

## Rice replaces Powell

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installing a loyalist who would be reluctant to offer dissenting views to the president.

Bush said Rice will take office at a critical time, citing the war on terrorism and efforts to bring peace to the Middle East and control the spread of weapons of mass destruction.

"Meeting all of these objectives will require wise and skillful leadership at the Department of State, and Condoleezza Rice is the right person for that challenge," he said.

Rice heaped praise on Powell, who was not at the ceremony, as "one of the finest public servants our nation has ever produced," and a great inspiration for her.

And she reached out to career diplomats at the State Department, some who might be wary of the arrival of the White House insider, and pledged to ensure they have all the tools they need to succeed.

"I have the utmost admiration and respect for their skill, their professionalism and their dedication," she said.

Rice could face some questions in the Senate confirmation process about her role in decision-making that led to the US invasion of Iraq based on now-discredited claims that Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction.

As part of the run-up to the war, she expressed fears that Saddam might be trying to develop nuclear weapons, saying famously, "We don't want the smoking gun to be a mushroom cloud."

Rice is considered more hawkish than Powell and will inherit a number of serious global challenges: Attempting to steer an unstable Iraq toward elections, seeking peace in the Middle East, fighting the war on terror, stopping suspected nuclear weapons programs of Iran and North Korea, and patching up strained ties with European allies over the Iraq war.

Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Richard Lugar of Indiana said he had strong confidence in Rice and would work to expedite her confirmation hearing.

Her nomination was the latest move in a sweeping overhaul of Bush's Cabinet after he was elected to a second four-year term two weeks ago.

The fate of Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, with whom Powell often disagreed, remained unknown.

He is said to be wanting to stay on for a while and a senior administration official noted that the United States was in a war, suggesting Bush might be reluctant to make a change at this stage.

In naming Rice at a White House ceremony, Bush also said he would promote deputy national security adviser Stephen Hadley to succeed her as national security adviser.

Rice has been a consummate

insider in the Bush White House and so close to the president that she is almost like part of the family, leading some experts to worry Bush might not be in a position to hear dissenting views.

## Mother

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pillow and quilt after two hours.

Returning home the following day, Jahangir found the door closed and saw through the kitchen window that his wife was hanging from the ceiling.

Later he broke into the house and found his two daughters strangled with a rope in the bedroom.

Meanwhile, Parveen's parents told The Daily Star that they are convinced Rina killed her daughters and committed suicide and they do not have any allegation against Jahangir.

Police have kept Jahangir in safe custody as he suffered a nervous breakdown.

## 16,000 species

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"Although 15,589 species are known to be threatened with extinction, this greatly underestimates the true number as only a fraction of known species have been assessed," said Craig Hilton-Taylor, who helped in compiling the report.

Because of the intervention of humans, the current extinction rate is estimated to be up to 1,000 times the expected natural one. Since 1500 AD, some 784 extinctions have been recorded, according to the IUCN.

"The current extinction phenomenon is one for which a single species, ours, appears to be almost wholly responsible," it said.

Indonesia, India, Brazil and China are among the countries with the most threatened mammals and birds. Plant species are declining rapidly in South and Central America, Central and West Africa and Southeast Asia.

Last year's report said 12,259 species were threatened but officials said the increase in threatened species of more than 3,300 was largely down to improved and expanded research work.

The release of the report is the latest in a series of gloomy assessments over the state of the world's plants and animals.

A three-year study published last month said more than 100 amphibian species are feared to have disappeared since 1980 largely because of pollution and global warming. Scientists feared hundreds more will become extinct in coming decades.

Amphibians, with their highly permeable skins, are particularly sensitive to changes to freshwater and air quality and considered one of nature's best indicators of environmental health.

The IUCN said half of the world's wetlands have been destroyed in the past century and more than a quarter of the world's coral reefs have also been lost.

However, the report said there were bright points with some species recovering after concerted conservation campaigns and others once thought extinct had been re-discovered.

The New Zealand storm petrel was presumed extinct but there were two separate sightings in 2003 and further ones this year.

And the European otter has moved out of the threatened categories amid signs of a recovery in western Europe and the former USSR.

The report was released to coincide with the opening of the World Conservation Congress in Bangkok with more than 5,000 people including activists and more than 50 environment ministers expected to attend over nine days.

The congress, bringing together scientists and experts from 181 countries, will debate the escalating extinction crisis and form a conservation blueprint for the next four years.

## Father gets double life for killing 2 daughters

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

A Barisal court yesterday handed down double life imprisonment to a father for killing his two daughters.

Judge Abdul Matin of the Speedy Trial Tribunal, Barisal gave the verdict in absentia of Babul Howlader, 29, of Badura village of sadar upazila in Patuakhali.

Babul abducted his daughters Sharmin, 2, and Palashi, 5, after an altercation with Zahanur Begum, his wife, on February 22, 2000.

As his relatives held him the next day, he confessed to strangling his daughters and dumping their bodies in a nearby pond. However, he fled when the bodies were being recovered.

## ICRC worried over

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Article three of the Geneva Conventions "clearly bans any attack against a person who is not taking part, or is no longer taking part, in hostilities, that includes those wounded, taken prisoner or a civilian," ICRC spokeswoman Antonella Notari spelt out.

NBC correspondent Kevin Sites, who filmed the incident, said he saw the marine raise his rifle and fire point blank at the head of a man, who was slumped against a wall in a mosque.

US networks and television channels in other countries have widely shown Sites's footage, taken on Saturday, but halted it in the second before the shot was fired.

The First Marine Division said in a statement released in Iraq that the marine "has been withdrawn from the battlefield pending the results of the investigation."

The military said it wanted to determine whether the marine acted in self-defence, violated military law or failed to comply with the international Law of Armed Conflict.

The ICRC welcomed the inquiry with Notari saying that "the court martial will determine whether this person was still participating in the hostilities or not."

"If he was not taking part in the combat, the action of the marine was prohibited. If this individual was a combatant, the American soldier had the right to defend himself," she added.

## Eid Day push-in bid foiled

BSS, Rangpur

Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) foiled push-in attempt by the Border Security Forces (BSF) of India through Joypurhat border on the Eid Day, BDR sources said.

They said the BSF men brought over 25 Bangla-speaking Indians, including women and children, by several trucks to the barbed-wire fencing gate near sub-pillar no 23 along Joypurhat border about 1.15pm.

As the Indian border guards tried to push their citizens into Bangladesh, the patrolling BDR men, ansar-VDP members and villagers build up resistance to the BSF move. In the face of strong resistance, the BSF men left the place along with the victims.

## 13 murdered

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worker, was retrieved from a lake at Monsurabad in Mohammadpur in Tuesday morning. His family members said Russell, 18, along with a couple of his friends went out in the Eid day afternoon and did not come back.

In a separate incident, Nayeem Sikdar alias Bindu, 45, general secretary of the ruling BNP's ward no 90 unit, was gunned down at Postgola in Shyampur.

The killers sprayed bullets on Nayeem, also an accused of former war commissioner Shahadat killing, when he was gossiping in a barber shop. He received seven bullets in the head and died on the way to the DMCH.

The victim's wife Sabina Yasmin Runa filed a case with Shyampur Police Station against 11 including his four brothers and Mozammel Sikdar, local ward commissioner, but police could not arrest anyone until 8:30pm yesterday.

Garment worker Mohammad Emon allegedly strangled her wife Ayesha Siddika, 20, at their house in Pallabi on Tuesday night and fled from the house. The body was found with a wire tied in the neck yesterday morning.

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Unknown assailants strangled Mohammad Ali, 28, a labourer, at his house on Tejgaon Rail Station Road yesterday noon. His sister Rahima rushed the body to the DMCH where the doctors declared him dead at 2:15pm.

## British

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Al-Jazeera has not shown the video, which it says shows a "man shooting at a blindfolded woman, who appears to be Margaret Hassan."

British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw said Hassan was probably dead, and Prime Minister Tony Blair expressed his "abhorrence" at the apparent killing.

A statement from Nielson said "this kind of savagery makes it almost impossible for relief agencies to continue their crucial work in Iraq."

"The main victims are the innocent and suffering Iraqis that benefited from international aid programmes."

Hassan, 59, was seized on her way to work in Baghdad on October 19 by an unknown group of kidnappers.

She was shown pleading for her life in a series of videos released by her captors, who threatened to hand her over to a group led by Islamic militant Abu Musab al-Zarqawi unless British troops left Iraq.

Last month, Zarqawi's al-Qaeda-linked group beheaded another British hostage, Kenneth Bigley, after he was abducted in Baghdad in September with two US contractors. They were also murdered.

In Fallujah, claimed by the Americans to have been the operating base for the elusive Zarqawi, a marine officer said Wednesday "the battle is over."

The city, 50km west of Baghdad, has been transformed into a rubble-strewn battlefield since US and Iraqi forces began an offensive on November 8.

"We've still got pockets of fighters, but it's becoming more and more scarce," said Lieutenant Colonel Leonard DiFrancisci, head of civil affairs for the 1st Regimental Combat Team.

Earlier, an AFP photographer embedded with the troops said US helicopter gunships bombed rebel positions, destroying houses that served as arms dumps.

The Fallujah campaign has raised fears about a humanitarian disaster, with tens of thousands of residents forced to flee, and the plight of the unknown number of civilians who stayed behind remaining uncertain.

US troops have prevented a Red Crescent aid convoy from entering Fallujah, a city of some 300,000 civilians in normal times, saying it was too dangerous.

But DiFrancisci said the marines expect to allow civilians back soon.

"As far as the return of civilians, it will be at least a week. That would be a guess."

"It would not be good yet for them to come back because it is not safe and public services are not in place to support large numbers of people. There is no water, electricity or refrigeration. There are no medical clinics that are operational."

At least 39 US soldiers have been killed and 275 wounded so far in Operation Dawn, and at least five Iraqi troops and more than 1,200 insurgents have also died, according to the US military.

There has been no independent confirmation of the casualty toll, and no figures made available on non-combatants.

In other violence, an Iraqi engineer working for the Americans was murdered near the northern city of Tikrit, police said, adding that he was the 40th such victim in recent months.

AP/AFP

## Manmohan offers

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were denied by the Central Reserve Police Force.

Sporadic shooting cracked out for about three hours after a troop patrol first came under fire, despite a security blanket thrown over Srinagar.

A strike called by a hardline separatist faction kept virtually all shops and businesses closed, reporters said.

The premier, who went first to the city's main Hazratbal mosque, appeared unperturbed and later addressed the rally in Urdu.

"We are talking to Pakistan so that this meaningless violence ends," Singh said.

"I have extended a hand of friendship to Pakistan," Singh went on, adding that he had told President Pervez Musharraf, "we can find solutions to all issues if we work with humanity and honesty."

Singh had told the students his government was committed to a "purposeful" dialogue with Pakistan to settle all outstanding issues.

"Our only condition is that, as agreed to by Pakistan, territory under control of Pakistan should not be used to promote cross-border terrorism directed against us."

Pakistan welcomed the first withdrawal of Indian troops from disputed Kashmir.

"This is a positive development and a good beginning," foreign ministry spokesman Masood Khan told AFP.

"We hope that gradual reduction of troops would provide relief to the Kashmiris, promote respect for their human rights, and reinforce the dialogue process."

The neighbours began talks earlier this year on resolving all disputes including Kashmir, the

trigger of two of the three wars between them since 1947.

Pakistani Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz is due in New Delhi next week for talks and another round of dialogue is set for the end of the month.

In a nod to separatists, Singh also renewed a promise to hold "unconditional dialogue" with "anyone and everyone in the state who abjures violence."

In the same Srinagar stadium former Indian premier Atal Behari Vajpayee addressed a meeting in April last year and extended a "hand of friendship" to nuclear-armed rival Pakistan.

Singh himself announced the troop reduction last week.

The first Indian forces left in a convoy of trucks and buses, an AFP correspondent said.

The paratroopers, stationed at Anantnag, 50 kilometers (30 miles) south of Srinagar for the past six months, headed for the northern Indian city of Agra.

"The first batch of troops commenced de-induction from the valley on November 17," defence spokesman R.K. Sen announced.

Indian Kashmir's chief minister Mufti Mohammad Sayeed said people in the region were "happy" at the troop pullout.

"It should have an impact on the overall situation in the state," he said.

"Now we expect a reciprocal step by Pakistan. There should be no violence (in Kashmir), there is no reason for it."

The army has not said how many troops would be removed from Kashmir.

Military experts estimate that India has about 250,000 troops in the region.

## Holiday hangover

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villages and towns.

Newspaper offices were scheduled to observe a three-day Eid vacation, but the holiday was extended for another day, November 16, due to the perennial confusion over sighting of moon.

The capital yesterday looked forlorn, as most shops and businesses kept their shutters down.

The notorious city traffic was less chaotic in the last few days. Numbers of pedestrians, rickshaws, auto-rickshaws, minibuses and other modes of vehicles were fewer than normal. The usually crammed buses had plenty of seats for passengers.

Movement of rickshaws, auto-rickshaws and minibuses increased yesterday, but they plied with fewer numbers of passengers. Rickshawpullers and auto-rickshaw drivers charged higher fares in an attempt to compensate for the lack of passengers.

Attendance was thin yesterday at the Secretariat, the headquarters of all ministries and offices of the republic. Most top officials were present, although a few ministers attended office. Attendance in other government offices in the capital was also poor.

Sources said only a few staff turned up and stayed in their offices for a few hours and they were busy exchanging Eid greetings and embracing each other. They also talked about their new clothes and how they had gone about celebrating the biggest religious festival of the Muslims.

Secretariat sources said there was virtually no work in the offices. A good number of officers and employees are on additional leave to spend more time with their near and dear ones back at their village homes, as they found the five-day holiday 'insufficient', the sources

## Eid celebrated

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parliament, diplomats, and political and military high ups offered their prayers.

On the occasion Prime Minister Khaleda Zia exchanged greetings with a cross section of people at Prime Minister's Bhaban. She also hosted a reception for the members of diplomatic corps, ministers, judges, former advisors of caretaker governments, political leaders and top civil and military officials at state guesthouse Jamuna on Hare Road.

On the Eid Day, people visited their relatives and friends to convey well wishes and exchange greetings. Children and youths adorned in new dresses went around the amusement parks, museums and zoos in a joyous mood.

National flags were hoisted atop government and private buildings. The streets of the capital were decorated with colourful miniature flags inscribed with Eid Mubarak in Bangla and Arabic. In the night, many public and private buildings were colourfully illuminated.

On the day, the government provided improved diets for the inmates of prisons, hospitals, vagrants' homes and other state-run dormitories. Underprivileged children enjoyed the facilities of Shishu Park in the city's Shahbagh free of cost.

The festive mood is still on. Before the Eid people in hundreds of thousands left Dhaka for their village and small town homes to celebrate the day with their near and dear ones. According to a preliminary estimate, around 60 lakh people left the capital this time to observe Eid elsewhere leaving the city streets looking forlorn.

added.

Offices of the ministers and secretaries at the Secretariat remained open to all to facilitate exchange of Eid greetings with the officials and staff. All most all ministers and secretaries passed yesterday in a relaxed manner.

Offices of all insurance companies, semi-government and autonomous bodies, multinational companies and businesses in Motijheel commercial district, the business hub of the country, opened, the staff seemed too inadequate to run business.

Most shopping malls and markets remained shut.

Attendance of officials and employees in state-run banks, post offices and, in some cases, private banks and commercial establishments also was less than normal. However, transactions in banks went on as usual.

Dhaka Stock Exchange swung back to business yesterday with the resumption of trading following the Eid vacation. But the holiday hangover also had its mark on the floor, as brokers attended in a far fewer number than normal.

With traffic thinner since Friday, civic life in the capital continued to have some respite from the hustle and bustle that residents are usually subjected to. City dwellers moved without hazards and breathe better in absence of traffic jam and air pollution.

Holidaymakers have meanwhile started returning to the capital. Officials and employees, who work in government and private offices were coming back, some with their families, by train, bus and launch at Gatabai, Mohakhali, Syedabad, Kamalapur, Sadarghat and other places in the city.

Offices and businesses are expected to start operations in full swing from Saturday.

## Altaf in charge of home ministry in absence of Babar

UNB, Dhaka

Former home minister Altaf Hossain Choudhury has been given the charge of the home ministry in absence of Lutfozzaman Babar.

The State Minister for Home Affairs, Babar, left for Saudi Arabia yesterday to perform umrah. He is expected to return home on November 25.

Altaf Hossain Choudhury, presently minister for commerce, is also abroad now. He returns to Dhaka today, officials said.

"Soon after his return, Altaf will attend a law and order review meeting in the conference room of the home ministry," said an official.

## Powerful

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10.30am.

Anisur sat at the rear compartment, surrounded by some other youths with a shopping bag in his lap. As the GRP members attempted to search his bag, all the youths jumped off the train and fled, leaving behind the bag. Police chased and caught Anisur.

They retrieved 21 high-speed, six-inch long Gelatin explosive bars each weighing 120 grams, three others weighing 125 grams each, 125 electric detonators and two mini tape recorders from the bag.

A team composed of superintendents of police of Bogra and Gaibandha and high officials of National Security Intelligence and Directorate General of Forces Intelligence and GRP questioned the arrestees, police sources said.

A team of army experts on explosives from Rangpur cantonment went to Gaibandha and examined the explosives. The tapes recovered from the recorders call for establishing Islam in place of democracy, calling it Kufri (non-believer in Allah).

The army team obtained a court order and detonated the explosives on November 13 at Bonbari field adjacent to Bonarpura Railway Station.

Big bangs rocked the area and could be heard from as far as three kilometres when the explosives were detonated, an event watched by a few hundred people.

Police on November 13 produced the arrestees before a magistrate's court, which placed each of them on a seven-day remand for interrogation.

During interrogation, Anisur confessed that one Haroon of Barokana village in Shaghata upazila introduced him to Amjad.

Haroon is the elder brother of Mamun, arrested earlier in connection with Joypurhat bomb incident.

Two cases were filed with the GRP under the Explosives Act.

## 20 killed

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on the way to Dhaka.

In Bogra three people were killed in as many accidents yesterday and the day before.

Cloth trader Abdul Gaffar died as a Dhaka-bound coach ran over his motorbike at Fultala under Bogra yesterday.

The day before, Shariful Islam, panicked by the horn of a mini truck just beside him, jumped out from a rickshaw and was run over by the truck.

The same day, a Bogra-bound bus turned upside down as the driver lost its control on the Natore-Bogra highway in Shibganj upazila, leaving 19 people injured.

One of the injured, Mohammad Ali, later died in the hospital.

Meanwhile a police constable was killed and 34 people, including two other cops, were injured when a bus overturned on Dhaka-Sylhet highway in Madhabpur upazila on Saturday, reports UNB.

Thirty-two passengers and three on-duty policemen were injured when a Faridganj-bound night coach turned turtle on the road while taking turn at Jagdishpur Gol Chatter.

One died and five others were injured as a bus and tempo collided near Langolbandh in Narayanganj on Tuesday.

On Monday one Shahidul Islam, 38, died, being run over by an unknown vehicle at Shimiral turning in Shiddiganj.

In Keraniganj a teenage boy was killed and five pedestrians were injured at Begunburi on Dhaka-Mawa road on Saturday, reports UNB.

Locals said a speedy jeep hit Rocky, 16, leaving him dead on the spot. Five pedestrians were also injured during the accident. They were admitted to different local clinics.

Agitated people set fire on the jeep which was without any number-plate and kept the road blocked for one hour protesting the incident.

Fire fighters rushed to the spot and put out the fire of the vehicle which police seized later.

Cases were filed with different police stations regarding the accidents.

## Morshed

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implementation of the roadmap with the two-state theory for Palestine and Israel."

Asked about a US television report that an American marine has killed an Iraqi prisoner in a mosque, he said the government of the United States has already ordered inquiry to see if there was any violation of war rules.

## Delhi assures Dhaka

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interest.

He suggested developing multi-modal transport network connecting northeastern Indian states and Bangladesh for rapid growth of trade in the northeast by giving access to transport of cargo through land routes in the territory of each other's country.

"Land route access will make the direct trade between the two countries most economical and viable as this region is blessed with direct road and rail links across the border."

The Bangladesh commerce minister said his Indian counterpart had assured that all irritants relating to greater exports from Bangladesh to India would be addressed within three months before Nath undertakes a visit to Bangladesh in February next year. "I am very happy with the business-like response of Mr Nath when I brought up the issues of tariff and non-tariff barriers during my meeting with him this morning," he said.

Altaf said it was encouraging to note that India and Bangladesh have recognised the need to identify non-tariff barriers and phase them out. "This definitely is a proactive initiative on the part of the commerce ministries of our two governments."

He pointed out that India accounts for 14 percent of Bangladesh's imports while contributing a little more than one percent of Bangladesh's total exports. "This highly disproportionate picture is neither healthy for trade nor for mutually beneficial linkages among the closest neighbours."

The Bangladesh minister said there is a general consensus among trade analysts and the business community in Bangladesh that in spite of the narrow product range, Bangladeshi products could have a better deal in the Indian market had there been enough facilitating measures to do away with the relatively regimented imported regime in India.

He said ceramic, melamine tableware, jamdani sari, toiletries, cosmetics, pharmaceuticals, dry-cell and automotive battery, cement, biscuits, wafers and woven and knit garments, UPS, inverters and bicycles from Bangladesh have good market potential in India but "a number of them have been faced with critical barriers resulting in deadlock in exports."

Altaf listed as impediments to boosting exports from Bangladesh the labelling requirement for export of jute bags, complex registration procedure for export of pharmaceuticals, chemical test for leather and leather products, quarantine requirement for jute products, standard certification need for export of cement and sanitary and phyto-sanitary requirements for agro-processed and food products.