

BNP, allies happy

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The recruitment process began in May after the government ordered for completion of recruitment against 70 percent vacant posts of class three (clerks and personal staff) and class four (peons, drivers, cleaners) employees by October 31.

Around 60,000 such posts remained vacant under different ministries and district administrations until October. Of the total, the district and other lower level offices were to recruit some 20,000 people, officials said.

But the 'drama' began when the government all of a sudden on October 28 suspended the recruitment process amid widespread allegations of corruption, irregularities, nepotism and political influence in the recruitment process.

On November 20, the government cancelled all complete and incomplete recruitment. And finally on Sunday, the government revoked the cancellation order declaring the recruitment until October 28 valid, amid pressure from the ruling party.

There were allegations that some recruitment was done secretly even after October 28 as the district officials issued appointment letters with backdate signature.

Reliable sources said the suspension order came following intelligence and field level reports that the district administration in collaboration with a section of BNP leaders had recruited many pro-Awami League people. Influenced by some leaders, the prime minister later cancelled the whole recruitment process, they argued.

But the cancellation sparked a serious backlash in the rank and file of BNP leaders and officials. As ministers, MPs and senior leaders lobbied for the withdrawal of the cancellation order, the prime minister was finally convinced to reverse the November 20 order.

Sources at the Prime Minister's Office said some senior ministers

argued that the appointees might move against BNP if they do not retain the jobs. It may also leave a negative impact on the next general elections as lakhs of people were involved in the matter.

Meanwhile, the aggrieved employees, who were already appointed by the district administrations, started staging demonstration across the country against the cancellation order.

Local leaders of BNP allegedly provoked the aggrieved employees and their families to go for street demonstration aiming to create pressure on the government. It is alleged that the leaders did so because they took bribes while getting them jobs.

Sources estimated that the district officials and ruling party leaders shared around Tk 100 crore through the recruitment of class three and four employees.

Officials said 55 districts have completed recruitment of employees and most of them were given appointment letters before October 28. The newly recruited people also drew salaries and festival bonus before the government cancelled the recruitment.

When the recruitment was cancelled, the aggrieved employees even filed cases against the government order in Fabin, Thakurgaon and Panchagarh, which was another reason for the withdrawal of the cancellation order, sources said.

Cobra nabs 3, foils robbery attempt in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Elite detectives of Cobra foiled a robbery attempt at a Sutrapur house last night and caught three robbers with two firearms and a machete.

Shamim alias Hridoy, one of the robbers, received bullets in the left knee while attempting to flee. He was admitted at orthopaedic hospital. His two accomplices - Wasim and Aslam - were in custody.

The gang of four went to Muzammel Hossain's house on Wari Street at 8:00pm to commit a robbery. Three of them entered the house confining the guard while one stood guard at the gate.

Receiving phone calls by locals, Cobra team rushed there immediately and caught the three, 'Shaful Islam, assistant commissioner of Detective Branch who led the team to the spot.

The robbers, standing in the street, tried to flee.

"Shamim tried to free himself from our grip and bullets from our shotgun hit him during the jostling," said the Cobra officer.

The law-enforcers seized a point 32-bore revolver and an LG (light-gun), a machete, scotch tape and a container of balm from them.

BCL calls hartal

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The BCL announced a weeklong agitation programme including the hartal at a press conference at Chittagong Press Club yesterday evening.

Earlie, Mohim's body was brought to morgue at Anderkilla in the city from Chandanaisah for autopsy.

Businessmen of the area put their shutters down while fellow Mohim and relatives thonged Mohim's house to see the body.

Mohim was buried at Garibullah Shah Mazar Graveyard. City Mayor ABM Muiyuddin Chowdhury and local AL leaders and workers attended the janaza.

A Rab press release said Rab men seized one pistol, one revolver, three locally made guns, and 49 bullets from the scene of the shooting.

The 'shootout' broke out as armed cadres loyal to Mohim opened fire on Rab in a bid to snatch him, said the press release.

Rab team arrested Mohim from Shah Amanat International Airport Sunday night. He was accused in a number of cases including assistant commissioner (CMP) Bashir Ali murder case.

Mohim received bullets while attempting to escape during the 'shootout'. He was rushed to Chandanaisah Hospital, where doctors declared him dead.

100m may die

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huge outbreaks throughout the region earlier this year that killed 32 people in Vietnam and Thailand.

Believed to be transmitted through contact with bird droppings, he said the speed of the virus's spread and its adaptation to a form that can be carried by pigs and cats had shown conditions were ripe for a devastating pandemic.

Suu Kyi

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The party has been held since May 2003 by the military junta following a clash between her supporters and a pro-junta mob.

A group of low-ranking civil servants went to her home in Yangon on Saturday to tell her about the extension, according to an NLD source. The extension was confirmed by junta officials responsible for her security.

Security remained tight around her home on Monday and barriers remained in place on the main road to her villa.

The extension to her third term of house arrest comes two days after the ruling military announced that it had released more than 9,000 prisoners from its jails in the week from November 19.

MALIBAGH MURDER

HC rejects

quashment

petitions of

Iqbal, 4 others

BSS, Dhaka

The High Court (HC) yesterday dismissed the quashment petitions filed by former Awami League lawmaker HBM Iqbal and four other accused in the sensational Malibagh murder case.

The court discharged the rule issued earlier and vacated the stay order. Now there is no legal bar to start the trial of the case, lawyers said.

A division bench comprising Justice Sped Mohammad Dasgupta Hossain and Justice Mamunul Rahman delivered the judgement after hearing the petitions.

On February 13, 2001, a procession led by the then Juba Dal president Mirza Abbas and other BNP leaders was brought in the capital in support of hartal. When the procession reached Malibagh crossing, several rounds of bullets were fired on it from another procession passing the area led by Dr Iqbal. Three people died and several others were injured.

After assuming power by the BNP led coalition government, police reinvestigated the case and submitted supplementary charge sheet accusing 24 people, including Dr Iqbal. The case was transferred to Speedy Trial Tribunal-1, Dhaka for trial.

Dr Iqbal and four others filed separate petitions with the High Court for quashing the proceedings of the case. The court issued rule and stayed the case in the trial court.

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4 girl students

abducted in

Satkhira

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

Trafficers abducted four girl students of a madrasa in Sharap Pur village in Assasuni upazila Sunday.

The victims are: Rebeka Khatun, 14, daughter of Shawkat Ali, Taslima Khatun, 14, and Aklima Khatun, 12, both daughters of Abdul Latif of Bakra, and Mukta, 12, daughter of Shahidul Islam of Sharap Pur. They were students of class seven and eight at Sharap Pur Dakhil Madrasa in Assasuni.

Police said quoting eyewitnesses and Abdul Wahab, Swarnali Union Parishad member, trafficers led by Masuma Khatun picked up the girls.

Masuma, daughter of Ruhul Amin, in the name of taking to a market took them to Satkhira town, from where they boarded a Dhaka-bound bus, sources said.

The officer-in-charge of Assasuni Police Station admitted the incident, saying they are trying to rescue the girls.

Partha

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Police Station the same day accusing Partha of undercover destructive activities.

The e-mail to the Bangla daily sent on August 23 from the address hikmatulzihad@yahoo.com claimed responsibility for the August 21 carnage on an Awami League (AL) rally that left 23 people killed and over 200 hurt.

It also threatened to kill AL chief and Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina in a more planned way in seven days after the gory episode.

The investigation officer pressed charges against Partha on September 8, showing 12 people as prosecution witnesses.

On September 15, Partha was shown arrested in the August 21 grenade attacks case filed by Moutijheel police.

Advocate Khondaker Abdul Mannan of Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (BLAST) conducted the case on behalf of Partha.

Drowning in debt

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instalments. She was forced to sell the corrugated tin of their house and move in with relatives.

"As my son was away from the house, my daughter-in-law sold the corrugated tin from their small house," said Md Majed Mia, father of Shafique.

Habibur Rahman, an official of Asa tells The Daily Star, "This is an isolated incident though we are not sure whether it happened or not."

He adds, Asa has launched a complimentary loan programme from last September under which loans will be given to those who are unable to pay their weekly instalments.

"This complimentary loan is soft and they don't need to pay it in weekly basis," Habib points out.

The villagers said, when they are unable to pay an instalment to a loan shark, some borrow from an NGO to clear the debt. Later, they must sell their valuables to pay the NGO loan.

"We have lost almost everything during the 20 days long floods and could not earn at that time. But we had to continue the weekly instalment during that time also. The employees of the NGOs do not move from our yard until we pay them the weekly," said Majed Mia, father in law of Morshedha from the Thana Kalsi village.

Meanwhile, a report by the Disaster and Emergency Response Group of donor agencies this month said millions of those affected by floods will struggle for another year with no guarantee of stable food supplies. The monsoon, a season when there are no crops to harvest and food runs short in the north, exacerbates these needs.

HR workers

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day national conference on "Institutional Protection of Human Rights: Role of Civil Society, NGOs and Media" at the IDB Bhaban in the capital.

State Minister for NGO Affairs Lutfur Rahman Khan Azad was special guest in the concluding session of the conference arranged by the law ministry in cooperation with UNDP and Australian High Commission in Dhaka.

Former Law Secretary Md Aminullah, Head of the Program Support Unit (PSU) of the Save the Children, UK, Nayeem Wahra, Programme Manager, UNDP, AH Monjurul Kabir, Head of Human Rights Unit of Commonwealth Secretariat, London, Hanif Vally, former advisor to the caretaker government, Major General (Retd) Moinul Hossain Chowdhury, Deputy Attorney General of Bangladesh, Adilur Rahman Khan, and Associate Professor of the Department of Law of Dhaka University Dr Asif Nazrul spoke in the session.

Addressing the session, the human rights activists alleged police frequently abuse the 'Code of Criminal Procedure 1898' that

includes Section 54 of the CrPc and Section 86 of the DMP Ordinance.

Complaints were also made against abuse of Section 167 of CrPc, Special Powers Act 1974, Special Security Force Ordinance 1986 and Joint Drive Indemnity Law 2003.

Such transgressions are "direct violation of human rights as the laws cover a wide range of situations like lack of investigation, of punishment and of justice," said the DU teacher Asif Nazrul.

He also noted that the law-enforcing agencies cause extrajudicial killing, systematic harassment of political opponents, victimisation of innocent people for serving personal interests taking advantages of the impunity.

"Impunity can spell disastrous impact for the disadvantaged and weaker population of the country. Legalised impunity breeds further violation of rights and facilities many other forms of impunity," said Asif.

To challenge the "vicious cycle of impunity" effectively, he suggested immediate formation of a separate, independent and powerful investigating agency like the proposed national human rights commission.

Opposition holds rally

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opposition efforts to mobilise public opinion for the December 11 'No-confidence Human Wall' to expedite fall of the government.

AL General Secretary Abdul Jaill said people of the country are fed up with the misrule of the coalition government. "People want to get rid of this government as it has failed to check deterioration in law and order."

The AL general secretary also blamed the alliance rulers for 'politicising' the administration and urged people to unite to put an end to the prevailing situation.

Workers Party President Rashed Khan Menon said criminal activities are on the rise but the government is indifferent to it.

"Political unrest in the country will last as long as the BNP-led coalition government remains in power," said Menon.

He also said there is no alternative but to go for a bigger movement against the government.

General Secretary of the Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB) Mujahidul Islam Selim said the alliance government has become a danger to the

nation.

"Religious extremism is getting deep rooted in the country as jamaat-e-Islami is an ally of the present government," Selim observed.

AL Joint Secretary Obaidul Kader said people are now passing their days in utter insecurity.

Referring to 'crossfire' incidents of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab), he said, "The government of Khaleida Zia will be ousted through a crossfire of movement."

Thousands of people from Dinajpur, Panchagarh, Thakurgaon and Nilphamari attended the rally.

Chaired by Ali Asgar Sardar, convenor of Tentulia district AL, the meeting was also addressed by Gono Forum General Secretary Saifuddin Ahmed Manik, Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD) President Hasanul Haque Inu, JSD leaders Mainuddin Khan Badal and Nazmul Haque Pradhan, Workers Party leader Fazel Hossain Badsha, President of Gono Azadi League, Abdus Samad and Samyabadi Dal President Abu Hanif Shahabuddin.

Assets management

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for recoveries. Deployment of private experts also eliminates corruption.

China, Thailand, Korea, Indonesia and many countries in the central and Eastern Europe, Latin America, and Africa have AMCs.

The creation of an AMC for Rupali Bank can also be used as a technique to attract new investors to the bank, sources said.

Transfer of loans to an AMC will leave a hole in the balance sheet of the bank. This hole is normally filled by the issuance of government bonds in consideration for the acquisition of the loans transferred.

In line with the consultant's suggestion, the government may consider one of the four processes to privatise Rupali Bank. The first one is retaining Rupali's current structure as an integrated body along with its loan portfolio.

The second process is retaining the bank's structure but restructuring the loan portfolio into those loans, which are regarded as either current and which are being highly unlikely to be recovered. In this process, the recoverable loans will

stay with the bank and the bad loans will go to the AMC.

Besides, the government may consider splitting the bank's branch network by location, type of business or geography. The branches of urban locations may be separated from those in the rural areas. The separation could also be made considering the types of loans and deposits of the branches.

The last approach is a combination of the three processes.

The Pakistani model of privatisation outlines the sale of an institution to a strategic investor with management and majority ownership, sale to a strategic investor with management and minority ownership, management buy-out and public offer of shares on the stock exchange.

"The government will now scrutinise the consultant's report and take its decision soon," said a finance ministry official.

The World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) have been hammering on privatising the four nationalised commercial banks which are heavily burdened with default loans of around Tk 12,000 crore.

All set to hold Ijtema

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morning and ends on Sunday morning through Akheri Munajat.

The venue has been expanded to the eastern side to accommodate more devotees as the organisers expect a larger gathering this year compared to previous years.

Thousands of devotees sit on the adjoining roads, pavements and open spaces for lack of space under the canopy every year. Besides, thousands take shelter in nearby houses in Tongi and Uttara and participate in the Ijtema.

Hundreds of tube-wells have been installed and temporary latrines set up on the eastern and western sides of the venue.

Temporary water reservoirs have also been set up at different corners of the ground to provide ablution facilities to the devotees.

Army personnel were constructing four pontoon bridges on Turag to enable people to cross the river easily.

A large number of devotees from home and abroad have already come to Dhaka for joining the Ijtema. Many of them are now staying at Kakkail Mosque, the main

centre of the organisers, and other mosques.

President Iajuddin Ahmed, Prime Minister Khaleida Zia and Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina are expected to participate in the Akheri Munajat.

Islamic scholars from home and abroad will deliver speeches every day at the Ijtema highlighting various aspects of Islam. The speeches will be translated in various languages so that devotees could understand them.

The government has taken adequate measures to ensure security during the Ijtema and already deployed large contingents of police at the venue.

The police have set up checkpoints at different entrances to the ground. Rapid Action Battalion and army personnel were also seen yesterday on patrol in the area.

The Dhaka-Mymensingh highway will be off limits to traffic and vehicles will be diverted to Ashulia from Tongi bridge during the Ijtema. The authorities have asked Tangail-Mymensingh bound people to avoid Tongi road for some days.

MILITANT THREAT

Nat'l swimming

begins today

without women

participants

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Women swimmers are not taking part in the Keya Cosmetics Eighth National Long-Distance Swimming Championship beginning today on the Dakatia river in Chandpur in the wake of militant's threat.

Bangladesh Swimming Federation yesterday postponed the only women's event in the face of 'Anti-Islam Activities Prevent Committee's (AIAPC) threat.

Chandpur District Commissioner Taherul Islam told the AIAPC leaders, who submitted a memorandum to him, that State Minister for Youth and Sports Fazlur Rahman ordered to postpone the event.

Fifteen AIAPC leaders including Jamaat-e-Islami district committee General Secretary Saleh announced militant action to resist the event at any cost.

Tk 24 lakh mobile

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On 23 November customs officials found the locks open and detected the missing of 281 Nokia mobile phone sets along with 200 batteries.

The officials formed a three-member body to probe the 'stealing' incident at the godown on the third floor of the Customs Circle Office building.

5 die

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On November 25, Raihan Ali, 45, of Dhanmaha, died on November 27, and Iddadul Islam, 36, son of Hekmat Mistri of Mathurapur, died on November 28.

The sick are secretly taking treatment to avoid police interrogation, sources said. The families of the dead also have not filed any case, as police would then take away the bodies for inquest, they added.

They said the liquid substance, smuggled into the district from India, was either not properly rectified or poisonous. Alcohol is sold at different drug stores and by illegal vendors.

When contacted, Officer-in-Charge of Daulatpur Police Station Mujibur Rahman told The Daily Star that they do not know anything about the incident, as no-one showed up to file a complaint.

Tata opening

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billion in power, steel and fertilizer, among others, in a first such huge investment proposal from any Indian company.

The Tata officials told the minister that a representative of the Board of Investment (BoI) should head the co-ordination committee that should also have representatives of other ministries related to Tata's investment proposal.

Tata will start a feasibility study soon and the co-ordination committee could expedite the inputs for the study, they observed.

Mosharraf told journalists after the meeting, "We will place Tata's suggestions at the National Co-ordination Committee headed by the commerce minister. We hope to form this co-ordination committee (for Tata) very soon."

Tata's feasibility study will cover how steel raw materials from India can be imported and which port is the most convenient for such import. "To produce one ton of steel, 1.7 ton of iron ore needs to be imported from India," Mosharraf noted.

Tata will also see how gas pipeline for their industries here should be installed and which could be the potential locations for the pipeline and the proposed industries.

"Tata wants to complete the study fast. It wants to take loans from multilateral lenders on the basis of that study and get the ball rolling," the state minister said.

The Tata delegates arrived in Dhaka on Friday and will fly out today leaving Manzar Hossain behind. They also met State Minister for Power Iqbal Hossain Mahmood and high government officials on Sunday. They visited different sites for setting up the industries.

Tigress found

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autopsy at noon, the body of the tigress was dumped into the ground near Kashiabad Forest Station after its skin was peeled off.

The skin is now lying with Mahmudul Hasan, assistant conservator of forest in charge of Nallian Range Office of the SFDR.

The tigress died of diarrhoea or from starvation sometime on Wednesday or Thursday. She was very old, said Conservator of Forests Altaf Hossain Khan. He denied the allegation that the tigress was trapped to death by poachers during Raas Purnima festival held recently at Dublar Char and Alor Kol, the coastal belts of the Bay of Bengal.

"We have obtained the autopsy report which says the Royal Bengal tigress died a natural death," said the conservator of forests.

Locals and fishermen, however, said the cause of death of the tigress has been suppressed in the autopsy report. The nylon rope of the trap used by the poachers has been missing since the retrieval of the body of the tigress in an attempt to conceal criminal evidence.

Koira Upazila Livestock Officer Haripada Biswas said he found signs and symptoms suggesting that the tigress had been trapped to death.

According to locals and fishermen, the tigress was trapped to death by a gang of poachers led by Abdul Gani, member of Hadda Union Parishad of Koira upazila. Forest guards of Koira Patrol Outpost aided and abetted the poachers in the crime, locals alleged.

Russia offers

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and conditions outlined for availing loans of the World Bank (WB) and the Asian Development Bank (ADB).

"The Russian minister has told me that our suggestions will be discussed at a joint commission of Russia and Bangladesh," Mahmud told reporters at his Secretariat office yesterday. "The joint commission will decide if the supplier's credit proposal can be modified."

The Russian energy minister also told the state minister that 20 percent of the power plants in Bangladesh are Russian-made. The power board and its local experts are well aware of Russian technology and machinery. He added that the Russian power companies are comfortable working in Bangladesh.

Russia has proposed to set up Siddhirganj units 2 and 3 at a cost of around \$400 million. The government is considering setting up a 210-megawatt unit 2 using local resources, the minister said.

The Siddhirganj unit 1, set up by Russian company TPE, took 13 years

to complete. Prime Minister Khaleida Zia will inaugurate the plant on December 18.

The government plans to make Siddhirganj a major power hub in the coming years by setting up more plants there, Mahmud said.

MEETING WITH PM
The Russian minister also called on Prime Minister Khaleida Zia at her office yesterday and said his country would extend cooperation to Bangladesh's energy sector apart from the power sector.

Oganesyan who is leading a five-member delegation to Bangladesh to see the 210-megawatt Siddhirganj Power Plant said his country is also eager to go for further investment in power sector in Bangladesh.

He said Russia can help Bangladesh develop expertise in power and energy sectors by providing the students in those fields with training facilities. The prime minister appreciated the proposal.

3 of a family

FROM PAGE 1
"We were among the first to arrive at the spot when we heard that a fire had broken out in the neighbourhood," said Mohammed Khokon.

"We could quickly arrange for passage of the panicked residents, which probably averted a possible stampede," Kajo, another factory worker, said.