

Four more contractual appointees

Mansur Musa becomes Bangla Academy DG

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has given contractual appointments to four more persons of different academies and institutions under the Ministry of Cultural Affairs.

With the latest appointments, the number of contractual appointments has risen to 52 in nearly last four months of the BNP-led four-party coalition government.

According to an official notification issued yesterday, the government appointed Abul Mansur Muhammad Abu Musa, known as Mansur Musa, of the Dhaka University, as director general (DG) of the Bangla Academy on a two-year contract. He also served as DG of the academy during the period of the previous BNP government.

Litterateur Abdul Mannan Syed has been appointed executive director of the Nazrul Institute for two years, while the incumbent executive director of the institute, Muhammad Nurul, has been withdrawn to the Bangla Academy after cancellation of his contractual appointment.

Assistant Publicity Secretary of the BNP Ahmed Musa has been appointed director of the Bangladesh Folk Art and Crafts Foundation, Sonargaon, on a two-year contract.

Senior journalist Shafiq-ul-Islam, known as Mahmud Shafiq, has been appointed director of the National Book Centre for two years.

Meanwhile, the government brought some changes to the mid-level of the administration yesterday.

Joint Secretary Rustam Ali has been appointed chairman of the Bangladesh Sericulture Board. Deputy Secretary Mridula Bhattacharyya has been made director of the Press Institute of Bangladesh (PIB).

Chief Executive Officer of the Dhaka District Council Anju Monwara Begum has been transferred as deputy secretary to the

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FM tells JS Bangladesh Bhaban in UK sold during AL rule

BSS, Dhaka

Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan told the Jatiya Sangsad yesterday that the historic 'Bangladesh Bhaban' in London UK, was sold during the rule of Awami League government.

"A probe body has been formed to investigate the allegations regarding the sale of the Bhaban and purchase of a new building there," he said, while replying to a question from Jamaat lawmaker Shah Mohammad Ruhul Quddus.

Khan said the report, to be submitted by the committee after investigation, would be placed before the parliament. He said the present government would investigate the Bangladesh Bhaban issue for ensuring its transparency and accountability.

The foreign minister said Bangladesh now has extradition treaty with only one country in the world. Under this treaty, he said, the government could not bring all criminals back to the country and put them under trial accordingly.

Replying to another question from BNP lawmaker Mohammad Mosharrar Hossain, he said at present 31 from BCS (foreign) cadre and 11 from BCS (non-foreign) cadre are discharging their duties as ambassadors and high commissioners.

The number of ambassadors and high commissioners during Awami League was 28, who were appointed under political and special consideration for various terms, he said.

Duty-free cars for project used for private purpose

Govt loses huge revenue

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Thirteen luxurious cars, imported duty-free under a power project, are being used privately depriving the government around Tk 2 crore in revenue.

According to sources, the cars were imported by a Russian firm, Techno Prom Export (TPE), for an expansion project of Ghorashal Power Plant.

Of the 13 cars, five were imported against the passbook of the project that expired in 1998. But no taxes were allegedly paid for the private use of the cars despite reminders from the National Board of Revenue (NBR).

Another five cars were imported duty-free against passbooks of the officials of the firm without informing the NBR. All the passbook holders left the country after the end of their tenure. These cars are now being used

without any legal papers.

The luxurious cars include Nissan Sunny, Toyota Corolla, Nissan Blue Bird, Toyota jeep and Toyota Crown Royal Saloon.

Director General of the Directorate of Customs Intelligence Alauddin Chowdhury expressed his ignorance about the matter when contacted.

He however said they will look into the matter if the registration numbers of the cars were available.

The registration numbers of the cars are SAS-65-3644 (Nissan Blue Bird) SAS 65-3696 (Nissan Sunny), ASV-004 (white Toyota microbus), ASV-005 (grey Toyota microbus) ASV-006, (green Toyota Corolla) ASV-007 (white Toyota Corolla) AKG-007 (blue Toyota jeep) ASV-008 (blue Toyota corolla), ASV 009 (Toyota jeep) ASV-010 (Toyota Crown Royal Saloon) and ASV 011 (blue Toyota Corolla).

Int'l meet on new regional forum begins today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A Two-day international conference begins in the city today to explore the possibility of forming a new economic regional forum comprising Bangladesh, China, India and Myanmar.

"The main objective of the conference is to discuss ways of forging a new economic forum, reviving the historic silk route and to bolster investment and trade opportunities in the region," said Dr Debapriya Bhattacharyya, executive director of the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD).

"Although the first initiative for such a conference was taken up by the government of Yunnan province in China, it is still at the non-government level," he said while briefing newsmen at the CPD office yesterday.

He said the conference would mainly discuss trade and investment opportunities, strengthening transport connectivity and institutional and political dimensions of

cooperation.

Bhattacharyya observed that these four countries hold a great potential for cooperation in a number of areas including transport and infrastructure, trade and investment, joint venture, border trade, science and technology, tourism and exploration of natural resources.

This would be the third such conference with the previous ones held in China and India in 1999 and 2000 respectively.

Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan would inaugurate the conference at BRAC Centre.

Commerce Minister Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury, Communications Minister Nazmul Huda and State Minister for Foreign Affairs Reaz Rahman would be chief guests of three separate sessions.

Around 30 delegates from the participating countries would attend the conference.

Home Minister of Assam State Government Pradyut Bordoloi

would also be among the 9-member Indian delegation.

The first such conference took place at Kunming in Yunnan province in China in 1999.

Former president of the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industries and CPD Chairman Prof. Rehman Sobhan led the Bangladesh delegation to the conference.

Dr Bhattacharyya said the two previous conferences were participated by high-level officials, eminent experts, business leaders and leading members of the civil society.

The main achievements of the previous conferences were that the participants could reach an understanding and felt the need for such a forum, he observed.

CPD Research Director Dr Mostafizur Rahman and some members from the foreign delegations were also present during the briefing.

Shazneen case Bail petitions of 5 accused rejected

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The second special court for prevention of women and children repression, Dhaka, yesterday rejected the bail petitions of the five accused in Shazneen rape case.

Judge Kazi Rahmat Ullah passed the order following two separate petitions, seeking bail by the defence lawyers.

In its order, the court mentioned that the charges of rape and murder brought against the accused were primarily proved on the basis of confessional statements given by Shahidul Islam alias Shahid, the main accused in the case. Moreover, the case is primary stage of trial. So, the bail petitions are rejected.

The defence lawyers submitted two separate petitions for bail on behalf of the accused Hasan, Shaniram, Badal, Minu and Parvin.

The prosecution side opposed the bail petitions.

The court also adjourned the hearing of the case till March 10 following a time petition submitted by the defence lawyer.

The lawyer stated in his petition that this chief counsel MA Kamrul Hasan Khan Aslam, appointed for the accused Shahid, could not appear in the court due to his illness. So, he prayed for adjournment of the hearing.

The prosecution side was ready for hearing. Additional SP of CID Mojibur Rahman, first prosecution witness and complainant of the case, appeared in the court to face cross-examination by the defence lawyers.

After hearing both sides the court granted the petition.

Shazneen Tasnim Rahman, 15, youngest daughter of Latifur

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HC stays order to demolish Amtali slum

BSS, Dhaka

The High Court yesterday stayed an order to demolish the Amtali slum for three months following a writ challenging the eviction notice.

A division bench comprising Justice Syed JR Mudassir Husain and Justice Syed Mahmud Hossain passed the order upon hearing of the petition against works ministry order issued on January 23.

Ain O Shalish Kendra, Coalition For Urban Poor and resident of the slum Bacchu Mia, Elyious Mia, and Kamala Begum jointly filed the writ petition.

The court also asked the government to show cause why they should not be directed to rehabilitate the slum dwellers before eviction.

UPDF leader shot dead in Khagrachhari

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A leader of the United People's Democratic Front (UPDF) was shot dead at Mohalchhari in Khagrachhari district yesterday morning.

The victim was identified as Rupayan Chakma, 29.

Sources said armed miscreants opened fire on Rupayan while he was going to Mahalchhari Bazar. He died on the spot.

Chittagong unit of UPDF in a press statement yesterday held armed cadres of Parbotiya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samity (PCJSS) the pro-peace accord group, responsible for the killing and demanded immediate arrest of the killers.

Masud Aziz made envoy to Malaysia

UNB, Dhaka

The government has appointed Masud Aziz, Director General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as Bangladesh High Commissioner to Malaysia.

Masud Aziz joined BCS Foreign Affairs cadre in 1977 and served in Bangladesh missions in Germany, Iran, Italy, India, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia in various capacities.

He also served as secretary general of SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry based in Islamabad, said a press release of the Foreign Ministry.



PHOTO: STAR

Firefighters spray water on a burning plastic factory warehouse as factory workers and local residents look on anxiously at Lalbagh in the city yesterday.

3 more murdered in city

STAFF CORR ESPONDENT

Three people were murdered in the city in last 17 hours till 3 pm yesterday.

Sakhawat Hossain, 25, son of Basir Uddin of Khilgaon Trimohoni, was shot dead in front of the Civil Aviation Staff Quarters at Kawa on the Zia International Airport at around 9.15 pm Monday.

Sakhawat, an NGO worker, was playing badminton in front of a F-type building along with his friends. Two hoodlums went there and called him out of the court. One of them shot him in left shoulder, back and left hand.

Fatally injured Sakhawat was rushed to Jahanara Hospital at Section-1, Uttara at around 10.35 pm where the doctors declared him dead.

Sources said Sakhawat was also the general secretary of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal, Kawa unit. Sakhawat's body was sent to

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the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) morgue for autopsy. Victim's father filed a murder case with airport police station.

In another incident, a construction worker was beaten to death by extortionists at East Shewrapara in the city's Mirpur area yesterday afternoon.

The victim, Khokan, son of Eskander Miah, came under attack, while he was working at a construction site at 20/5 East Shewrapara. A gang of four led by Masud and Selim went to the site and asked Khokan about whereabouts of the owner. The gang members locked in an altercation with Khokan and at one stage they started beating him. Fatally injured Khokan was rushed to the DMCH where the attending doctors declared him dead.

The victim hailed from Latifganj in Ramganj upazila of Laxmipur district. No case was filed with Kafrul police station till 8 pm yesterday.

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2 held for killing computer firm manager

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police have arrested two persons in connection with the mugging and killing of sales manager of a computer firm in Dhanmondi area on Monday.

Dhanmondi police arrested Qaium and Lal Miah the same night for their alleged involvement in the killing of Alam, sales manager of Smart Technology (BD) Limited, at Road No 4.

Jahirul Islam, owner of the computer firm filed a case with Dhanmondi police station in this regard. Police could not recover the looted money till filing of this report last night.

Armed muggers shot dead Shamsul Alam, 25, after snatching Tk 3.46 lakh from the victim Monday afternoon. Alam was returning to his office after withdrawing the money.

As soon as Alam's microbus reached in front of his office, four muggers riding two motorbikes

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Nigerian riots leave 100 dead

REUTERS, Lagos

Nigerian soldiers have kicked in doors and interrogated kneeling suspects at gunpoint in a hunt for those behind four days of tribal clashes that have left at least 100 dead in Lagos, Nigeria's biggest city.

Authorities in the city of 10 million suggested that clashes between gangs wielding bows and arrows, guns and machetes might have been engineered to create instability that could lead to an attempt to restore military rule.

Pitted against each other in the violence are Nigeria's main tribes and old rivals for power -- Hausas whose origins lie in the mainly Muslim north and Yorubas from the more heavily Christian and animist southwest around Lagos.

"As of now you can say 100 have been confirmed dead. About 430 have been wounded," Nigerian Red Cross President Emmanuel Ijewere told Reuters on Tuesday as he helped bring some 3,000 people who fled the ramshackle district to a temporary camp.

After a few hours of calm, some

residents returned to check whether their homes had been burned and rescue what possessions they could. But troops ordered them to leave again quickly.

The odd gunshot rang out and armed youths darted for cover at the approach of army and police patrols. The stench of rotting and burnt flesh hung in the air, as dozens of charred bodies littered the streets. "We pray that security forces will be around for at least one month so that normalcy will return," carpenter Mohammed Sabitu said. "That is the only way to end this madness."

Widespread alert

After flashes of violence elsewhere in Lagos, troops and police were on alert to stop trouble spreading. Soldiers were also on standby in northern Nigeria as the riots wound tensions higher across Africa's most populous nation.

The latest in a series of murderous clashes since army rule ended in 1999 were a stark reminder of Nigeria's fragility as it gears up for general elections next year.

Authorities in Lagos raised suspicions that the riots, following

an ammunition dump explosion in the city that caused 1,000 deaths and an unprecedented police strike, might have been engineered.

"Obviously when you look at the sequence of events you don't have to be a sleuth to know that it appears to be a programme," Lagos State Information Commissioner Dele Alake told Reuters.

"These events seem to be appeared to be designed to create an atmosphere of instability and perhaps give occasion to any military adventurers to act," he said.

Nigeria has routinely used the army to put down ethnic disturbances which have killed thousands since President Olusegun Obasanjo took office in 1999 to end a disastrous 15-year spell of corrupt and oppressive military rule.

Tension in Lagos has been driven higher by anger among lower-ranking soldiers over their treatment after the January 27 ammunition dump blast, which flattened most of the Ikeja barracks and left thousands homeless.

Most of the more than 1,000 who

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Workers go on rampage at KNM

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Workers of Khulna Newsprint Mills (KNM) went on rampage and ransacked the administrative building yesterday demanding payment of their provident fund money.

They also confined all the officials in the administrative building. Later, police went to the spot and freed the officials.

According to police and CBA leader, doors, windows and furniture of the Administrative office were badly damaged in the attack.

Discontent among the workers erupted when they heard that Taka 61 lakh was paid to retired employees and workers of the mill instead of paying it to workers against provident fund.

CBA leaders said Taka 1.65 lakh was withdrawn yesterday by the management for giving loans to workers. But officials concerned did not honour commitment made to workers regarding distribution of money withdrawn from PF.

Production in the KNM remained suspended for last one month due to fund crisis.