

RU recruits start fresh agitation today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

The 546 controversially recruited employees of the Rajshahi University (RU) yesterday announced fresh agitation programmes as the authorities failed to confirm their jobs in last two days.

The aggrieved employees said they will hold sit-in strike in front of the administrative building today and go for tougher movements including hanging up admission tests and enforcing indefinite strike.

They gathered near the administrative building all day long and had meetings with RU Vice Chancellor (VC) Prof Faisal Islam Faruki, Registrar Abdus Salam and Treasurer Prof Abdul Zabbar Khan.

RU authorities, virtually sandwiched between employees' agitation and High Court (HC) order against the controversial recruitment, are unlikely to find an easy solution to the problem.

Talking to newsmen, VC Faisal Islam Faruki blamed Pro VC Kam

Shahadat Hossain Mondol for the anomalies, saying that the latter was chairman of the recruitment committee.

"Yet we are looking into the legal aspects of the matter and trying to find out ways for a settlement," he said.

Pro VC Mondol said he was trying to re-appoint the recruits to vacant posts, adding that he sent an emergency letter to the registrar to identify vacant posts and advertise for those.

He, however, said, "We can't appoint the 546 employees till the HC stay order remains".

Registrar Abdus Salam said there are only 255 vacant posts in different departments and offices under the university and all departments and offices were asked to report whether they can create any new posts.

Authorities can manage nearly 300 posts to re-appoint, but in no way they can confirm jobs to 546 employees they recruited allegedly on political pressures and for bribes in April last year, sources said.

Court to decide charge framing against Partha Jan 13

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court on January 13 will decide about framing charges against Saibal Saha Partha, arrested on suspicion of emailing a threat to kill Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina.

Partha was taken to the Fifth Additional Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court under tight security for hearing on his discharge petition yesterday.

After the hearing, Judge Rabul Hassan (in-charge) of the court set the date.

Earlier, the defence lawyers submitted a petition for discharging Partha from the charges brought against him both in the FIR (first information report) and charge sheet.

Moving the petition, the defence lawyers told the court that the charges brought against Partha were false and fabricated. But the prosecution lawyers argued the charges were primarily proved and prayed for framing charges against him.

Earlier on August 25, intelligence agencies took Partha into their custody and handed him over to Dhanmondi police on August 29. The email sent to the Prothom Alo on August 23 from hikmatulzihad@yahoo.com claimed responsibility for the August 21 carnage on an Awami League (AL) rally that left 23 people killed and over 200 injured.

It also threatened to kill Hasina, also the main opposition AL chief, in a more planned way in seven days.

Seven killed in Rangpur road crash

UNB, Rangpur

Seven people died and 35 others were injured in a bus-truck collision on the Rangpur-Bogra highway in Peerganj upazila in the early hours yesterday.

Police said the accident occurred at around 1:15am when a Dhaka bound bus from Rangpur crashed into a truck coming from the opposite direction on Angara Bridge, killing four bus passengers on the spot. Three died on the way to Rangpur Medical College and Hospital.

The dead are Ranjit, 30, Amulya, 35, Jagotshi, 35, Rana, 8, Rashedul, 40, Shahajan, 45, and Shukur Ali, 50.

Of the injured, nine were admitted to Rangpur Medical College Hospital while the rest to the upazila health centre.

A case was filed with Peerganj Police Station.

Small industries

FROM PAGE 12
The CDSMI identified 11 priority areas for setting up SMEs: Electronics, software, light engineering, agro-processing, leather, knitwear, plastic, synthetics, education, and healthcare and diagnostic services.

Benapole strike

FROM PAGE 12
Islam yesterday failed to end the deadlock.

In a bid to persuade port users to withdraw their strike, the government on Tuesday decided to withdraw 50 per cent of the enhanced charges on warehouse and equipment.

Rajuk to take ACC

FROM PAGE 1
For approving designs and plans of buildings in the capital without lawful authority.

No fewer than 200 such files have disappeared from Rajuk office. Rajuk sources said those files were either stolen from the office or the officers did not maintain files, because those files had to do with unauthorised approval of building designs.

"We have come to know about 200 files. The number could be far more than that, as there is no official document in our office," said a high official of Rajuk, requesting anonymity.

One Rajuk official said those officers would provide illegally approved designs to building owners but did not keep any documents on them in the Rajuk office.

The authorities came to know of the matter when some inspectors found approved designs with the building owners but no files on them at Rajuk. Later, the authorities probed the case and terminated the three officers but let two others go.

Abdul Latif Helali, authorised officer of Rajuk, told The Daily Star that the illegal buildings include Happy Rahman Plaza at Bangla Motor intersection, Aziz Co-operative Super Market and another 14 buildings of a media house.

A section of corrupt Rajuk officers are making quick money by allowing most of the building owners to develop the structures without proper plans, slowly making the city unliveable, a Rajuk official said.

According to experts, Rajuk officials do not comply with the Rajuk codes and, as a result, the city has been expanding in an unplanned way, triggering unhealthy living conditions, traffic congestion, filling up of wetlands and commercialisation of residential areas.

Plan for engineering

FROM PAGE 12

"We have placed a demand to the principal secretary to the prime minister to form an expert committee consisting of BUET (Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology) teachers and other experts to assess the quality of PWD's work," said a high official of the PWD. "If the expert committee recommends setting up mini engineering cells, we will accept it," he said seeking anonymity.

The PWD's manpower includes 600 graduate engineers and 1,200 diploma engineers for construction and maintenance work involving about Tk 700 crore a year. The PWD does not however do such work for the Roads & Highways Department, railway, Telegraph & Telephone Board and Postal Department.

The ministries for health and education in some cases also go for their construction work. But slow implementation and poor quality of construction work done by the education ministry raised questions, sources pointed out.

The Planning Ministry in a report in the middle of last year mentioned poor quality of construction of classrooms done by the education ministry. The report also said the ministry takes a lot of time in implementing its constructions, raising the cost.

"The PWD is responsible for any mismanagement and damage of

government structures due to poor quality of construction," a high official of the department said.

"If mini engineering cells are established in different ministries, they will have to hire consultants for construction as they do not have the expertise. The hired consultants will have no responsibility once construction is complete," he said.

Khulna

FROM PAGE 12

meeting also condemned negligence of patrol police to nab the attackers.

Dip Azad survived as the bomb that hit his back did not explode.

The spot is near Moilapota police box and patrol police were found unmoved when the bomb throwers ran away, eyewitnesses said.

None including patrol police helped me when I chased the bomb throwers, said Mokhlesur Rahman Pintu, proprietor of AL Amin Pharmacy who was with Dip Azad during the incident.

Dip Azad received death threats several times from Purbo Banglar Communist Party (Janajuddho) and New Biplobi Communist Party for writing on their terrorist activities.

Journalists Manik Saha and Humayun Kabir Babu and police subedar Ashraf were killed by extremists in the city last year.

Cabinet body to help

FROM PAGE 1

in its appeal to the cabinet committee, the state oil and gas authority said the huge amount of unrealised bills has made it difficult for it to clear the millions of dollars monthly payments to international oil companies to purchase gas.

Saifur said, "Unocal has already told the government that it will not accept arrears for more than a quarter."

Asked about the Tk 4.52 crore the finance ministry owes to Petrobangla in unpaid gas bills, the finance minister claimed all gas bills of his ministry was cleared.

He said, "The finance ministry, being the most generous ministry of Bangladesh, clears the pending bills of all government agencies, which no other finance ministry in the world does."

The finance ministry receives over Tk 3,328 crore a year from Petrobangla in revenues. Last year Petrobangla paid to the ministry Tk 1,823 crore in Vat (value-added tax) and supplementary duties, Tk 322 crore for debt service liability, Tk 175 crore as dividend, Tk 162 crore in income tax and Tk 39 crore in customs duties.

PM calls for crop

FROM PAGE 12

onions, garlic, ginger and turmeric," she told a delegation of agriculturists.

The prime minister assured that the government would provide all necessary support to attain self-sufficiency in agricultural products.

Emphasising research for increasing diversified food production, she said Thailand and Malaysia, where weather was not much different from Bangladesh, have achieved remarkable progress in agriculture while Bangladesh lagged behind.

Addressing the newly elected executive committee of Agriculturists Institution, Bangladesh at the International Conference Centre (ICC), Khaleda said agricultural production will have to increase, as only mills and factories will not be able to take the country ahead.

Mentioning her government's top priority on agriculture, she also called for inspiring the farmers for cultivation of soyabean, mustard seeds, pulses and maize to meet the domestic demand.

This will save a handsome amount of money spent on imports and the saved amount can be invested in other agricultural development projects, she added.

"India, Pakistan and Thailand have advanced far," the prime minister said. "Why shall we lag behind?"

A 29-member newly elected body of Agriculturists Institution, Bangladesh led by its President Mohammad Ibrahim Khalil and Secretary General Kabir Ahmed Bhuiyan met the prime minister.

Some 14 other agriculturists of different institutions and agriculturist

forums also accompanied the delegation.

The prime minister said every inch of land will have to be utilised for agricultural production keeping in mind that population was increasing, but not the land.

The prime minister regretted that a number of fruits, once available in Bangladesh, are now coming from foreign countries like Thailand. She stressed the need for increased production of indigenous fruits.

The prime minister said every inch of land will have to be utilised for agricultural production keeping in mind that population was increasing, but not the land.

The prime minister regretted that a number of fruits, once available in Bangladesh, are now coming from foreign countries like Thailand. She stressed the need for increased production of indigenous fruits.

The prime minister said every inch of land will have to be utilised for agricultural production keeping in mind that population was increasing, but not the land.

Constable stabbed to death

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Comilla

A rickshaw-puller was arrested in the town yesterday two hours after he stabbed a traffic police constable to death.

Constable Md Selim was on-duty at the town's Kandirap intersection when Badal, 35, of Mijangazhi village in Natore, attacked him at 5:00pm. He stabbed him eight times in his abdomen and neck area.

Selim's colleagues rushed him to Comilla Medical College and Hospital where he died after half an hour.

Police seized the rickshaw Badal abandoned on the scene and traced its owner Abdul Matin, who gave them his whereabouts.

Police arrested Badal from Station Road in the city at around 7:00pm.

Had the recent tsunami struck our country, the devastation would be beyond our imagination, Rahman said, adding, "Let's not spare the chance" to take measures to limit the extent of loss and damage in any such future calamity.

A 200km continental shelf, created by a long span of shallow water alluvial deposition, played a significant role in saving Bangladesh from this year's tsunami. The shelf reduced the speed of the approaching waves, said ASM Maksud Kamal of the Department of Geology of Dhaka University.

Mir Fazul Karim, director of the Geological Survey of Bangladesh (GSB), said tsunamis in the Bay of Bengal have a very low frequency -- once in every 400 years. Nevertheless, precautionary steps are must to minimise the destruction from any such tsunami, though infrequent.

Inter-organisational co-operation among the GSB, Meteorological Department, Water Development Board and the armed forces is needed to draw a comprehensive and effective earthquake disaster mitigation plan, he noted.

Shamsuddin Ahmed of Unicef also spoke at the session chaired by FEJB Chairman Quamrul Islam Chowdhury.

Shamsuddin Ahmed of Unicef also spoke at the session chaired by FEJB Chairman Quamrul Islam Chowdhury.

Shamsuddin Ahmed of Unicef also spoke at the session chaired by FEJB Chairman Quamrul Islam Chowdhury.

Shamsuddin Ahmed of Unicef also spoke at the session chaired by FEJB Chairman Quamrul Islam Chowdhury.

Shamsuddin Ahmed of Unicef also spoke at the session chaired by FEJB Chairman Quamrul Islam Chowdhury.

Shamsuddin Ahmed of Unicef also spoke at the session chaired by FEJB Chairman Quamrul Islam Chowdhury.

Shamsuddin Ahmed of Unicef also spoke at the session chaired by FEJB Chairman Quamrul Islam Chowdhury.

Abed Khan resigns from Bhorer Kagoj

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Editor of the Dainik Bhorer Kagoj Abed Khan has resigned as per a decision of the daily's board of directors.

Khan, also a famous columnist, joined the Bhorer Kagoj as the editor on June 18, 2003.

He requested the publisher of the Bangla daily in a letter yesterday to effect his resignation from January 1.

He started his career as a journalist in 1962 with now-defunct Dainik Jehad after graduating from Dhaka University.

During his long career, he was, in turns, elected president, joint secretary and member of the then East Pakistan Journalists' Union and Dhaka Journalists' Union.

JIC to quiz Hiqma chief again

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

The self-proclaimed Shahadat-e AL Hiqma chief, Sayed Kawasr Hussain Siddiki Raja, was again sent to the Joint Interrogation Cell (JIC) in Dhaka for interrogation yesterday.

Investigation officials said Kawasr needs to be questioned further for information about the patrons of his organisation, the only banned Islamist militant outfit of the country.

"We're not at all worried about Kawasr or his position. But we're really anxious about the people guiding him," said an investigation official asking not to be named.

"Despite being arrested several times, he returned to AL Hiqma activities each time he was released. Moreover, his speeches, sent to the press or found in writing, have certain inconsistencies," the official explained.

The JIC earlier interrogated twice, each time for seven days, since his arrest under the section 54 for storming a police station on November 6.

Five others who were arrested during the November 6 attack on Boalia Police Station in the city are now out on bail.

Sources said another session case may be filed against him on completion of the JIC interrogation.

JCD demands ban on Shibir politics

DU CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka Medical College (DMC) unit of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD), student wing of the ruling BNP yesterday demanded immediate ban on politics of Islami Chhatra Shibir (ICS), student wing of Jamaat-e-Islami, on the DMC campus.

The JCD made the demand at a rally on the DMC campus after the ICS men swooped on them on Tuesday. The incident left some 15 activists of the two organisations injured.

JCD leaders warned ICS to oust them from the campus if they try to organise any political activities there.

The JCD men pasted posters on the campus that read, "No ICS politics on the DMC campus".

The clash erupted when some JCD men charged ICS activist Arif for taking his girlfriend to his room in Fazle Rabbi Hall on January 1, sources said. At least 15 activists of the JCD and ICS were injured in the clash.

Additional police forces have been deployed on the tension-gripped campus.

The DMC authorities have formed a three-member inquiry committee headed by Prof Amzad Hossain of Orthopaedic Department to probe the incident.

28pc Dhaka

FROM PAGE 1

The Building Code must be followed strictly and methodically, said Atiq A Rahman, executive director of the Bangladesh Centre for Advanced Studies.

Had the recent tsunami struck our country, the devastation would be beyond our imagination, Rahman said, adding, "Let's not spare the chance" to take measures to limit the extent of loss and damage in any such future calamity.

A 200km continental shelf, created by a long span of shallow water alluvial deposition, played a significant role in saving Bangladesh from this year's tsunami. The shelf reduced the speed of the approaching waves, said ASM Maksud Kamal of the Department of Geology of Dhaka University.

Mir Fazul Karim, director of the Geological Survey of Bangladesh (GSB), said tsunamis in the Bay of Bengal have a very low frequency -- once in every 400 years. Nevertheless, precautionary steps are must to minimise the destruction from any such tsunami, though infrequent.

Inter-organisational co-operation among the GSB, Meteorological Department, Water Development Board and the armed forces is needed to draw a comprehensive and effective earthquake disaster mitigation plan, he noted.

Shamsuddin Ahmed of Unicef also spoke at the session chaired by FEJB Chairman Quamrul Islam Chowdhury.

Shamsuddin Ahmed of Unicef also spoke at the session chaired by FEJB Chairman Quamrul Islam Chowdhury.

Kuwait pledges \$75m for 3 projects

UNB, Dhaka

Kuwait has made a fresh pledge of \$75 million to finance three Bangladesh projects, including the construction of the third Karnaphuli Bridge in Chittagong.

The two other projects to be financed by Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED) are greater Chittagong Power Transmission and Distribution project (supplementary loan) and Ziaur Rahman Medical College and 500-bed Hospital in Bogra.

Bangladesh Ambassador to Kuwait Nazrul Islam Khan apprised journalists in the capital yesterday of the Kuwaiti funding plan.

Briefing the members of Diplomatic Correspondents Association Bangladesh (DCAB) at the Jatiya Press Club, he said Bangladesh has so far received \$387 million in loan from the Gulf state for project financing.

Of the soft credit of \$75 million, Khan said \$40 million will be provided for third Karnaphuli Bridge project, \$15 million for greater Chittagong Power Transmission and Distribution project and \$20 million for Ziaur Rahman Medical College and Hospital.

In reply to a question, he said negotiations are on with the Kuwaiti government for the recruitment of skilled manpower from Bangladesh in IT, engineering and other sectors.

At present about 180,000

Bangladeshi workers, mostly unskilled, are employed in different development sectors of Kuwait, altogether remitting the second highest amount of wage earnings from the Middle East after Saudi Arabia.

Besides, some 4,500 defence personnel (both in-service and retired) are working in Kuwait for cleaning up ammunition abandoned by Iraq during the Kuwait-Iraq war. Sixty medical doctors are also employed over there.

"There are enough opportunities for expanding cooperation between Bangladesh and Kuwait," the envoy said.

He said since the volume of trade between the two countries is quite insignificant, Bangladeshi businessmen can explore market for their products, including garments. Dhaka mainly imports petroleum from the oil-rich Gulf country.

Describing the bilateral relations as excellent, the ambassador said Kuwait Foreign Minister Mohammad Sabah is expected to visit Bangladesh shortly.

Khan, who played a vital role in freeing abducted Bangladeshi driver Abul Kashem from captivity, said the driver was picked up by the Islamic Army of Iraq on October 18 on his way to Baghdad and got freedom "by the grace of Allah".

Bomber kills 15 at Iraq cop academy

REUTERS, Baghdad

A suicide car bomber killed at least 15 people at an Iraqi police academy yesterday, but Prime Minister Iyad Allawi vowed to stick to his timetable for a January 30 election despite escalating attacks.

The bomber barreled his way into a compound in the town of Hilla, south of Baghdad in a lawless area known as the "Triangle of Death," and blew up his explosives-filled vehicle after coming under heavy fire, police spokesman Hadi Hatif said.

The attack was the latest by insurgents targeting Iraq's US-backed interim government and its fledgling security services in a bloody campaign to sabotage the election.

It came a day after gunmen assassinated Baghdad's provincial governor and a suicide truck bomber killed 11 people outside a police command headquarters, a surge of violence that drew fresh calls for delaying the national ballot.

The government is committed to running the elections on schedule, Allawi told a news conference. "We know some Iraqis fear voting, but we have to overcome those fears."

He insisted he had a plan to safeguard voters but gave few details except to say more Iraqi troops would

be sent to the northern Sunni city of Mosul, the scene of deadly attacks.

But raging violence has shattered trust in home-grown security forces that hardly seem able to protect themselves.

A hospital official in Hilla, 100 km (62 miles) from Baghdad, said at least 15 people were killed, including nine policemen, and 25 wounded in the bombing at the police academy, which had been due to hold a graduation ceremony.

Hours earlier, a car bomb targeting a US military convoy killed two Iraqi bystanders in western Baghdad, police said.

The Iraqi militant group Army of Ansar al-Sunna, which on December 21 week mounted the deadliest suicide attack on Americans since the start of the war with an attack on a US base in Mosul, claimed responsibility for the bombing.

Govt shortens tender process for food import

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government yesterday decided in principle to amend food procurement regulations to quicken the process amidst apprehension that depleting food reserve and a low Aman output might necessitate emergency import of food in the shortest possible time.

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs at a meeting took the decision of shortening the time frame for food procurement tender to 21 days from 45 days now.

Finance and Planning Minister M Saifur Rahman, who chaired the meeting, said the decision was taken to expedite food import as food is a sensitive issue.

The floods last year caused losses of crops but the government is yet to get a final estimate of Aman output, he said.

If the prime minister approves yesterday's decision, the food ministry would also be able to procure food through bilateral negotiations avoiding open bidding process in case of emergency needs, meeting sources told The Daily Star.

According to official records, the government's food reserve now stands at 6.38 lakh tonnes, much lower than the critical food safety reserve of eight lakh tonnes.

The government's internal food procurement drive also hit a snag as it could procure only two tonnes of rice till late December against a target of two lakh tonnes in the current procurement season -- November to February -- because of flood-induced losses of Aman.

Market price of rice soared to Tk 16 a kg in the northern region wholesale markets while the government offered a rate of only Tk 13.10 a kg with almost no response from the farmers.

Against this backdrop, the food ministry has planned to import 1.5 lakh tonnes of rice and procure one lakh tonnes from domestic market, sources said.

Food Secretary Siddiqueur Rahman Chowdhury said however the ministry has decided to import rice but the volume of import is yet to be finalised.

ACC busy mending

FROM PAGE 1
appointment of Reza-e-Rabbi as the secretary of the commission by the government.

Besides, a meeting was scheduled to be held yesterday at the new ACC headquarters at Argagon but was rescheduled for today.

The ACC chairman said that they were yet to accept resignation letter of Matin and that they would decide about the matter at today's meeting.

"We cannot hold him back if he does not want to be with us," he said when asked about the resignation.

The ACC, meanwhile, has sent only a draft rule on screening of ex-Bac staff for the president's approval, although some ex-Bac officials had told journalists that five to seven draft rules were sent for presidential approval.

Commissioner Maniuruddin Ahmed told reporters yesterday that a draft rule regarding inquiry and investigation into corruption had been formulated and it would be finalised at today's meeting.

The ACC chairman however said in the next 15 days will prepare the ACC organogram and five draft rules before sending those for presidential nod.

According to the ACC Act, once the rule is approved the commission will decide which of the former Bac staff will be in the commission. But, a few days after taking charge of the ACC on November 23, the chairman and a commissioner formed two committees for screening ex-Bac staff and another for formulating draft rules.