

Appoint 27 BCS cadres in 60 days: HC to govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday directed the government to appoint 27 candidates who passed the 34th and 35th Bangladesh Civil Service (BCS) exams but were not appointed.

The government has been asked to appoint the candidates at their respective posts within 60 days of receiving the HC judgement.

The court also declared the decision to drop them from recruitment illegal.

The HC bench of Justice Md Ashrafal Kamal and Justice Razik-Al-Jalil delivered the verdict after hearing three separate writ petitions filed by the deprived candidates, challenging legality of the government decision.

Advocate Salahuddin Dolon, Advocate Siddique Ullah Miah and Advocate Abus Sattar Palwan appeared for the petitioners while Deputy Attorney General Waish-Al-Haruni

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PAIRED FOR LIFE... two ruddy shelducks in flight over Boalia char of the Karnaphuli river in Chattogram. Locally known as chokha-chokhi, these migratory birds winter in the subcontinent. They are found in pairs or small groups, and mostly inhabit inland waterbodies. There is also a strong pair bond between the male and female, which is considered to be for life. This photo was taken recently. PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

RAPE, MURDER OF LAXMIPUR GIRL IN 2012

HC confirms death for 8

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday confirmed the death sentence of eight robbers out of 10 and commuted the death penalty of two to life imprisonment in a case filed for raping and killing a schoolgirl in Laxmipur in 2012.

A gang of robbers swooped on the house of Krishna Lal Devnath at Dhutia village under Laxmipur Sadar upazila on July 18, 2012.

At one stage, the gang took the girl, a seventh-grader, hostage at gunpoint and raped her before fleeing the spot with the loot, including gold and cash.

Relatives rushed the critically injured girl to the Sadar hospital where doctors declared her dead.

Her father filed a case against unnamed robbers the next day. Police pressed charges against 25 people on May 15, 2013, according to the case statement. A Laxmipur court on September 16, 2014 sentenced 10 robbers to death in this regard.

Yesterday, the HC bench of Justice Bhabani Prasad Singha and Justice Md Kamrul Hossain Mollah delivered the verdict after hearing the death reference of the case and the appeals filed by the convicted accused against the trial court verdict.

The eight offenders whose death sentences were confirmed by the HC are -- Nur Nobi, Hedayet Ullah Hedu, Hiron, Saddam (absconding), Nur Alam, Manik (absconding), Rashed (absconding) and Sumon (absconding). Deputy Attorney General Md Aminul Islam told The Daily Star.

The two accused whose death sentences have been commuted to life imprisonment are Sohel and Anwar Hossain, he added.

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Barishal's own Robo Boy

10th-grader builds bilingual humanoid robot



Shuvo only spent around Tk 25,000 to make this robot named "Robin", which can communicate in both English and Bangla. PHOTO: TITU DAS

SUSHANTA GHOSH, Barishal

When Sophia, a life-like robot that can effortlessly talk to humans, visited Bangladesh and replied to any question thrown at her, people all around were blown away. Among those people was a spirited teenager from a small village in Barishal, who was not only impressed but also inspired. This young boy, Shuvo Karmaker, one fine day decided that, he too, will build a robot in the likes of Sophia.

Soon enough, the tenth-grader managed to do just that, and even added a bit of his flair. While Sophia can only speak English - Shuvo's robot, Robin - is bilingual. That's right, Robin can communicate in both English and Bangla.

Residents of Gaila village, where Shuvo lives, now call him the "Robot Boy". Shuvo had a regular childhood like everyone else: he goes to Gaila Secondary High School and stays with his parents. What sets him apart is that

he fully took advantage of what little opportunities of growth were in front of him.

"When I started, I had no experience with any of this. So, I tried to learn about robotics and programming from the internet," reminisced Shuvo. "I still remember, when my friends used to play in the afternoon, I would go home and immediately sit in front of the computer, going from one website to another and learning all there is about programming."

"And now I am enjoying the benefits of all those countless days of tinkering," he said.

His biggest project yet, however, came to be after he witnessed Sophia. "After seeing Sofia, the thought of making a similar robot at minimal costs came to me. And on top of that, since Sofia can't speak Bangla, I wanted to add that feature too," Shuvo said.

Shuvo started to build Robin on May 25, 2018 and it took him about

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Destiny MD sentenced to 3 years' jail

First verdict against him in seven years

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday sentenced Rafiqul Amin, managing director of Destiny Group, to three years' imprisonment in a case filed for not submitting his wealth statement to Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC).

Judge Shamim Ahammad of Dhaka's Special Judge Court-8 gave the verdict and also fined Rafiqul Tk 50 lakh.

If Rafiqul fails to pay the fine within 30 days, the district collector can realise it by auctioning his properties, ordered the judge.

This is the first judgement against Rafiqul Amin since his arrest in 2013, confirmed Mahmud Hossain Jahangir, a public prosecutor of the Anti-Corruption Commission.

According to the case statement, ACC filed a case against Rafiqul with Ramna Police Station on September 8, 2016, for not submitting his wealth statement.

Trial of the two money laundering cases against Rafiqul and several others is now pending with Dhaka's Special Judge Court-4, according to court sources.

On July 31, 2012, ACC filed the cases with Kalabagan Police Station against Rafiqul and 21 others for laundering Tk 3,285.26 crore by cheating investors.

Later, Rafiqul was sent to jail after he surrendered in connection with the cases.

He has been in jail since then.

ARMS CASE

Charges framed against GK Shamim, 7 others

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday framed charges against SM Golam Kibria Shamim -- popularly known as GK Shamim -- and his seven bodyguards in connection with an arms case.

Shamim and his bodyguards, now in jail, pleaded not guilty and demanded justice after Judge Md Rabiul Alam of the 3rd Additional Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court read out the charges to them.

The seven bodyguards are: Md Delwar Hossain, Md Murad Hossain, Md Jahidul Islam, Md Shahidul Islam, Md Kamal Hossain, Md Samsad Hossain and Md Aminul Islam.

The court set February 26 for starting trial in the case.

The judge also rejected bail petitions filed by the accused.

Rapid Action Battalion members on September 20 last year arrested Shamim on charges of extortion and tender manipulation. His bodyguards were also arrested.

That day, the elite force members raided his house and office in the city's Niketan and seized eight firearms, a huge amount of ammunition, fixed deposit receipt (FDR) worth Tk 165 crore, around Tk 1.8 crore in cash, a large stash of US and Singaporean dollars and some foreign liquor.

Later, Rab filed three cases against Shamim with Gulshan Police Station.

The residence and office of GK Shamim, an influential contractor of the Public Works Department and other government organisations, was raided following information that he was involved in extortion and tender grabbing. Shamim and his bodyguards were remanded for several days in the cases.

Rab Sub-Inspector Shekhor Chandra Mollick, investigation officer of the case, submitted the charge sheet on October 27 last year.

Brother kills brother in Mymensingh

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

A man died at Mymensingh Medical College Hospital (MMCH) yesterday morning after being injured by his brother the previous night over a land dispute.

The deceased is Hashim Uddin (65), of Mailora village in Tarakanda upazila.

Quoting family members and neighbours of the victim, officer-in-charge of Tarakanda Police Station Md Abul Khayer said there had been a longstanding dispute between Hashim and his younger brother Abul Kashem over a piece of land. Both of them were farmers.

Around 9:30pm on Monday, Kashem and his men attacked Hashim with sharp weapons while he was returning home from the local bazar.

Hashim was taken to MMCH where he succumbed to his injuries. Police sent the body to the morgue for autopsy.

Police also detained two people, Md Kazimuddin and Abul Kalam, for interrogation, which was ongoing at the time of filing this report. No case has been filed yet, police said.

Healthy ecosystem vital for resilience

Says US ambassador after visit to Sundarbans

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Healthy ecosystems and protection from natural disasters are critical to developing a resilient Bangladesh, said US Ambassador to Bangladesh Earl Miller, following a three-day visit to the Sundarbans yesterday.

The visit by Miller and USAID Mission Director Derrick Brown to the world's largest mangrove forest, ahead of World Wetlands Day on February 2, highlighted the importance of conserving the Sundarbans and its wildlife, according to a statement of the US embassy yesterday.

During the trip, Miller met Bangladesh Forest Department representatives at Harbaria and visited the US government supported conservation activities that contribute to the protection of the Sundarbans and its biodiversity.

He visited Kotka with a doctoral

student from the University of Delaware whose tiger conservation research is funded by the US Fish and Wildlife Service. They also hiked part of the popular Kotka trail and learned about the role and impact of tourism in the Sundarbans.

Yesterday, Miller met with representatives of local civil society organisation, WildTeam Limited, to learn how conservation activities have continued beyond USAID's \$10.5 million Bengal Tiger Conservation Activity (Bagh), completed in 2018.

On May 22, 2019, Forest Department and USAID announced that the Bengal tiger population had stabilised and marginally increased, from an estimated 106 tigers in 2015 to around 114 tigers in 2018.

Through USAID's Bagh and Climate Resilient Ecosystems and Livelihoods (CREL) activities, in partnership with Bangladesh government, USAID helped train

community groups to conserve the Sundarbans and its diverse biodiversity. CREL activities, included supporting the planting of 565,000 mangrove seedlings on 512 hectares.

Support for conservation initiatives has played a fundamental role in preserving green space and the valuable ecosystems and biodiversity in the United States, which is important to increasing US resilience, said a statement of the US embassy in Dhaka.

"Such efforts provide similar benefits to Bangladesh, strengthening its capacity to respond to natural disasters and protect ecosystems critical not only to Bangladesh but also the health of the planet.

"The US government is committed to continue supporting Bangladesh's resilience to natural hazards and advance US-Bangladesh priorities,"

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JnUTA election held

JNU CORRESPONDENT

A 15-member executive committee of Jagannath University Teachers' Association (JnUTA) was elected for a one-year term yesterday, with Md Nure Alam Abdullah elected as president and Shamima Begum as general secretary.

The polls were held at JnU Central Auditorium from 9am to 2:30pm. Chief Election Commissioner Prof Md Maniruzzaman Khandaker announced the results around 5pm.

Also elected were: Prof Mohammad Abdul Baki as vice-president, Prof Md Zahir Uddin Arif as treasurer and Prof Md Momin Uddin as joint-secretary. GM Al-Amin, Md Anwar Hossain, Numan Mahfuj, Muhammad Elias, Muhammad Rezaul Hossain, Md Imran Hossain, Shahana Akther, Md Abul Hossen, Protiva Rani Karmaker and Lutfurnahar were elected executive members of the committee.

Two factions of pro-Awami League teachers' group 'Blue Panel' contested the polls as pro-BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami teachers' group 'White Panel' did not take part. Contacted for his comments on the election, JnU White Panel President Prof Mosharrar Hossain declined to speak.

A total of 524 out of 678 teachers cast their votes in the polls.

PRIMARY TEACHER RECRUITMENT HC stays results in four more districts

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court has stayed the results of government primary school teacher recruitment tests in four districts -- Natore, Faridpur, Lalmonirhat and Nilphamari -- for six months on charge of violations of relevant rules.

The court also issued separate rules asking the authorities concerned of the government to explain in four weeks why the results of the tests should not be declared illegal.

The HC bench of Justice Sheikh Hassan Arif and Justice Md Mahmud Hasan Talukder came up with the orders and rules in last two days following four separate writ petitions, filed by several candidates who could not qualify in the viva voce.

The bench had earlier stayed the results in more than 20 districts on similar grounds, Deputy Attorney General Bipul Bagmar told The Daily Star.

Advocate Niaz Muhammad Mahboob, a lawyer for the petitioners from Natore, told The Daily Star that as per section 7 of the primary teacher recruitment rules 2013, 60 percent of such teachers will be appointed from female candidates, 20 percent from "posshya" (dependent) quota and 20 percent from male candidates. But the conditions were not followed, the lawyer said.

Following another writ petition, the HC on January 19 stayed the results of such recruitment tests in 14 districts for six months.

The 14 districts are: Patuakhali, Madaripur, Sirajganj, Naogaon, Chapainawabganj, Habiganj, Mymensingh, Netrakona, Noakhali, Jashore, Satkhira, Tangail, Barguna and Thakurgaon.



US Ambassador Earl Miller during his visit to the Sundarbans.

PHOTO: COURTESY