

Petrobangla

FROM PAGE 12
Five of the appointees are serving in different organs of Petrobangla and the other one is working in the BCIC, a source said. They will have to resign first before accepting the five-year contract, an unattractive proposition since the appointees will lose retirement benefits.

They are now inquiring whether they could join under lien, instead of resigning from their present services. They cited the instances of Petrobangla and Power Development Board (PDB) officials, who are working under lien in the Hydrocarbon Cell and the Power Cell, in their defence, said the source.

"Besides, except for salary and house rent, the contracts have not offered benefits like festival bonus, leaves, dividends, and profit bonus though they are enjoying such privilages under their present jobs," he said.

Currently serving in the Jalabad Gas Company Ltd, Mohammad Abdulla has been appointed managing director (MD) at the Titas Gas Transmission and Distribution Ltd, Monzur Moshed Talukder (presently at Titas) at the Gas Transmission Company Ltd, and Abdul Wadud (currently in the BCIC) at the Rupantarita Prakritik Gas Company Ltd (RPGC).

At director level, the government appointed Aminur Rahman in Titas (now in Titas), Khandker Salek Sufi in the GTCL (now in GTCL) and Kamruzzaman in the RPGC (now in RPGC).

They were selected from over 185 candidates who responded to newspaper advertisements. Petrobangla interviewed 66 applicants from both public and private sectors and selected six on the basis of merit.

Petrobangla interviewed a couple of dozen aspirants for director's posts and selected six. This list was okayed by the energy ministry before getting green signal from the Prime Minister's Office.

The appointment letters were

Retail prices of vegetables keep soaring

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

supposed to be issued on November 1 but were shelved in the face of serious opposition from trade unionists at Titas.

Though government reportedly reached an understanding with the unions leaders, a source said unionists threatened the Titas management of dire consequence couple of days back.

The prices of spices, however, remained by and large unchanged over the past one week.

The price of a kg of green chilli went up by Tk 10 to 12 and sold at Tk 50 at the city's Fakirpool, Shantinagar and Karwan Bazar kitchen markets yesterday.

The managing directors will get a monthly salary of Tk 50,000 plus Tk 20,000 for house rent, a full-time motor car and medical facilities for whole family. A director will get Tk 45,000 salary plus Tk 15,000 for house rent.

The appointees are currently serving the government at a much lower salary but their fringe benefits are much higher than those of contract services.

One of the director-appointees has served Petrobangla for 23 years and is qualified for a pension worth no less than Tk 15 lakh on completion of 25 years' service. If he must accept his contractual appointment, he will have to resign and forego the pension benefit.

"It's really confusing; the government says it is taking measures to contain essentials price, the media reports say wholesale prices are going down, but the retailers claim the opposite," said Shahidul Islam, an NGO activist, while shopping at the Fakirpool kitchen market.

"Ordinary consumers like me are undoubtedly helpless," said Ishita Huq, a housewife of Bara Magbazar area while shopping at Shantinagar kitchen market, "It appears we are hope to unscrupulous traders."

The price of a kg of cucumber ranged between Tk 26-28 yesterday, up from Tk 24 the day before. But beans sold at Tk 40 a kg yesterday, down from Tk 50 the day before. The price of a kg of tomato remained stable at Tk 40.

A kg of fresh long beans sold at Tk 28 yesterday, which was Tk 20 three days ago at Karwan Bazar and Gulshan lakeside outlet.

Local onion sold at Tk 28 to 30, Indian onion Tk 24, turmeric Tk 75, dried chilli Tk 85 and edible oil Tk 48-52 a kg.

On fulfilling the conditions, the ADB will clear the \$113.4 million loan for the Dhaka Clean Fuel project that aims at setting up a robust Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) distribution system for Dhaka and its outskirts.

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has been pressing the government to give full autonomy to the three affiliates of Petrobangla with appointments of fresh MDs and directors under contract.

Akram Khan, who was the last player to represent Chittagong against South Africa seven months ago.

The first match may also see two more debutants in off-spinner Jamal Uddin and all-rounder Manjurul Islam. But it seems everybody has forgotten about Moniruzzaman, the top scorer in the domestic League.

Bangladesh coach Dav Whatmore was more eager to end the losing streak. "Four years without a win is too long and we want to change that. We are going to fight as hard as we can," said the 49-year-old after the team's final practice yesterday.

But he was tightlipped about the line-up despite having a number of newcomers to the team.

"I cannot predict anything about the composition at the moment. We want to see the wicket in the morning tomorrow before deciding," said Whatmore.

"I think it is a flat and good wicket for batting. So, there is a chance we might opt for two spinners," he said while commenting on the nature of the pitch.

Captain Mahmud was however hoping that his batsmen would put up a decent total against a very strong England line-up.

"No doubt England have a lot of quality all-rounders in their arsenal but if we can put up a disciplined performance anything can happen," said Mahmud.

England will certainly enjoy more flare in the one-day series with the return of all-rounder Andrew Flintoff, fast bowler James Anderson and one-day specialist Vikram Solanki.

Both teams will declare their playing

Cabinet secretary

FROM PAGE 12
Land Secretary Azad Ruhul Amin, the other CSP official, deserves the post on seniority grounds.

Sources say the government is wavering to appoint Azad as the next cabinet secretary superseding Badir in a break with normal course of promotion and tradition.

Senior leaders of the ruling party have strongly recommended an extension to Sa'adat considering his performance and argued strongly for his case saying most of his contemporaries are serving on contracts.

But those who oppose Sa'adat are also opposed to Badir despite his clean professional records.

Some allege that an influential quarter at the PMO did not even hesitate to wield their influence to harass Badir with multiple transfers including two in a couple of days last month.

Badir was transferred from the local government ministry to the planning division against the desire of Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan after the alliance government took office.

Last month he was transferred from the division to the science and information technology ministry and then to the Planning Commission as a member.

The influential quarter at the PMO also has reservations about Ruhul Amin, an efficient and sincere official, sources said.

Currently, the government has no alternative but to give extension to Sa'adat despite rancour among mid-level and senior officials about his role in recent promotions they said.

Many officials allege that he failed to ensure justice in recent promotions to joint and additional secretaries as the head of the Superior Selection Board.

A powerful quarter at the PMO say in case of delay in finding a suitable officer, Prime Minister's Principal Secretary Kamal Uddin Siddiqui would be given an additional charge of the cabinet secretary.

But policymakers think such a move would be dangerous, as there is strong opinions against Kamal in both administration and the ruling alliance because of his alleged "excessive interference in all government activities".

The kingdom has arrested hundreds of suspected militants since the May 12 suicide bombings on Riyadh housing compounds.

Revolution day

FROM PAGE 1
and roads and road islands will be decorated on the day. Public and private buildings will also be illuminated.

Special prayers will be offered at mosques, seeking divine blessings for peace and progress of the country. Prayers will also be offered at temples, pagodas and churches on the occasion.

National dailies will bring out special supplements highlighting the significance of the day. Bangladesh Television and Radio Bangladesh will air special programmes.

The BNP will also hoist party flags atop all its offices. Leaders and activists of the BNP and its front different front organisations will visit the Mazar of late president Ziaur Rahman at 10:00 this morning to offer feteha (prayers) and place wreath.

Prime Minister and BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia will offer feteha at the mazar this morning. Besides, the BNP and its front organisations will organise discussions from tomorrow to November 15.

The Ministry of Cultural Affairs has chalked out a three-day programme, while the Islamic Foundation has taken a two-day programme to mark the day.

President Iajuddin Ahmed and Prime Minister Khaleda Zia gave separate messages on the eve of the day.



Iftar preparation goes on in full swing outdoors in Dhaka on Wednesday as stallholders chop, mix and fry the much sought-after delicacies, unmindful of the dirt and germs that the people will consume with the food.

2 more US soldiers

2 US soldiers

FROM PAGE 12

and close Baghdad down and make it look as though Iraq can't work with coalition forces," and added British troops could still be in Iraq in 2005.

Faced with daily guerrilla attacks and a string of suicide bombings, the United States has been pushing for more countries to share the burden of policing Iraq, but with limited success.

Turkey initially agreed to send a large contingent, but Iraq's US-appointed Governing Council objected to the plan and says the idea has now been dropped.

US officials did not give the number of American troops being called up for Iraq, but said they would include Marines as well as two regular Army divisions, the 1st Infantry Division in Germany and the 1st Cavalry Division from Fort Hood, Texas.

Marine Corps General Peter Pace, vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, stressed that the troops would be part of a 2004 Iraq rotation plan, and that the 132,000 American troops now there could decrease to just over 100,000 in May.

"We will be talking to Congress this

afternoon and issuing orders tonight and having press briefings tomorrow on the next rotation of forces," Pace told the House of Representatives Armed Services Committee Wednesday.

"It does include a call-up of reserves, it does include use of land forces, it does include the Navy and Air Force."

A spokesman for Paul Bremer, the head of Iraq's US-led postwar administration, said he was open to the creation of a new Iraqi security force to help root out guerrillas and foreign militants.

But Bremer was in talks with the Governing Council to ensure that such a force was not controlled by Iraqi political factions, was integrated into existing command structures and worked in coordination with US-led troops, the spokesman said.

Normalcy was drifting back to Narayanganj yesterday after three days of chaos that stemmed from the death of a garment worker in police fire, fuelling waves of violence and a half-day hartal in the district.

But many knitwear factories did not resume operation for fear of further attacks by angry garment workers and thin presence of workers in the industrial belt of Fatullah and Siddhirganj.

Paramilitary Bangladesh Rifles, still

on patrol, dispersed workers attempting to stage demonstrations in front of Faria and Majumder garment factories at Majidpur in Natul.

The commercial district descended into lawlessness as thousands of frenzied garment workers wrecked about 200 factories and clashed with law enforcers, after a machine operator of Pantex Garments Factory died in Monday's police fire on the workers demonstrating for an eight-hour work schedule and pay of arrears.

Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BKMEA) demanded deployment of army in the knitwear factories for security. The BKMEA leaders placed the demand at a meeting with the Dhaka divisional commissioner and deputy inspector general of police (Dhaka range).

Influential 'villains behind the scene' played the main role in bringing notorious smuggler Shamsul to Khulna Police Station Sunday night and letting him off next morning, the officer-in-charge (OC) of the station claimed.

But he refused to divulge names of the villains and said he is ready to face the situation without fear.

A one-man probe body comprising Assistant Commissioner of Khulna Metropolitan Police (KMP) Mohammad Alif is now investigating the matter.

The OC, Shafiqul Azam Swapan, has been asked to show cause why Shamsul was arrested and released without the knowledge of senior KMP officials.

There are allegations that Shafiqul took Tk 3 lakh in bribe from the smuggler and allowed him to go. He denied the allegations.

No KMP official senior to the OC admitted giving him permission to arrest the smuggler.

"We were not informed even after his arrest and till he was let off by (the) OC," said KMP Commissioner Md Mostafizur Rahman.

KMP Deputy Commissioner Md Mahbub Hakim and other senior officials also expressed similar views.

Meanwhile, one of the two rival groups of local BNP is reported to have intervened in the matter to save the OC from being punished.

Sources alleged this group forced the OC to arrest Shamsul as they failed to realise Tk 10 lakh from him to celebrate the ensuing Eid.

Monga plight

FROM PAGE 1
misappropriating a huge amount of relief.

But State Minister for Youth and Sports Fazlur Rahman denied the allegation in his address to a meeting in Kurigram on Tuesday.

"Relief distributors here are not involved in corruption unlike in Gaibandha," he told another meeting at Durgapur Union Council.

Relief and Disaster Management Deputy Minister Asadul Haque Dulu, visiting Kanchipara union in Fulchhari, Gaibandha, on Tuesday caught Union Parishad (UP) Chairman Akbar Hossain in the act of distributing VGF rice less than allocated 10kg a person.

"The UP members did not give me a VGF card, as I could not pay them Tk 30 they demanded," said 85-year-old Abbas Ali of Fakirpara village.

Sakhina Begum, a widowed mother of five, alleged the UP chairman and members prepared the relief distribution list favouring their party supporters and the poor who gave them money.

On the allegations by Nandi, Abbas

and Sakhina at the relief distribution centre at Ramna Primary School, Tofazzal Haq, Ramna union BNP organiser secretary, said: "They are rich. It's their business to make extra money through embezzlement."

In seconds, about 100 destitute people surrounded Tofazzal and challenged him to show how Nandi, Abbas and Sakhina are rich. Tofazzal fled to escape public wrath.

Ramna UP Chairman Abul Kashem denied the allegations of taking money for VGF cards and said about 3,500 of the 5,000 families in his union are affected by monga and he provided 2,700 families with VGF wheat in the last one month.

Playing on the job and food crises during the spell of near-famine, the moneylenders in Kurigram are giving loans to borrowers and waiting for the aman harvest to get the money back with high interests.

Zahurul to his home to collect the money he lent. Zahurul was released on relatives' promise of paying the loans back in a week.

Kobad Ali of Fakir village has a similar story to tell.

Dulu, Saiful, Doshman and Yakub are a few other victims of moneylenders at Buraburi in Ulipur upazila, who tag Tk 300 to Tk 450 in interest a month on every Tk 1,000, villagers said.

But there were no signs of unrest on the streets as people in Colombo went about their daily work.

Kumaratunga effectively scuttled the annual budget, which was to have been unveiled on November 12 and sent the markets into a nosedive with the Colombo Stock Exchange shedding 20 percent in two days. The market was flat Thursday.

The last state of emergency collapsed together with a government headed by Kumaratunga's party, which

Custodial death Cops foil bid to lay siege to IGP's office

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police foiled a bid of Khilgaon locals to lay siege to the office of the inspector general of police (IGP) yesterday demanding arrest and trial of Khilgaon policemen involved in beating a young man, Shakil Ahmed Chowdhury Sumon, to death.

More than 300 locals took out a procession from Khilgaon area yesterday morning and marched down to Golap Shah Mazar at Gulistan where police intercepted them.

Police told them they would not be allowed to go up to the police headquarters and asked them to hand over their memorandum, ifany.

The processionists said they demanded arrest of former officer-in-charge Entejar Rahaman and second officer Mahbubur Rahaman of Khilgaon Police Station within 24 hours and a judicial probe into the death of Sumon in police custody.

They later tried to proceed towards the Jatiya Press Club, but police dispersed them at Zero Point.

They held a rally at Muktagan where Sumon's parents rejected the police investigation into Sumon's death. The probe found no proof of police beating on Sumon.