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Biswas sworn-in



Acting Chief Justice M H Rahman administering the oath of office to newly-elected President Abdur Rahman Biswas at Bangabhaban on Wednesday. —Star photo

By Staff Correspondent

Newly elected President Abdur Rahman Biswas formally took oath of office at a simple ceremony at the darbar hall of Bangabhaban on Wednesday.

The oath was administered by Acting Chief Justice of Bangladesh Justice M H Rahman.

The oath taking marked the completion of the process of transition to parliamentary democracy after sixteen years of presidential rule.

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia, Ministers, Members of Parliament, high civil and military officials were present at the 9-minute ceremony.

With the taking of oath of Abdur Rahman Biswas Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed automatically ceased to be the Acting President of Bangladesh.

There was no formal handing over of power, because the Constitution 11th Amendment Act does not provide for that. Justice Shahabuddin went to his Bangabhaban office on Wednesday morning and was accorded a farewell by his staff. He was not present at the swearing in ceremony of President Abdur Rahman Biswas.

Abdur Rahman Biswas, earlier on Tuesday, won the presidential election by securing 92 votes against his Awami League backed rival Justice Badrul Haider Chowdhury.

The Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina and members of Parliament belonging to Awami League, Jatiya Party, the Communist Party of Bangladesh, Ganatantri Party and National Awami Party were absent from the oath taking ceremony. AL sources said their MPs did not join the function as they complained, their cooperation was not being reciprocated by BNP in the presidential election.

Moulana Matur Rahman Nizami and some other MPs of Jamaat, Rashed Khan Menon and Hasanul Huq Inu of 5-party, Shahjahan Siraj of Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal, Salahuddin Quader Chowdhury of National Democratic Party, independent MPs Maj (Retd) Hafizuddin and Nurul Islam Mont were among those present at the function.

Abdur Rahman Biswas accompanied by Chief Election Commissioner Justice M A Roush entered the Darbar Hall of the Bangabhaban right at 4-30 pm. The short oath taking ceremony was preceded by playing of the national anthem and recitation from verses of the Holy Quran.

After taking the oath the President signed the oath. And the function ended with the playing of the national anthem.

After the swearing in ceremony President Abdur Rahman Biswas told newsmen he would try his best for the development and welfare of the people. He thanked the people. See Page 12 Col. 1

Khaleda to attend Commonwealth summit

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia is expected to leave Dhaka for Harare, the capital of Zimbabwe, on October 14 as the head of Bangladesh delegation to the 11th Commonwealth heads of government meeting being held there from October 16 to 22, reports BSS.

This will be the first international conference that Begum Zia will be attending as the head of a democratically-elected government.

He contributions will have special bearing in the Commonwealth context one of whose core values is to promote democracy and respect for human rights, an official release said.

Begum Zia will be one of the selected few heads government to be called upon to reply to the address of welcome by the host President Robert Mugabe.

See Page 12 Col. 7

Law Minister to discharge PM's responsibilities

By Staff Correspondent

Law Minister Mirza Golam Hafiz is expected to discharge the responsibilities of the Prime Minister during the absence of Begum Khaleda Zia from Bangladesh between October 14 and 23, according to reliable sources.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia is scheduled to leave Dhaka on October 14 to attend the 11th Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting to be held at Harare between October 16 and 22.

The Jatiya Sangsad (Parliament) will be in session during the Prime Ministers stay abroad.

PM orders Defence Ministry to vacate old HC building Plan to expand Supreme Court



Badrul Haider Chowdhury making a point at a press conference on Wednesday. —Star photo

By Mostafa Kamal Majumdar

The government plans to expand the Supreme Court to help expedite the disposal of cases and remove the existing case congestion.

To accommodate more chambers and courtrooms for judges the old High Court building is being transferred to the Supreme Court.

Law Minister Mirza Golam Hafiz told The Daily Star on Wednesday that Prime Minister Khaleda Zia had passed an order asking the Ministry of Defence to vacate the old High Court building soon.

Under the plan another floor will be constructed on the Supreme Court Bar Association building to ease the congestion problem faced by the Bar members, the Law Minister said.

He said as a legacy of nine years of autocratic rule the Supreme Court had in December 1990 a congestion of cases.

Work selflessly for nation: Shahabuddin

The Acting President, Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed, said Wednesday that we all should pursue our national objectives with a sense of partnership to take the country forward and erase our image as one of the poorest nations, reports BSS.

In his last farewell speech addressed to the Bangabhaban staff including the President's Guard Regiment (PGR) and the President's Security Forces (PSP), Justice Shahabuddin said, "If we are aimless, we will drift haphazardly like a piece of wood in the vast ocean without ever reaching our national goals."

Attired in his usual dress and looking pale after a bout with influenza, Justice Shahabuddin however looked satisfied that he could fulfil his mission as the interim head of the government when he met his staff to bid them goodbye.

He advised the staff, both civil and military, whom he preferred to call colleagues in his brief but touching address, to work selflessly with devotion to free the people from the clutches of poverty. "You, as public servants, owe much to our poor people many of whom live below the poverty line. You must first set examples of austerity and selfless service yourselves before advising others to do so."

He said all should work in their respective stations with utmost sincerity and without grumbling for rewards. "Rewards will automatically follow good deeds," he stated.

Justice Shahabuddin said he had executed his responsibilities during his brief tenure with no malice to anybody and had to take some stern decisions in the interest of the nation when situation had called for. He said the government should neither fear hard options nor hesitate to act decisively to protect and promote the supreme national interest.

Later, the President's Guard Regiment gave him a ceremonial guard of honour. Justice Shahabuddin inspected the guard in a sombre mood and took the salute.

The President-elect, Abdur Rahman Biswas, sent him a number of souvenirs through the clutches of poverty. "You, as public servants, owe much to our poor people many of whom live below the poverty line. You must first set examples of austerity and selfless service yourselves before advising others to do so."

Shahabuddin returns to Supreme Court

By Staff Correspondent

Acting President Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed assumed the office of the Chief Justice of Bangladesh with the swearing-in of former Speaker Abdur Rahman Biswas as President on Wednesday. Justice Shahabuddin who steered the country through the most turbulent days after the fall of Ershad regime took up the responsibility as Vice-President on December 6 last year.

As per provision of the 11th amendment to the Constitution Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed automatically returned to the judiciary as soon as the elected President entered his office.

The Supreme Court will open on October 20 after autumn vacation.

Chief Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed may go for long leave leading to his retirement from judiciary, after autumn vacation it is learnt from a reliable source.

Badrul blames narrow party politics for defeat

By Staff Correspondent

Former Chief Justice Badrul Haider Chowdhury, dicated in Wednesday's presidential election said that he took the initiative to contest the election as a national consensus candidate but that his initiative was marred as the political parties failed to come out of narrow party politics.

Justice Chowdhury in his post election press conference at his residence yesterday afternoon said that his candidature was not only supported by the Awami League but that many other forces promoted his nomination as well.

Justice Chowdhury, about 65 years old, appeared jolly in the press conference and as in his maiden press conference prior to the election he welcomed journalists with twigs of rajanigandha yesterday too.

Justice Chowdhury replied to a question about the election. See Page 12 Col. 6

JCD, BCL meet for campus peace

By DU Correspondent

The central and the Dhaka University leaders of Jatiyabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) and Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) met Wednesday at the Zahurul Huq Hall and Mohsin Hall in presence of the Proctor and the hall authorities in an effort to maintain campus peace.

They discussed implementation of the decisions of the Dhaka University Academic Atmosphere Council (DUAAC) See Page 12 Col. 8

Manik CPB chief, Nurul Islam GS

By Staff Correspondent

Saifuddin Ahmed Manik was today elected unopposed President of the Communist Party of Bangladesh by its 77 central committee members.

Nurul Islam Nahid was elected General Secretary with 52 votes against his challenger Mujahidul Islam Selim with 10. Five members abstained from voting.

The fifth congress began here on October 3 and was scheduled to conclude on October 8 but was extended by one day for the election. See Page 12 Col. 4

PM pays homage to Oct 10 martyrs

Work unitedly for democracy, uplift

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia Wednesday paid homage to the martyrs who sacrificed their lives on October 10 last year at the beginning of the final stage of the movement to re-establish democracy in the country, reports BSS.

In a message on the eve of this historic day, the Prime Minister said, "I am paying deep respect to the memories of those including Zahid Hossain Jahad, Zakir Hossain, Monwar Hossain Monar, Awlad Hossain and Azad, who sacrificed their lives in the movement for democracy."

She said "a year ago on this day Jahad, Zakir, Monwar, Awlad and Azad embraced death for democracy."

See Page 12 Col. 5
 Related story on page 12

Violence marks hartal in Munshiganj

From Our Correspondent

MUNSHIGANJ, Oct 9 : Violence and clashes marked the day-long hartal at Munshiganj town Wednesday, called by the local unit of Awami League-backed Chhatra League protesting the killing of one of its leaders.

Tension mounted in the small town when the body of Shaheen was brought from Dhaka Medical College Hospital where he succumbed to the multiple stab injuries, allegedly by Jatiyabadi Chhatra Dal activists.

See Page 12 Col. 3

Hasina demands punishment to Shaheen's killers

By Staff Correspondent

Awami League chief and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament on Wednesday blamed the ruling party for the "brutal killing" of Chhatra League leader SM Shaheen while he was undergoing treatment at the Munshiganj Hospital.

Sheikh Hasina in a statement called on the government to track down the killers and give them exemplary punishment after trial.

Burmese junta purges civil servants after testing loyalty

BANGKOK, Oct 9 : Burma's military junta has fired large numbers of civil servants after testing their loyalty with written questionnaires, a Western resident of Rangoon said Wednesday.

The move reflects the junta's stepped up attempt to suppress all dissent among the intelligentsia, middle classes and civil servants, he said.

The resident, who is highly reliable but spoke on condition of anonymity, said he learned a few days earlier that about 600 civil servants in the two ministries of industry had been fired, with no reason given.

A few weeks before that about 200 lecturers and middle-ranking officers of Rangoon universities were similarly sacked. "They literally would come in on a Monday morning and be told to clear their desks by that evening," he said.

"As a result of inadequate answers being given to (the) questionnaires, the purge is now proceeding.... Certainly the pressure is very intense," he added.

The State Law and Order Restoration Council seized power in September 1988, when soldiers killed hundreds, perhaps thousands of people, to crush nationwide rallies for democracy. It has refused to transfer power to pro-democracy parties that swept the May 1990 elections, and through arrests and intimidation has silenced all overt dissent.

Last Friday, the No 2 man in the junta, Maj Gen Khin Nyunt, said action had been taken against disloyal civil servants. He did not specify the time frame but said 2,972 civil servants had been dismissed, suspended or retired and 1,573 had been demoted, had their annual pay raises suspended, transferred or warned.

Action was taken against another 10,516 civil servants for corruption and violating regulations, the state radio quoted him as saying in a speech to officials of ministries.

Khin Nyunt said that on September 24, the military commander ordered all ministers to give a "final warning" to their subordinates that continued forms of opposition in words, deeds, behavior and thoughts despite the warning being issued will no longer be tolerated.

He said employees of state media, including newspapers and broadcast stations, have issued false news and made "instigations."

At the UN General Assembly, Burmese dissidents who formed an opposition government are challenging the country's seat and the world body is to consider possible condemnation of the junta.

Two hacked to death in Jhenidah

JHENIDAH, Oct 9 : Two people were hacked to death in a village of Kaliganj upazila in the district today. Police said Zahuruddin Mandal (32) of village Subarnachhara was killed together with a guest at about 8.30 this morning by a group of armed assailants, reports UNB.