

Reshuffle rumour rumbles again

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Continued speculations for several months over an impending reshuffle of the cabinet have left several senior ministers and some junior ministers wary.

A number of sources said the 60-member jumbo cabinet with its present composition may sit for the last time today as many cabinet members may face the axe, while some fresh faces may be drafted in.

But the size of the current 60-member council of ministers will definitely be trimmed, maybe to 45 to 50 members.

Highly placed sources said

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia received resignation letters from four cabinet ministers, 11 state ministers and one deputy minister in August last year due to unsatisfactory performance and various allegations against them.

These members are already fearful of losing their portfolio. Some junior ministers are also keeping their fingers crossed. But the list may now be changed as a few of them have succeeded to have their names crossed off from the axelists.

As a result, sources at the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) said, some more cabinet and state ministers might also be asked to submit

resignation letters because of their reported involvement in various scandals. Besides, portfolio of several ministers and state ministers would be changed with the arrival of a few new faces.

Sources said the prime minister has also planned to change the portfolios of several cabinet ministers and state ministers. The home, environment and forest, foreign, shipping, post and telecommunications, food, fisheries and livestock, energy and mineral resources and jute ministries may see new faces.

Dhaka Mayor Sadeque Hossain
SEE PAGE 11 COL 7

Abducted reporter yet to be rescued

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

President of Sitakunda Press Club and correspondent of the Ittefaq Atahar Siddiq Khosru is yet to be rescued even after 96 hours of his abduction on Wednesday evening.

Local journalists yesterday staged a demonstration in Sitakunda demanding immediate rescue of the journalist and arrest of the kidnappers.

Khosru was abducted while going to a relative's house at Maderbari from Dewanhat area at around 10:00pm Wednesday.

Following the incident Khosru's elder brother filed two general diaries with the Double Mooring Police Station and the Sitakunda Police Station.

Khosru's family members and local journalists accused involvement of a local BNP top leader in the abduction.



PHOTO: PID

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia gives a commissioning order to one of the commanding officers of two offshore patrol vessels BNS Kapatakhyia and BNS Karotoa at a ceremony at the naval jetty of BNS Issa Khan in Chittagong yesterday.

Govt steps sought to keep SARS at bay

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Stringent measures have been demanded of the government to prevent outbreak of SARS in the country.

Speakers made the demand at a roundtable discussion yesterday and expressed concern over the preparedness of preventing Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), recently detected in India some South East Asian countries.

The roundtable on SARS epidemic and national preparedness was organised by the Shasthya Andolon (health movement). It was held at the Dhaka Community Hospital (DCH) auditorium yesterday with Prof Ahmed Kamal of Dhaka University in the chair.

They said the lackadaisical preparation the government has been taking is not at all adequate as far as this highly infectious disease is concerned. Moreover, as people have limited knowledge about it, it may spread quickly.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 5

Navy to become a 3-dimensional force, says PM

UNB, Chittagong

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday announced a package of action plans and initiatives to build a three-dimensional naval force at a ceremony commissioning two patrol vessels in the Bangladesh Navy.

The prime minister, who is also in charge of the Defence Ministry, formally commissioned the two offshore patrol vessels (OPV), BNS Kapatakhyia and BNS Karotoa, at the naval jetty of BNS Issa Khan by unveiling their nameplates and handing over the commissioning orders to the two commanding officers.

It was followed by hoisting of national flags, commissioning pennants and naval ensigns at the masts of the ships as a mark of their joining the Bangladesh Navy fleet.

Both the vessels were in active service in the British Royal Navy prior to the procurement from the

UK.

A contingent comprising 43 Navy members, including eight officers, led by their commanding officers boarded each offshore patrol vessel during the commissioning.

Ministers, diplomats, MPs, chiefs of three services, high civil and military officials and members of the elite were present at the commissioning function.

The prime minister informed her audience that three more patrol vessels would be added to the naval force in the coming year and the procurement process of two patrol boats was already in the final stage.

She further said the government has planned to add helicopters to naval ships and include Naval Air Arm in the naval force apart from procuring ships and other military equipment.

Khaleda Zia also disclosed the
SEE PAGE 11 COL 3



PHOTO: STAR

Students of the Jagannath University College hang out in front of the main building of the institution, as government college teachers in Dhaka went on a two-day strike yesterday.

Govt urged to go into more gas exploration

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government should immediately start investing in gas exploration and development, as the sector is on the verge of facing an acute crisis.

The sector needs an investment of Tk 2,000 crore to Tk 3,000 crore in the next couple of years to meet the projected minimum gas demand, speakers said yesterday at a roundtable on 'Oil and Security' organised by Bangladesh Institute of Law and International Affairs (BILLA).

Professor Rehman Sobhan emphasised value addition to gas and said that the best way to add value was to give input to the agriculture sector by manufacturing fertilisers and generating electricity at a much lower cost. "It will have impact on the rural economy," he said.

At the roundtable, moderated by Waliur Rahman of BILLA, the speakers maintained that the international situation arising out of the Iraq war might affect the oil price. But it would not severely hit energy security of Bangladesh that depends mainly on local gas as the source of energy.

However, for every dollar of oil price hike, Bangladesh would have to increase export by 5 per cent to match the deficit, warned Muzammel Huq who presented the keynote paper.

Huq, who is the general manager of the Grameen Bank and former member of International Institute of Strategic Studies, London noted that a mere seven per cent oil supply drop could push oil prices up by 30 per cent.

Gas Transmission Company Limited (GTL) General Manager
SEE PAGE 11 COL 2

Potato goes abroad

REAZ AHMAD

The export basket now has a new item -- potato.

Exporters hope to fetch \$2 lakh this year by exporting 1,100 tonnes of high quality potatoes to Singapore and Malaysia.

Non-government organisation BRAC and another private company, Agri-Concern, are exporting the item and exploring new markets.

Exporters told The Daily Star that the price for high quality Bangladeshi potatoes ranges between \$170 and \$180 per tonne in Singapore and Malaysia.

But if the Thai market could be tapped, potatoes could attract a premium price of \$205 per tonne. And that is where both the organisations are now trying to export.

BRAC first exported only 26 tonnes of potatoes in 1999. The

volume rose to 350 tonnes in 2002. The target for this year has been set at 1,000 tonnes. Mallik Saqui, general manager of the Vegetable Export Programme of BRAC, said 80 per cent of the target would be achieved.

"Had there been no (Singapore-bound) shipment cancellation due to SARS, we would have met the full target," Saqui said.

He said high quality potatoes including the granola variety are grown by contract farmers in Dinajpur and Rangpur and are transported to the Chittagong port for export. Granola potato is round in shape with yellowish flesh.

"We train farmers on production, grading, packaging and storing," said Saqui. "Previously, many failed to export this perishable commodity due to lack of proper technology."

SEE PAGE 11 COL 1

Indian push-in victims arrested

BSS, Dinajpur

Two Indians, who were pushed into Bangladesh by the Indian Border Security Force (BSF) five days ago, were arrested yesterday after Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) failed to push them back, BDR sources said.

On April 29, the BSF deliberately pushed the two Bengali-speaking Indian youths secretly through Barogram, adjacent to the Kotwali police station of the district, said the sources.

On the same day, a BDR patrol team caught them and confirmed their identities after interrogation.

The two Indians are Sayed Mosharaf Hossain, 25, son of Sayed Sadiq Ali, and Sayed Babul, 20, son of Sayed Yusuf Ali, both residents of Fataka Hair, Pransagar, under Gangaram police station of South Dinajpur district of West Bengal.

During interrogation, the two men said they were held by the BSF before being pushed into Bangladesh.

After the push-in incident, the BDR Battalion 15 here wrote to the BSF Battalion 11 asking for a flag meeting to take back the Indian nationals. But the BSF did not respond till yesterday.

The commandant of Fulbari BDR Battalion 15 handed over the two Indian youths to the Kotwali police after filing a case under the Customs Act yesterday. Officer-in-charge of Kotwali police station Shahid Shukrana confirmed the matter.

1288 candidates of 21st BCS appointed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Public Service Commission (PSC) has appointed 1288 candidates of the 21st Bangladesh Civil Service (BCS) in cadre services under different ministries, a hand-out said yesterday.

The newly recruited officials have been asked to join their positions by May 31, said the hand-out.

Three murdered in Barisal

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

Three murders have occurred in the Barisal division during the past 24 hours.

Two young men were hacked to death while one person was shot dead by dacoits.

According to police sources, Liton Howlader, 26, son of Munsur Howlader of village Adhuna of upazila Gouranadi under Barisal district was beaten and hacked to death by unknown miscreants.

Liton, a college student studying in Dhaka, had come home last Friday. On Saturday evening he was called out of home by some unknown people. He had been missing since then. His body was found yesterday morning in a

classroom at the local primary school.

In another incident, one Rafiqul Islam, 28, of village Lafadi upazila Babuganj was butchered on Saturday night.

According to police sources, the victim's head was severed. The body was found yesterday morning some 200 yards from his house. His head was also recovered from the vicinity.

His relatives said, Majnu, the victim's cousin, together with some seven other persons called Rafiqul out from his home at Friday evening. He was missing since then.

Meanwhile, one Hemayet, 45, of
SEE PAGE 11 COL 1

Robber lynching on rebound

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least 16 alleged robbers were killed by mobs last month.

In a single incident, 13 robbers were beaten to death and two others seriously injured by a mob of villagers in Bhaluka upazila in Mymensingh district on April 30.

The angry villagers closed in on the armed gang, caught 16 operatives and beat them up savagely when they were passing through the village at around 5:00am.

In another incident, two alleged dacoits died in mob lynching at Bhatgharia village in Habiganj on April 24 midnight.

Because of the alarming increase in dacoity incidents, the

Criminal Investigation Department (CID) of police has already instructed all its district units to increase vigilance.

"We have instructed CID units to track down notorious gangs," Additional Inspector General of Police Ashraful Huda said.

"We are also trying to ascertain whether the origin of all the dacoity incidents are the same," Huda said.

The CID chief urged the people to assist the law enforcers by handing over the captured criminals to them. He also asked them to refrain from dishonouring street justice.

On April 30, armed robbers stabbed 10 people including pas
SEE PAGE 11 COL 6

Whitewashed again



PHOTO: STAR

PERFECT START: New South African skipper Graeme Smith poses with the GreenPhone Test series trophy yesterday.

SPORTS REPORTER

South Africa won the second and final Test against Bangladesh by an innings and 18 runs at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

The home side, who began the fourth day on 204-8 needing another 24 runs to make South Africa bat again, were bowled out in the third over of the day.

The tourists took the second new ball and Shaun Pollock struck in his second over. He forced Mohammed Salim to edge with his third delivery and Graeme Smith took a regulation catch at second slip.

The experienced right-arm paceman then sent the leg stump of last man Mashrafe bin-Mortuza cartwheeling to seal a 2-0 whitewash over the minnows.

Last week South Africa won the first Test at Chittagong by an
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SEE PAGE 11 COL 7

Rajshahi press in line of fire

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Sixty-seven journalists were attacked and the declaration of a newspaper was cancelled in 16 districts of Rajshahi division in the last one year.

The facts were revealed in a survey report published on the occasion of the World Press Freedom Day by a Rajshahi based NGO, Centre for Communication and Development (CCD).

In July 2002, the district administration of Natore cancelled declaration of a local Bengali daily, Uttar Banga Barta. District Awami League general secretary Advocate Hanif Ali Sheikh was the editor and publisher of the newspaper.

Besides, five other newspaper offices were ransacked by hooligans and they threatened to stop their publication, the survey said.

Most of the attacks on journalists came from political hooligans, smugglers, drug traders and also from high officials of the civil administration and police, according to the survey.

DU proctor sacked

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka University sacked Proctor ASM Atiqur Rahman and replaced him with AK Firoz Ahmed of the Department of Public Administration.

The decision was taken for the interest of the university, the Vice Chancellor of the university, Prof. SMA Faiz told the reporters briefly.

However, the sources said the change of the university proctor is the outcome of the recent split in the BNP Jamaat backed white panel teachers.

ASM Atiqur Rahman was appointed proctor in August last year when his predecessor Nazrul Islam resigned in the wake of huge students' agitation following the police atrocities on the students of Shamsunnahar Hall.

Woman held in cop murder case remanded

UNB, Bagerhat

The woman arrested in connection with the killing of two cops and arms looting case in Fakirhat upazila was remanded for four days yesterday, sources said.

Khodeza Begum, 35, was produced before the court seeking five days remand but the court granted four days and directed the police to have a policeman present at the

SEE PAGE 11 COL 8

	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
May 5		6-29 pm
May 6	5-21 am	

Prayer Timings		
May 5		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-30	5-00
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	5-00	5-15
Maghrib	6-34	6-38
Esha	8-00	8-30

Source: Islamic Foundation