry lockup in central Baghdad, killed at least three Iraqi police commandos and a prisoner, police Lt. Col. Falah al-Mohammedawi said. Four commandos were injured in the midday attack.

A second roadside bomb in a farming area in the so-called

Triangle of Death south of Baghdad killed four policemen, police Capt. Muthana Khalid Ali reported from the area.

The 10 dumped bodies, apparently executed, were the latest gruesome discoveries tied to the underground sectarian war being conducted by Shia and Sunni Muslims as they settle scores in the chaos that grips the capital.

As many as 700 people have been killed in sectarian violence since the Feb. 22 bombing of a Shia shrine in Samarra and the subsequent series of car bombings and mortar attacks in the Sadr City slum on March 12.

Baghdadis voiced anger Monday when asked about their lives as the war entered its fourth year.

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Bird flu confirmed in 3 Afghan provinces

AFP, Kabul

Tests confirmed yesterday a new outbreak of the deadly H5N1 strain of bird flu among chickens in three Afghan provinces, including the capital Kabul, officials said.

The broad H5-type virus was found in dead chickens in the eastern provinces of Kunar, Laghman and Nangarhar, Kabul and Wardak province in the west.

Samples from Laghman, Nangarhar and Kabul provinces tested positive in laboratories in Italy for the sub-type N1, an indication that the cases in all five provinces were H5N1, officials said.

"We have sent samples from the three provinces of Kabul, Laghman and Nangarhar for sub-typing to Italy and they were tested positive for H5N1," Azizullah Usmani, head of the agriculture ministry's veterinary department, told AFP.

"This is an indication that all the viruses in the five provinces are H5N1," Usmani said.

Afghanistan and the United

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A mother helplessly stands with her influenza-hit child yesterday as Dhaka Medical College Hospital's children's ward is overcrowded following a flu outbreak.

Prayer Timing		
March 21		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fair	4-55	5-30
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-45	5-00
Maghrib	6-16	6-20
Esha	7-45	8-15

Source: Islamic Foundation