

7 joint secys promoted

UNB, Dhaka
Seven joint secretaries or equivalents have been promoted to additional secretaries and their jobs placed in the establishment ministry as officers on special duty (OSDs). The Superior Selection Board recommended their promotion last week.

They are, according to their previous postings, Syed Abdur Rashid, director, Bureau of Anti-Corruption, Mostafizur Rahman, director-general, NILG, M Badre Alam Khan, joint secretary, establishment ministry, Lutfar Rahman Chowdhury, director-general, Bangladesh Betar, Julfikar Haider Chowdhury, divisional commissioner, Barisal, Tara Charan Chakma, vice-chairman, CHT Development Board and AKM Delwar Hossain, MDS, BPATC.

Meanwhile, two deputy secretary level officials have also been made OSD.

Of them, Kamrunnesa Khyam was a director at the Board of Investment and Tapan Kumar Baral, a director at the National Savings Directorate.

In another development, two secretaries went on LPR yesterday.

They are Dhiraj Kumar Nath of Rural Development and Cooperatives Division and Shafiquddin of Ministry of Religious Affairs.

Alleged drug peddler murdered

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

An alleged drug peddler was killed by his rivals in front of the Railway Colony south of Khelaghar Math at Tejgunipara in the city's Tejaon area Wednesday night.

The said peddler identified as Mohammad Yusuf, 18, son of Ali Hossain, was a resident of South Manjupurpara, Mirpur.

Operatives of the two drug-dealing groups led by Saiful and Selim exchanged gunshots to take control of the area at about 8:30pm. The hour-long shootout was followed by chases and counter-chases in which Yusuf was chopped to death on being caught by his rivals.

Fatally injured, Yusuf was rushed to Suhrawardi Hospital where the attending doctor declared him dead. Later, the body was sent to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital morgue for autopsy.

Victim's brother Shafiq Uddin filed a case with Tejaon Police Station accusing Tara and two others belonging to the Saiful group of the murder.



Vehicles ply one of the many unpaved roads in the city's Gulistan spewing smoke and blowing dust all around yesterday.

No take off by air pollution project

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

Launched almost a year behind schedule, the environment ministry's Air Quality Management Project (AQMP) undertaken to remove air pollution from Dhaka and other major cities is yet to take off fully due to alleged "interference from the top".

The delayed launching was because of interference by high-ups in selection of officials, consultants and contractors, sources in the project told The Daily Star yesterday.

The five million dollar project is aided by the World Bank (WB). Launched early this year, the main tasks like setting up of a monitoring station in Dhaka city to monitor emission of smoke by vehicles, procurement of equipment and recruitment of adequate manpower is yet to be completed to begin the actual work, the sources said. The manpower to be recruited will have to undergo training, they said.

Even the most important part of the AQMP to make available lubricants with proper additives in sealed containers or pouches for use by auto-rickshaws and two wheelers having two-stroke engine still remains a far cry,

a look at the project's report card shows.

Although the authorities have introduced unleaded petrol and octane to make the air lead-free, the much wanted diesel with less sulphur content is yet to be available.

At an evaluation meeting on December 11 at the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MOEF), secretary of the ministry Sabihuddin Ahmed directed the project officials to gear up work after the Eid holidays. The meeting was attended by officials, consultants and WB representatives.

AQMP sources said they are going to set up the first monitoring station at one end of the south plaza of Jatiya Sangsad near Asad Gate in the city next month.

Due to bureaucratic hurdles, a small shed at the corner of the Sangsad plaza could not be renovated to install the imported equipment kept in boxes at a warehouse for the last six months, they claimed.

This station and three others in the city will monitor emission of smoke by vehicles.

Meanwhile, the AQMP personnel are using a mobile station borrowed

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PM at President's Parade at Bhatiyari AL govt imposed political will on armed forces

UNB, Ctg

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday blamed the immediate-past government for what she called imposing political decisions on the armed forces, causing irregularity, disparity and discontentment.

She assured that the present government would give priority to professionalism and talent.

The Prime Minister who is also in charge of the Ministry of Defence was addressing the President's Parade marking commissioning of the 45th Long Course and 16th Special Course of Bangladesh Army

at the Bangladesh Military Academy in Bhatiyari here.

She reiterated her government's commitment to build up skilled and modern armed forces for meeting the challenges of the new century.

"Necessary modernisation and expansion of the armed forces to meet the challenges of the 21st century is one of our major election pledges. We will by all means implement the pledge," she said.

On arrival at the parade ground, she was received by Chief of Army Staff Lt Gen M Harun-Ar-Rashid, GOC of Chittagong Maj Gen Mohammad Abdul Matin and BMA

Commandant Brigadier General Abdul Hafiz. Horse riders with lances escorted her.

The Prime Minister reviewed the smartly turned out parade on board a horse-drawn carriage and took salute at the impressive march past. She also distributed the Sword of Honour and medals among the outstanding cadets.

Battalion Senior Under Officer Mohammad Solaiman was adjudged the best all round cadet and adorned with the 'Sword of Honour.' He also received the Chief of Army Staff's Gold Medal for the

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DMP traffic staff face tall task, but get poor resources

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Discontent prevails among most of the field level personnel of DMP's Traffic Department for what they say "grossly inadequate resources and benefits" the government provides them.

Many of the city's 502 traffic sergeants, mostly university graduates, say their salary and other benefits are "so poor" that they "feel discouraged to perform their duties properly".

Many of these sergeants expressed their frustration and compared their work situation with members of the armed forces and the paramilitary Bangladesh Rifles. While police on the city streets are so short of vehicles to perform their duties, fleets of vehicles are lying

idle at army barracks. The armed forces enjoy a much higher salary and other benefits than that of police, who are constantly on duty, they said.

The government has provided about 25 per cent of the sergeants with motorbikes but the rest have to procure their own transports, they claimed. To perform their professional duties, police as well as the traffic department have to requisition private vehicles. This often makes policemen unpopular with members of the public, they said.

With a gross monthly salary of about Tk 4,094, which includes Tk 300 as medical allowance, Tk 1,187 as house rent, Tk 80 as conveyance and Tk 100 for snacks, a traffic sergeant is constantly on the move to "procure his own food", some

police officials said. They said they were "virtually forced" to take bribes from transport workers and ignore traffic offences to meet their family expenses.

"The country expects the policeman to be honest but is the state providing us enough to be honest? Our system forces us to become dishonest," a young sergeant told this correspondent.

"I get Tk 1,118 as house rent but can you rent any house in Dhaka for that amount? At present I live with my wife and a child at a rented house in Mirpur and pay Tk 6,500 as rent. Everyday, I know I will have to procure some extra money to pay the rent and buy food for my family," he said.

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Bangladesher Samajtantrik Dal brought out a procession in the city yesterday, protesting the price hike of petroleum products and gas.

Fuel price hike protested

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

More organisations yesterday protested the price hike of petroleum products, gas and electricity.

The Left Democratic Front (LDF) at a meeting at its office demanded immediate withdrawal of the "autocratic and anti-people" decisions, saying those will affect the commonman and the country's economy.

The prices were raised to cover up the losses in state-owned organisations due to inefficiency and corruption of officials, it said.

The LDF will stage demonstrations and hold rallies from December 29 to 31 in the city and on January 1 in other places to protest the price hike, said a press release.

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AL HR convention: Participation of others still uncertain

REAZ AHMED

Preparations are underway despite uncertainty over participation of other political parties in an Awami League-sponsored national convention that has been deferred twice so far.

The convention styled 'Crimes against Humanity' is aimed at projecting violations of human rights in the country since the alliance government took power on October 10. The two-day convention was initially scheduled for a January 17 start and was later rescheduled for January 19-20.

However, as the fresh schedule coincides with Biswa Ijtima, the

second largest congregation of the Muslims from all over the world, the convention has been deferred again.

"A fresh schedule would be announced once we find a venue. We've already cancelled bookings at Hotel Sheraton as the earlier schedule coincided with the Ijtima," said Convenor of the National Preparatory Committee of the convention, Justice KM Sobhan, while talking to The Daily Star yesterday.

On the question of participation of other political parties, Justice Sobhan said, "We have had talks with different progressive political parties but they are yet to give their decisions."

Before formation of the National Preparatory Committee, AL chief Sheikh Hasina had dialogues with four left-leaning political parties with

a call for co-sponsoring the convention so that it gets an all-party character. However, that initiative of the AL hit a snag stalling the dialogue with other political parties.

The left-leaning parties have expressed regrets about not being able to join the AL in co-organising the convention.

KM Sobhan said that despite changes in the schedule, preparations to make the convention a success were going on in full swing.

"Our designated people are busy writing papers to be presented at the convention while the list of panelists have almost been finalised," he added.

Meanwhile, the convenor, who is now operating with a skeleton group of associates including Barrister Amir-ul Islam and former ambassa

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	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
Dec 28		5-20 pm
Dec 29	6-41 am	

Prayer Timings		
Dec 28		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-30	6-00
Juma	12-15	1-20
Asr	3-45	4-00
Maghrib	5-25	5-30
Esha	7-15	7-45

Source: Islamic Foundation

Impose anti-dumping duty on Indian yarn: BTMA

SHAHRIAR KARIM

Textile entrepreneurs have urged the government to impose countervailing duty on import of Indian yarn and make it mandatory to import it only through the two seaports in the country. The Bangladesh Textile Mills Association (BTMA), the apex body

of the country's textile mills, in a letter to the commerce secretary made the appeal yesterday. "As the Indian yarn exporters are dumping their products in Bangladesh, we strongly suggest that 25 to 30 per cent countervailing duty be imposed on import of all sorts of Indian yarn," BTMA Chairman A Matin Chowdhury said in the letter.

However, Commerce Secretary Suhel Ahmed said he did not see any such appeal yesterday. "Maybe it will come to my notice on the next workday," he said when contacted.

Earlier in the week, the BTMA has

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Auto-rickshaw, tempo fares up

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Auto-rickshaw and tempo fares increased in the city yesterday following price hike of petroleum products.

Drivers realised extra fares, sometimes unusually high, on the plea of the price hike, a good number of passengers told this correspondent.

The filing stations in the city started selling fuel as per the enhanced rates. Octane was sold at Tk 30 per litre against Tk 25 earlier, petrol at Tk 28 against Tk 25 and kerosene and diesel at Tk 17.50 against Tk 14 per.

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SAARC Summit India to press for ratification of anti-terrorism convention

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, New Delhi

India hopes the SAARC summit beginning in the Nepalese capital of Kathmandu early next month will set a deadline for Bangladesh and Pakistan to pass enabling legislations to complete the process of ratification of the Regional Convention on Suppression of Terrorism.

Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee, who is now certain to attend the summit, is expected to articulate India's pro-active role on the convention on suppression of terrorism at the grouping of heads of states or governments in the Nepalese capital, official sources here said.

Bangladesh and Pakistan are among the member-countries of South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) whose parliaments are yet to pass legislations ratifying the convention on terrorism which was first adopted at the summit in Kathmandu way back in 1988.

Besides, India is likely to suggest the adoption of a regional extradition treaty, the sources said, adding that New Delhi expects the coming summit to go beyond reiteration of old positions.

Terrorism, according to Nepalese ambassador to India B B Thapa, will top the agenda at the Kathmandu summit, even though

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EC finally to ask for expense statement

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission, nearly after three months of the October 1 election, has initiated a move to ask the political parties to submit statements on their polls expenses to the EC, official sources said.

EC officials, as per a directive of the Chief Election Commissioner, are now busy preparing notification asking the parties to submit their statements. It will serve prescribed forms to the parties for this.

"Statement in plain paper signed by the party secretary general or a responsible person would also be accepted," said an EC official adding that the EC would publish a notification within a short time in this regard through newspapers and other media.

In a hurriedly made promulgation shortly before the general election, the caretaker government had brought changes in the Representation of People Order (RPO) that included provisions for registration of political parties with the EC and maintenance of their income and polls expenditure accounts with any schedule bank. But, the EC did not make the provisions mandatory at that time.

The EC had fixed the ceiling of election expenses of parties in three categories. The ceiling was Tk 1.5 crore for parties nominating over 200 candidates, Tk 1 crore for over 100 candidates and Tk 75 lak for those nomi-

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