

# New EC commissioner meets old ones without taking oath

Commission claims it a courtesy call

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The newly appointed Election Commissioner Mahmud Hasan Mansur yesterday paid an unprecedented surprise visit to the Election Commission (EC) Secretariat and held meetings with the chief election commissioner (CEC) and two other election commissioners, without taking the oath of office.

Hasan Mansur, who was suddenly appointed as an election commissioner last Thursday and who is scheduled to take the oath today, also met the EC secretary during the visit but did not pay any courtesy call on the rest of the officials at the secretariat.

Stunned by the surprise visit, officials of the EC Secretariat termed it unprecedented, since

none of the previous election commissioners had visited the EC before taking the oath.

While the newly appointed election commissioner was talking to the EC secretary, the officials of the secretariat were busy communicating with the office of the Supreme Court's registrar to arrange Mansur's oath-taking ceremony.

Mansur arrived at the EC Secretariat at 10:45am and the commission sent a letter to the Supreme Court registrar's office at 11:00am after issuing a circular about his appointment as the fourth election commissioner, sources said.

CEC MA Aziz, who defended Mansur's visit to the EC Secretariat, however said the commission will be strengthened by the appointment

## Abu Solaiman new cabinet secretary

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Liberation War Affairs Secretary Abu Solaiman Chowdhury has been made new cabinet secretary replacing ASM Abdul Halim.

Abu Solaiman Chowdhury joined the BCS [Administration] cadre in 1973. He assumed the office of Liberation War Affairs Secretary on January 15 this year. He worked in the ministries of Women and Children Affairs, Civil Aviation and Tourism, Youth and Sports, Cultural Affairs, LGRD and Cooperatives. He also worked at Bangladesh Handloom Board, Election Commission Secretariat and Jamuna Multi-purpose Bridge Authority.

Sources said the new cabinet secretary would retire early next year.

Solaiman obtained Hubat Humphrey Fellowship from the American University on Development Planning and Resource Management in 1984-85. He also received advanced training on different programmes from the Netherlands, Indonesia and Malaysia.

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Bangladesh Airline Pilots Association stages a demonstration in front of Biman headquarters yesterday, demanding immediate measures to make the airline financially solvent.

## Dahagram people protest BSF restriction

UNB, Lalmonirhat

Bangladeshi citizens in Dahagram and Angorpota enclaves yesterday staged demonstration rejecting the Indian Border Security Force (BSF) proposal to allow only five cattle to pass through the Tin Bigha corridor a day.

Around 2,000 enclave dwellers brought out a procession and raised slogans to protest the BSF decision. However, Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) personnel prevented them from proceeding towards the corridor.

The BSF on Saturday restricted the movement of cows and goats through the corridor on the pretext of checking smuggling of Indian cows.

Tin Bigha Sangram Committee leader Rezanur Rahman said they would submit a memorandum to

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# Iran reaffirms support for Lebanon truce

Tehran ready for nuke talks, says Annan

REUTERS, Tehran

UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan said Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad yesterday reaffirmed support for a UN resolution on Lebanon and his determination to negotiate an end to Tehran's nuclear standoff with the West.

Ahmadinejad told UN Secretary-General on Sunday Iran wanted to find a negotiated solution to its nuclear dispute with the West but would not freeze uranium enrichment ahead of any talks.

"On the nuclear issue, the president reaffirmed to me Iran's preparedness and determination to

negotiate and find a solution to the crisis," Annan told a news conference in Tehran.

Annan has been touring the Middle East seeking to shore up the ceasefire that halted a 34-day war in Lebanon between Israel and Iranian-backed Hezbollah guerrillas.

UN Resolution 1701 drew up the terms for the ceasefire, including expanding an existing UN peace-keeping force in Lebanon and calling for an arms embargo on Hezbollah.

After meeting Ahmadinejad, Annan said the Iranian president "reaffirmed his country's support for

the implementation of Resolution 1701 and agrees with me that we should do everything to strengthen the territorial integrity of Lebanon."

Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki, speaking at the joint news conference, also said Iran was ready "to cooperate with the United Nations in resuming peace in Lebanon and on its borders."

Iran funded and armed Hezbollah in the 1980s but now says its support is primarily moral and political. However, it is still widely believed to be the group's main arms supplier.

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## Democrats on a roll in battle for US Congress

REUTERS, Washington

Democrats enter the fall campaign with a clear edge in the high-stakes fight for control of the US Congress, riding a wave of momentum that has them positioned to retake the US House of Representatives and make significant gains in the Senate.

President George W Bush's low approval ratings and public dissatisfaction with the Iraq war, gas prices and the country's direction threaten Republican leadership in Congress and put Democrats within reach of an victory on November 7, analysts said.

"I don't think the question any longer is can Democrats win control of Congress, it's can Republicans do anything to stop it?" said Amy Walter, House analyst for the non-partisan Cook Political Report newsletter. "All the factors and issues are pushing so strongly against Republicans."

All 435 House seats, 34 of 100 Senate seats and 36 governorships are at stake in November's election, with Democrats needing to pick up 15 House seats and six Senate seats to reclaim majorities.

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PHOTO: STAR

A granddaughter of Izzat Ali, 70, breaks down in front his body at Dhaka Medical College Hospital after he was shot dead in Mirpur in the capital yesterday.

## 25 injured in factory fire

UNB, Narayanganj

At least 25 people were injured in a devastating fire at a plastic packaging factory at Kanchpur under Sonargaon upazila yesterday.

The fire that broke out at Style Pack Ltd, a sister concern of Bombay Sweets, at Ghaspara at 10:00am could not be extinguished as of late last evening.

Firefighters suspected that the fire originated from mixture of chemicals and soon engulfed the entire factory.

Sixteen fire fighting units rushed to the spot and were trying hard to douse the flame. Foam was also used to douse black flames rising from inflammable chemicals.

"The fire has been brought under control but could not be totally extinguished," said a Fire Brigade official at 8:00pm.

## PHULBARI FLARE-UP

# Injured yet to get govt aid

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

The bullet-hit victims of the August 26 carnage in Phulbari, Dinajpur are yet to get financial support for their treatment even though the government said on Wednesday that it would compensate the victims within 72 hours.

The government on Wednesday pledged to provide a compensation of Tk 2 lakh to each of the families of those who died on August 26 and a total of Tk 9 lakh compensation for the injured. Rajshahi City Corporation Mayor Mizanur Rahman Minu had made the pledges in a public meeting at

Phulbari after signing an agreement with the demonstrators in Parbatipur.

Dinajpur Medical College Hospital sources said Md Rezaul Islam, 23, Md Osman Ali, 19, Saiful Islam Labu, 30, Shah Newaz Bin Akram, 17 and Md Mahsin Ali, are receiving treatment at the hospital since August 26. All of them received bullet injuries, doctors of the hospital said.

Mahsin Ali, who received bullets injuries in his chest, is receiving treatment at the balcony of the hospital. He said he cannot afford a cabin and he would apply for

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## Hasina visits Phulbari today

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina will visit the trouble-torn Phulbari in Dinajpur today along with 14-party opposition leaders, Dinajpur Awami League (AL) unit sources said.

During the daylong visit, Sheikh Hasina, also president of the AL, will address a public rally at Phulbari College Ground and express her sympathies and support towards the people.

She will also meet the families of those slain and wounded on August 26 police firing during an anti-Asia Energy demonstration.

## Asia Energy still waits for govt decision

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has not communicated any decision or message to the Asia Energy Private Ltd as of yesterday on the Phulbari coal mine deal, protesting against which six people were killed on August 26 in police firing during an anti-Asia Energy demonstration.

The British company is maintaining a low profile, while some of its executives have left the country.

The Asia Energy would have to issue a public announcement shortly clarifying its position and status in Bangladesh at the London Stock Exchange, where the company's share transaction has remained suspended since August 31, sources said.

If the company does not make the public statement soon, transaction of its shares at the London Stock Exchange would be suspended for good, they added.

The energy ministry, meanwhile, is going slow on the matter, allowing the public sentiment to die down, sources said.

## Elderly man shot dead inside shop

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

An unidentified criminal shot a 70-year-old man dead inside a shop at Pallabi in the city yesterday apparently over refusal to pay money.

Witnesses said a youth came to the scrap material shop at Taltola in Mirpur Section 11 at about 12:30pm and shot Izzat Ali point-blank in the face and throat.

Izzat's grandson Mohammad Rana, who was present during the incident, said that the youth, aged around 22, came and gave him a piece of handwritten paper. "As I was reading the paper, the youth shot my grandfather twice and ran away," he said.

Rana and locals rushed Izzat to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) immediately where the doctors declared him dead.

Izzat's son Harunur Rashid, 6

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# British police grill terror suspects

AFP, London

British police were questioning yesterday 14 men arrested over the alleged training and recruitment of extremists in the country's latest high-profile anti-terrorism raid.

The 14 were arrested in London overnight Friday on suspicion of planning acts of terrorism, prompting searches, including one at an Islamic school.

London's Metropolitan Police said they were detained "on suspicion of the commission, preparation or instigation of acts of terrorism", following a "pre-planned, intelligence-led operation" lasting

months.

The men, aged between 17 and 48, were being grilled at the high-security Paddington Green police station in central London. Home Secretary John Reid was being kept fully informed.

Britain's domestic Press Association (PA) news agency said the men were thought to be mainly young British Muslims of Pakistani origin.

An unnamed security source told the Mail on Sunday newspaper: "This network is not thought to be involved in actively plotting terrorism. This was a sophisticated

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## N Korea may test another missile

REUTERS, Seoul

North Korea may be preparing for another missile test, South Korea's Yonhap news agency reported on Sunday, but a government official in Seoul discounted the report.

Yonhap also reported China is likely to invite North Korean leader Kim Jong-il to visit this week in an effort to restore their relationship

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Prayer Timing		
September 3		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-30	5-05
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-45	5-00
Maghrib	6-23	6-26
Esha	7-45	8-15

Source: Islamic Foundation