

Govt gets down to jack up manpower

Priority recruitment list in a week; health, education, industry to get immediate staff

SHARIAR KARIM

In the face of resource constraint, a cabinet committee yesterday decided to cut short a list prepared by a secretary committee to fill 10,000 vacancies in different government departments, according to highly placed sources.

The secretary committee early this year recommended immediate appointment to 10,000 vacant posts.

However, the cabinet committee on public administration at a meeting yesterday felt that it would not be possible to immediately recruit such a huge manpower, as it would mean increased expenditure, according to sources.

The committee meeting chaired by Finance and Planning Minister M Saifur Rahman instituted another four-member secretary committee headed by Cabinet Secretary Dr

Saadat Husain and asked it to prioritise the list and submit it in seven days to the government. The other members of the committee are finance secretary, establishment secretary and an official from the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) with the rank of a secretary.

"We have set up a secretary committee to prioritise the list. There are many important posts lying vacant, but we have to think where

the money will come from to pay the new recruits," Saifur told waiting newsmen after the meeting.

He also said important vacant posts like those of doctors and engineers have to be filled up immediately despite financial constraints.

According to meeting sources, some of the ministers who attended yesterday's meeting favoured recruitment for vacant posts in their

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Biman to put ATPs back into service

UNB, Dhaka

In an attempt to overcome the shortage of aircraft in domestic flight-schedule, Bangladesh Biman will soon restart operation of ATP planes.

The engineers of Bangladesh Biman had properly repaired the two ATP aircraft that remained grounded here for a long time, said an official handout.

State Minister for Civil Aviation and Tourism Meer Mohammad Nasiruddin yesterday visited the airport to himself see the repaired ATP aircraft at the hanger and expressed satisfaction over the work of the engineers.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia on February 1, 1992 inaugurated the 80,000-square feet hanger where five aircraft, including two domestic ones, could be repaired at a time.

Later, the state minister had a meeting with the engineers of the hanger.

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'Nothing wrong with defence deal'

Morshed says it won't hurt ties with India

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The defence deal between Bangladesh and China signed in Beijing Wednesday does not contain anything destructive, said Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan yesterday.

"Of course not" was his reply when Morshed was asked if the agreement would have any bearing on Bangladesh's relation with India.

"It's not a destructive matter. It aims to ensure timely and necessary defence cooperation (between Bangladesh and China) and not directed at any third country," the minister told a press conference at his ministry. "It has been done in line with the globally acknowledged practice."

Briefing newsmen on Prime Minister Khaleda Zia's just-concluded five-day visit to China, he said Dhaka and Beijing signed three agreements on economic cooperation.

However, the minister refused to release any copy of the defence accord or elaborate on its content.

"I must make it clear that it's not a security pact...it's only on expanding cooperation in the defence sector. The deal is aimed at modernising the armed forces of Bangladesh. Training of troops is its main focus. I hope Bangladesh would benefit from it," he said about the agreement.

Asked if Bangladesh would purchase military hardware from China under the new agreement,

the minister quipped: "We did not carry any shopping list (while visiting China). Bangladesh cannot afford expensive military hardware."

Pestered with questions on the issue, Morshed said the two countries under the umbrella defence accord would sit when necessary to discuss and decide on increased cooperation in the defence sector. "We'll do whatever necessary for peace." The deal is renewable after every five years.

To another question, the foreign minister said the accord would make possible smooth and speedy defence cooperation between Bangladesh and China. "The umbrella agreement will remove difficulties we had to face for piece

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Cold wave claims six more lives in Thakurgaon

UNB, Thakurgaon

Cold wave claimed six more lives in the district on Friday night, raising the death toll to 11.

They were identified as Monju Rani Saha, 65, of Jaminderpara, Jagonnath Singh, 60, of Bazarpara, Khateja Bewa, 85, of Faridpur and Samiron Bibi, 50, of Kochubari village in Sadar upazila, Nurunnabi, 40, of Bhelatir-Dangibosti in Peerganj upazila and Kofura, 90, of Torra village in Horipur upazila.

Meanwhile, about 300 people with pneumonia, diarrhoea and respiratory complications have been admitted to Sadar Hospital and four other upazila health complexes, local civil surgeon said.

Dutch-Bangla Bank Ltd has provided 5,000 blankets for distribution among the cold-hit people of the district. Speaker Barrister Jamiruddin Sircar formally inaugurated the distribution Friday night.

The district administration is yet to receive any relief or warm clothes from the government for distribution.

14 more listed criminals arrested

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The joint forces led by the army arrested 66 people including 14 listed criminals in different areas of the country in 24 hours till 8 am yesterday.

They also recovered 19 firearms including a pistol, four revolvers, six pipe guns, six shot guns and a cut-rifle and eight bullets.

Our Correspondent in Barisal reported that the joint forces arrested a Jamaat-e-Islami leader yesterday.

Abu Bakkar Khan, Ameer of Nalchity upazila unit of Jamaat, was arrested from his house. He was detained under Section 54 of the CrPC.

Our Pabna correspondent reported that six persons including a listed criminal were arrested and some firearms and drugs were seized during raids in different areas of the district yesterday.

The army arrested listed criminal Shahjalal along with a revolver. He is an accused in a number of cases.

In Narsingdi, the joint forces arrested four persons including a fake army officer from a bus stand on Friday night.

The fake army officer, Pronoy Kumar Banik, used to collect toll from people.



PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ

A woman cooks out in the Suhrawardy Udyan, now a hangout of anti-social elements. Four acres of the park, one of the city's largest open spaces, have been fenced off for a mega-project of monuments commemorating the War of Liberation.

Greens in blues

Sex workers roam at night, drug peddlers during day at Suhrawardy Udyan

ZAHEDUL ISLAM

If you visit the Suhrawardy Udyan, one of the largest open spaces in the city, you will hardly recognise it as a park.

Most of the park area is now in a shambles with an unfinished mega-project of monuments commemorating the War of Liberation.

About four acres of the 67-acre park have been fenced off. People know little about what is going on inside the four-acre site since May 1999.

The immediate past govern-

ment had plans to build Swadhinata Sthambha, which includes a tall glass tower, an amphitheatre, an underground museum amid oval-shaped walkways and a range of art works.

But the Tk 171 crore project, 40 per cent of which is complete, came under severe scrutiny after the BNP-led four-party alliance came to power. The project was officially suspended on February 16 this year following a meeting chaired by Housing and Public Works Minister Mirza Abbas.

An official at the housing and public works ministry said the

suspension order came after 'corruption' was detected in the project.

The incomplete structures are gathering moss and the whole area around it testifies to sheer indifference. No longer are there morning walkers or joggers seen in the lush green lawns of the park.

The entire park that tells the tale of grossly unplanned afforestation is now frequented by floating sex workers, drug peddlers, vagabonds, muggers and vendors. The project site now houses a makeshift army camp.

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Accused Rifat made approver in schoolteacher murder case

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Rifat Akond, one of the eight accused in schoolteacher Swapan Kumar Goswami murder case, has been made an approver in the case.

Metropolitan Magistrate Mohammad Shahidul Islam issued the order upon a petition, submitted by the defence lawyers on behalf of the accused.

Accused Rifat Akond, now in jail custody with the seven others, made an offer in a petition submitted to the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's (CMM's) Court, Dhaka, on December 23 to become an 'approver' in the case.

In his petition, Rifat said if he is made an approver, he would disclose everything he knows about the murder.

After hearing, magistrate Mamun-Al-Rashid took the petition into cognizance and directed the investigation officer (IO) of the case to take necessary steps in this regard.

On December 24, the IO submitted a forwarding report to the court and prayed for recording statement of Rifat. The court recorded Rifat's statement on December 26.

After scrutinising the statements of Rifat, the court yesterday granted the petition.

Earlier, Rifat and four other accused gave confessional statements before the Metropolitan Magistrate's Court on different dates.

Swapan Kumar Goswami, a teacher of the Government Laboratory High School in the city, was shot dead on October 26 near his residence at Bhutergoli.

Only two, not 20 NGOs resigned, says ADAB

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A vested quarter is engaged in a conspiracy to destroy the ADAB (Association of Development Agencies in Bangladesh) in a pre-planned way, a ADAB statement signed by its programme coordinator Minar Mansoor said yesterday.

It claimed that the so-called National NGO Coordination Committee (NNCC) is engaged in spreading "misleading, false and motivated information to mislead ADAB members as well as the people".

Referring to a news item published recently on the basis of a NNCC press statement that some 20 NGOs quit the ADAB, it said the information is "absolutely false and fabricated".

Only two NGOs in Jessore Mash and Karmajibi Sangstha resigned, it said.

The statement said a section of NGOs which lost the ADAB executive committee polls in September 22 last year are engaged in a conspiracy to dishonour the present ADAB leadership and to destroy the organisation.

"The so-called convention held in Savar was organised by the NGOs expelled from the organisation and defeated in the election. After they lost the polls, members of the so-called NNCC threatened to punish the ADAB".

It said that ADAB leaders had several rounds of talks with NNCC Convenor Fazole Hosan Abed to resolve the problems and to uphold the democratic tradition and inde

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Nasim reduced to mere member

Final ALCWC likely today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Awami League (AL) yesterday announced almost all the office bearers and members of its new central working committee, excepting two.

Announcement of two more names, which is likely today, would complete the formation of the new 73-strong AL Central Working Committee (ALCWC). Earlier, it announced 39 office bearers following the December 26 triennial council of the party.

At an adjourned meeting of the newly constituted party presidium yesterday, the AL announced names

of six more office bearers and 26 members. After chairing the meeting for three hours at a stretch at the party's Dhanmondi office in the city, AL President Sheikh Hasina adjourned the presidium meeting for the second day. It is scheduled to resume at 4:30pm today.

Former home minister and immediate-past organising secretary of the party Mohammad Nasim was finally picked as a member. Earlier, his exclusion from important party portfolio had taken many by surprise.

Similarly, previous information and research secretary Abu Sayeed also found a place in the new com-

mittee as a member. Nuh-ul-Alam Lenin has been tipped to replace Sayeed as the new information and research secretary.

HN Ashikur Rahman, Abdul Mannan Khan and Alamgir Kumkum retained their respective positions as treasurer, office secretary and cultural secretary. Two women leaders, Ivy Rahman and Najma Rahman have been made Women Affairs Secretary and Relief and Social Welfare Secretary respectively.

Names of two more office bearers - one organising secretary (out of seven) and freedom fighters' affairs

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Jalil sets sight on toppling govt

NAZRUL ISLAM

Newly elected General Secretary of the Awami League (AL) Abdul Jalil believes there is no alternative to toppling the present 'repressive regime' and having a democratic one through a mid-term election.

"Democracy is endangered in the hands of the BNP-led coalition government, human rights are being trampled and the country has been pushed on the verge of ruin," Abdul Jalil told The Daily Star in an exclusive interview.

The former AL presidium member, who was elected party general secretary at its triennial council on Thursday, talked about politics in the country, government-opposition relations, his plan to rejuvenate the 53-year old party and anti-government programmes and so on.

During his nearly one-hour interview at his Dhanmondi residence in the city, the sexagenarian politician expressed his optimism about dislodging this government

through a mass movement and establishing an exploitation-free social order.

He said his party would launch a massive anti-government movement after uniting the pro-liberation forces and reorganising his party workers. He mentioned

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Saber sent to Sylhet jail

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Saber Hossain Chowdhury, Organising Secretary of the newly formed central committee of Awami League and Political Secretary to party President Sheikh Hasina, was sent to Sylhet jail from Dhaka Central Jail late Friday night.

Earlier, the government had sent other eminent persons having different opinion or belonging to opposition political camp to jails in different districts from the Dhaka Central Jail.

Of them, writer-columnist Shahriar Kabir was first sent to Kashimpur jail and then to Chittagong jail.

Awami League (AL) leader Tofail Ahmed was first sent to Kashimpur jail and then to Kushtia jail. Prof Muntasir Mamun was sent to Dinajpur jail, AL leaders Shafi Ahmed and Bahauddin Nasim to Rangpur jail, AL leader Mukul Bose to Rajshahi jail and Reuters stringer Enamul Haq Chowdhury to Sylhet jail.

When contacted, an official at the Dhaka Central Jail said, "We have sent them to different prisons of the country as per instructions from the higher authorities."

Lawyers and family members of these detained persons allege that the government is simply harassing them by sending them to far off prisons.



Abdul Jalil

Bid to bring back Tridib Roy to counter PCJSS?

NURUL ALAM, Chittagong

Some tribal elites are trying to bring back former tribal chief 'Raja' Tridib Roy of Rangamati from Pakistan to float a political party in Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) to counter the Parbatyia Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samity (PCJSS), sources said.

Tridib Roy, father of incumbent Rangamati Chakma circle chief Debashish Roy, is in self-exile in Pakistan since 1971. He went to

Pakistan because of his role as a collaborator during the War of Independence and did not return to his homeland fearing backlash.

The tribal elites unhappy with the government to bring back Tridib Roy, possibly in February next.

The sources said frequent gun-fights between activists of PCJSS and UPDF (United People's Democratic Front) after signing of the CHT peace agreement in December 1997 angered some tribal elites and residents there. PCJSS signed the agreement. UPDF opposes it.

"This prompted them to take a move for launching a third front to protect the interests of tribal people as well as to restore peace in the hills", one source said.

The tribal elites are also trying to involve Debashish Roy in their efforts.

Talking to The Daily Star, B K Dewan, former advisor to Ershad government on CHT affairs, said, "I know Tridib Roy is supposed to arrive here on a visit to attend an installation ceremony to declare his grandson as prince.

"Efforts are on to give Tridib Roy a reception. So far I know there is no

embargo from the government side on his arrival here", Dewan said.

"But I don't know whether there is any plan to float a political party involving Tridib Roy" he added.

A senior government official in CHT on condition of anonymity said tribal leaders unhappy with PCJSS are discussing "internally" to involve Tridib Roy in CHT politics.

When contacted over telephone, Debashish Roy said his father may come to Bangladesh for a visit "any time in future".

"But my father told me with all seriousness that he has no intention at all to get involved in any political activity here", Debashish said.

Debashish said he visited Pakistan one and a half years ago to meet his father.

"At that time I had a discussion with my father on whether he wants to come home to do politics. He totally declined," he said.

Tridib Roy was Pakistan's envoy in some foreign countries after independence of Bangladesh as he was all along loyal to the Pakistani government.

It may be noted that, Binita Roy, mother of Tridib Roy, was advisor to president Ziaur Rahman.