

## HC stays govt order

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Dhaka, the government on Thursday appointed Mohammad Ayub Miah, a joint secretary at the industries ministry, as an administrator to take over the charges from the BGMEA executive committee to oversee the election within the next six months. The lower court order came on a petition filed by BGMEA member MA Masud.

Although the administrator did not come to assume his office, the appointment sparked off intense agitation among the BGMEA leaders and members.

In their submission to the High Court on behalf of the BGMEA petitioners yesterday, Barrister Rafique-ul-Huq and Dr M Zahir said a vested quarters in the government wants to politicise the country's largest trade body ahead of its election.

The appointment was made under the Section 10 of Trade Organisation Ordinance, 1961, which says the government may appoint an administrator in a trade body if it deems that the body is not being run properly.

However, the law dictates that the government must seek written opinion of the trade association before taking the decision. But, in this case, as the government did not seek opinion of the BGMEA, the appointment is illegal, the counsels pointed out.

Barrister Huq said the government intervention came at a time when the country is trying to get a duty-free access to the US market. The appointment has tarnished the image of Bangladesh abroad.

Dr Zahir said the apparel sector alone accounts for over 75 percent of the country's total export earnings amounting to some \$5.6 billion and about 20 lakh people, mostly women, and employed in the sector.

He said BGMEA did not file writ petition against the lower court rule, rather it is against the government order.

Respondents of the writ petition are the commerce secretary, director of trade organisations at the commerce ministry, the administrator

and MA Masud.

Assistant Attorney General Rajik-al-Jalil represented the government side in the writ petition.

At a press conference after the High Court verdict, the BGMEA president said, "Certain quarters is trying to seize the association coming through the back door, as they do not believe in election and democracy. We will prevent such undemocratic moves at any cost and continue our struggle to help each other to compete in a quota-free regime."

He lauded the government for its continued fiscal and policy support for the garment sector. The government has recently exempted all export-oriented industries from the value-added tax and allowed loan rescheduling without any down payment.

Customs procedure at Kamalapur inland container depot has been cut down to six from 38 steps. The government will also set up one-stop cells for garment export at the Chittagong port and Chittagong Customs House this month.

Huq said the government has always been a promoter and facilitator of the garment sector. "We talked with the commerce minister about the duty-free market access to the US on January 6. Unfortunately, later on the same day, we received a letter from his ministry about appointment of an administrator," he recalled.

He said there is no crisis in the BGMEA that calls for appointment of an administrator, adding the government should not try to control the trade bodies.

Huq said the BGMEA would talk with the foreign buyers and try to offset the harm to Bangladesh's image caused by the unfortunate episode.

Former BGMEA president Quazi Moniruzzaman, Senior Vice President MA Salam, Second VP Alamgir Rahman, VP M Gulam Faruk, VP (Finance) Anwar-ul-Alam Chowdhury and other directors and members were present at the press conference.

## CPB meets Gono Forum, Workers Party

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leaders of the Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB) said yesterday in separate meetings with Workers Party and Gono Forum leaders that they were not considering any political alliance with the Awami League, said sources.

The CPB leaders also discussed the present state of 'simultaneous' opposition movement as well as the role of the left 11-Party alliance.

A meeting source said Workers Party and Gono Forum leaders tried to bridge the differences growing between AL and CPB following the latter's abstaining from a combined opposition meeting.

Adviser to the Prime Minister on Parliament Affairs Salahuddin Qader Chowdhury's recent meeting with AL President Sheikh Hasina and repeated hartals called by AL's front organisations are said to have created the hiatus.

At the meetings CPB leaders said that as they do not deem AL a like-minded party and the CPB would not go for a political alliance with them.

CPB would continue their effort to establish a 'left democratic alternative' that would be independent of influence of the BNP and AL.

The party leaders however said they would continue to take part in the ongoing 'simultaneous movement' and do everything possible to resist the rise of religious extremism 'patronised by the alliance government'.

CPB President Manjurul Ahsan Khan, General Secretary Mujahidul Islam Selim, Workers Party President Rashed Khan Menon and General Secretary Bimal Biswas, and Gono Forum leader Pankaj Bhattacharya were present in the meetings.

## CHUADANGA GANG RAPE

## Women rights bodies demand speedy trial

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kishitla

Thirty-five women rights organisations in ten southwestern and one northern districts reiterated their demand for early trial and punishment of policemen involved in housewife Dily Khatun rape in a Chuadanga police camp on December 18 last year.

The organisations yesterday in a memorandum to the Deputy Commissioner concerned demanded immediate arrest of the rest of the policemen involved in the incident and formation of a special court for trial of the culprits.

They alleged that police in collaboration with some doctors in Chuadanga hospital damaged all evidence of rape.

Several organisations also shared similar programmes in the capital.

Thousands of people attended demonstrations and human wall programmes in the district towns organised by Governance Coalition, a combine of 35 rights groups, sources said.

Fourteen policemen of Gokulkhali camp including its in-charge Abdul Kuddus and Habildar Rokunuzzaman allegedly gang-raped the housewife at the camp after picking her up from Doliapur area in Alamdanga upazila of the district on December 18 last year.

In the face of countrywide protests, district police suspended five of the accused and arrested them. They are Kuddus, Rokunuzzaman and constables Harun, Sakib and Harunur Rashid.

Bangladesh Mahila Parishad, a Dhaka based women rights organisation has kept the victim under their safe custody and they will provide her legal support.

## ACC attaches

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Miah told The Daily Star last night.

The Cabinet Division in a circular on January 3 cited a serious conflict between the government and the newly formed ACC and formally announced 1,107 Bacc employees as reserved employees of the government, ordering them not to work with the commission.

The order left ACC Chairman Justice Sultan Hossain Khan and commissioners Prof Maniruzzaman Miah and Maniruddin Ahmed as the only commission officials aided by a few personal staff.

Yesterday's ACC meeting discussed running the under-trial cases and absence of commission staff in the district-level offices.

The commission also decided to send a proposal to the government for creation of 40 posts in addition to 36 newly created ones for running essential jobs of the ACC.

Although the commission had earlier disagreed with the government's proposal for hiring experts from the Asian Development Bank (ADB) to lay out the ACC's organogram, yesterday it agreed to sit with foreign consultants.

"The ACC members suspect the administration wants to hold sway over the ACC through consultants from the ADB, where they have a lot of control," said an ACC source.

The commission however thinks it does not need any involvement of consultants from any foreign funding agency right now as it can design the organogram itself.

## Bangabandhu

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Day of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

On this day in 1972, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman returned home after a long confinement in the then West Pakistan during the Liberation War in 1971 that led to independence of Bangladesh.

On the night of March 25, 1971, Pakistani army arrested him at his Dhanmondi residence and the following day sent him to custody in a West Pakistani jail.

After a nine-month struggle for independence, the nation achieved victory on December 16, 1971 and the then Pakistani authorities were eventually compelled to free the Bangladesh leader. Bangabandhu returned home on January 10.

In her address at today's rally Sheikh Hasina, also president of AL, would give a detailed account of the BNP-Jamaat-led alliance government's failures and urge the people to wage a greater movement to overthrow the government, party insiders said.

Today's rally will be her second at Paltan Maidan since the August 21 grenade attacks that she had

escaped narrowly. On October 3, she addressed another rally there amidst tight security.

Meanwhile, the AL and its front organisations have drawn up elaborate programmes to observe the day. The national flag and the party flag will be hoisted at the AL central office and the Bangabandhu Bhaban in the city and party offices across the country at 6:00 am.

AL leaders Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir, Mukul Bose, Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah and Faruk Khan will lay wreaths at the tomb of Bangabandhu at Tungipara in Gopalganj.

Meanwhile, AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil in a statement yesterday asked all units of the party and its front organisations to organise processions, rallies, discussions and milad mahfil to mark the day.

On the eve of Homecoming Day, AL chief Sheikh Hasina in a message yesterday urged people to step up the movement against the BNP-Jamaat-led coalition. In her statement, she accused the present government of undermining the spirit of Liberation War by patronising the war criminals.

## 5 nations agree

FROM PAGE 1

media on Saturday that Foreign Secretary Riaz Khokar had contacted other Saarc foreign secretaries about the fresh dates and Sri Lanka, Nepal and the Maldives approved them.

Bhutan's position is it would accept the dates approved by the other member states, Morshed said.

Pakistan would finally announce the dates for the Saarc (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation) summit upon India's response to the proposed dates. In case of India's refusal to endorse them, it would continue the process of consultation with the member states, he mentioned.

Meanwhile, Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh is now visiting the tsunami-hit Indian territories of Andaman and Nicobar Islands, while External Affairs Minister Natwar Singh has just returned from a world leaders' summit on tsunami crisis in Indonesia.

The Saarc summit earlier sched-

uled for January 9-11 was postponed on December 31 in the wake of the tsunami disaster in India, Sri Lanka and the Maldives.

The Saarc Council of Ministers' meeting is likely to be held on February 5-6 preceding the summit while the dates for the programming and the standing committees' meets would be decided after the summit dates are confirmed, the foreign minister said.

The programming committee was earlier scheduled to meet on January 3-4, the standing committee (comprising foreign secretaries) on January 5-6 and the Council of Ministers on January 7-8.

Dhaka had announced earlier that all preparations for the summit were complete and it would need only seven to 10 days to put the summit infrastructure in place.

The Saarc summit preparation cell, headed by Reaz Rahman, is holding meetings every Tuesday and Thursday to keep the preparations up to date, foreign ministry sources said.

## 4 more killed

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on the law-enforcers prompting them to retaliate. "During the shootout, a bullet hit Siddique's head and he died on the spot," said a Cheetah officer.

Siddique's cohorts however managed to escape arrest.

"I know nothing about him (Siddique) since he cut off contact with me about a year ago," said Siddique's mother Fazila Begum at the Dhaka Medical College and Hospital morgue where the body was sent for autopsy.

CHITTAGONG  
Khalifa Amin alias Killer Amin, a notorious criminal on the police list, was killed during a shootout between his gang and the Rab members at Bashkhaliapara village in Lohagara upazila of Chittagong early yesterday.

Three Rab members -- head constable Maqsum, constables Arjun Nath and Abbas Uddin -- were also hit by bullets during the firefight, our staff correspondent from Chittagong reports quoting Rab sources.

Amin, a well-known professional killer, was accused in 11 cases including those for three murders, arms and drug dealings and robberies. In one of the murder cases, he was convicted for a 32-year imprisonment.

Rab arrested him at Padua Bazar in Lohagara on Friday midnight and brought him to Rab-7 headquarters at Patenga for interrogation. During the interrogation, Amin said he had firearms hidden at Bashkhaliapara village.

Rab sources said they took Amin to the village at around 8:00pm on Saturday to recover the arms. As they reached Bashkhaliapara, Amin's gang opened fire to snatch him from Rab custody. The Rab members replied with shots.

During the exchange of gunshots Amin sustained bullet injuries falling in the 'line of fire' as he tried to flee, the Rab officials said. He was rushed to nearby Lohagara upazila health complex where physicians declared him dead.

After the incident, the Rab men seized one foreign-made pistol, one gun, two LGs and eight bullets of AK47 rifle from the spot.

NARAYANGANJ  
Suspected criminal Rubel, 30, was killed in an encounter of his accomplices with the Rab members at Jalkuri village in Siddhirganj at about 2:30am yesterday.

Rab sources said a team of the elite force nabbed Rubel, an accused in five cases including murder, from a house in Fatullah on Saturday night.

Following his confessional statement, the Rab men took him

behind an abandoned textile mill at Jalkuri to seize firearms of his gang. As they reached the spot, Rubel's men opened fire on the law-enforcers, a Rab press release said.

"During the firefight a bullet hit Rubel and he died instantly," the press release added. After the incident, the Rab members seized one revolver, one pistol and nine bullets from the spot.

BAGERHAT  
Our staff correspondent from Khulna reports: Apon Shaikh alias Abul Hasan, 25, a Bagerhat-based top leader of Janajuddho faction of Purba Banglar Communist Party (PBCP) was killed yesterday in an encounter with Rab.

A joint team of Rab and police arrested Apon at Karapara in the town on Saturday and interrogated him. Following his statement, the joint team took him near Satfoli Wapda Cross-dam in Sadar upazila in search of firearms.

When they reached the spot, Apon's followers opened fire on the law-enforcers to snatch their leader. The law-enforcers then returned fire. "Apon was killed on the spot," said a Rab official seeking not to be named.

After the incident the Rab men seized one revolver, four bullets, eight cartridges and six powerful bombs from the spot.

According to Rab, Apon was an absconding accused in 15 criminal cases including three murder cases. He was involved in forcible occupation of shrimp enclosures, extortion, abduction for ransom and rape, locals and police said.

## Principal secy

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government is discouraging contract-based service, a few bureaucrats like Siddiqui continue getting further extensions of their contracts.

Several efficient officials have not been awarded service contracts after their retirement, he said, asking not to be identified.

"Is Dr Kamal Siddiqui so indispensable for the BNP? Is there no trusted or efficient officer in the administration to replace him?" the minister asked.

As many as 62 officials are holding the posts of secretary, sources said. Among them, 24 are on contract and most of the rest serve as acting secretaries, the sources added.

Meanwhile, the government yesterday extended the contract of Bangladesh Ambassador in Beijing Ashfaqur Rahman for two more years.

Sources said his contract has been extended as he might be appointed the next foreign secretary.

## Witness says Chhatra Samaj leader shot Ahsanullah

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A prosecution witness in the Awami League lawmaker Ahsanullah Master murder case yesterday told the court that he saw Jatiya Chhatra Samaj leader Nurul Islam Dipu, his brother Shahidul Islam Shipu and their gang firing at the lawmaker.

Mohammad Jamal, an eyewitness in the case was giving his deposition before the Speedy Trial Tribunal-1, Dhaka.

Judge Shahed Noor Uddin recorded the deposition of the witness and he was cross-examined by defence lawyers. He will be cross-examined further today.

In his deposition, Jamal told the court that at about 10:00am he was standing in front of the Sahara Market at Tongi in Gazipur district. After some time, he saw a white private car coming towards the Market and then saw Dipu and Shipu getting down out from it. They went to Nurul Islam Sarker, the prime suspect in the case, who was sitting in the driving seat of another car. Nurul Islam then patted them on their backs, the witness said.

Later, Jamal and a friend of his, Farid, went to the Sechchasebak League's conference at Noagaoon High School. After a while, he heard sounds of blasts and gunshots and he came to know that the MP and some others were injured, the witness added. Jamal then told the court that Dipu and Shipu went to Amtoli and Nurul Islam Sarker left the scene with his car.

Twelve of accused are Nurul Islam Sarker, Rakibuddin Sarker alias Pappu, Boro Zahangir, Amir, Zahangir, Mohammad Ali, Nurul Amin alias Amin, Ayub Ali, Mahabubur Rahman, Monir Hossain, Dulal and Kabir Hossain. Of them, Kabir, Pappu, Ayub and Nurul Amin are on bail, while the rest are now in the custody.

Dipu and 17 others are still at large. Special Public Prosecutor Abdul Latif Talukder and advocates Mahbub Ahmed, Sahara Khatun, M Sajwar Hossain, Mohammad Ali, Kamrul Islam and Momtazuddin Mehedi appeared for the state. Advocates Nazrul Islam, Abm Sharfuddin Khan Mukul, Jasimuddin and Sanaullah defended the accused.

## Two fishermen missing after pirates throw them into Bay

UNB, Bagerhat

Two fishermen are feared dead and 12 others suffered injuries as pirates flung them into the Bay after looting their trawler Thursday night.

The injured fishermen said about 20 pirates attacked their trawler MV Janata near No. 1 buoy, 70km away from Daulachar.

The pirates beat them up and hacked five fishermen before throwing them into the sea, they added.

Another trawler rescued them, but Reza Amin and Awal went missing.

Twenty fishermen were killed and over 50 injured in pirate attacks in the Bay in the last three months, locals said.

## Tk 8 lakh looted

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seized the microbus with four guns and seven cartridges.

Another team of the police, meanwhile, caught a member of the gang with Tk 1 lakh from Dagonbhuiyan searching a passenger bus.

As the news spread, several labourers' organisations and traders blocked Majidi-Begumganj road demanding arrest of the robbers.

They, however, withdrew the barricade two hours later following talks with local lawmaker Mohammad Shahjahan, Deputy Commissioner Maksumul Hakim, Superintendent of Police AKM Shahidur Rahman and other high officials.

## Envoys to answer

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According to sources, most of the counsellors were appointed or chosen on political consideration and typically are not trained on how best to promote the country's exports to prospective buyers.

The commerce ministry last year decided to call back some of the under-performing counsellors but could not carry out the decision due to political pressures, said a source.

The missions that fulfilled their export targets for the period are those in Washington, The Hague, Madrid, Ottawa, Ankara, Manila, Muscat, Hong Kong, Tehran, Seoul, Moscow, Brasilia, Tashkent, Doha, Manama, New Delhi, Canberra, Warsaw, Riyadh, Thimphu and Jakarta.

Together they facilitated an export income of \$1,359 million, up by 18 percent from the goal of \$1,153.5 million for the four months.

The government previously used to set the export targets on sectoral basis after consulting with the private sector entrepreneurs. But, at present, export targets are set country-wise and the foreign missions asked to take necessary measures to achieve those.

The country's export target for the current fiscal year has been set at \$8,565.78 million. Its export earning in FY2003-04 was \$7,602 million.

## Hosts 7wkt away

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successive overs. In his first over the lively right-arm had left-handed opener Barney Rogers brilliantly caught for no score by substitute fielder Manzarul Islam, who held a low catch at second slip. Tapash then trapped one-down Vusi Sibanda leg before, leaving Zimbabwe at 2-2.

Young left-arm spinner Enamul Haque's perseverance paid off when he bowled Matsikenyeri for Bangladesh's third wicket in the final session.

Zimbabwe will be pinning their hopes on Hamilton Masakadza (26 off 51 balls) and Brendan Taylor, yet to open his account, when the pair resume the fight for survival on a wicket that is strangely behaving as fresh as it was on Day One.

Still, the fourth day saw a total of 14 wickets fall with the Tigers trying to push for a substantial lead after mopping up the last Zimbabwe resistance early in the morning.

The visitors could only add four runs to their overnight total of 308-8 before being bundled out, giving Bangladesh a healthy 176-run lead.

There was a sense of urgency when Bangladesh started their second innings and scored 204-9 before the declaration came forty minutes after tea.

Skipper Habibul Bashar led the brisk scoring with his second half-century of the match. Fresh from his 94 in the first innings, the 28-year-old scored an 80-ball 55 that featured six fours. But his second essay was not unblemished as he offered two chances on 46 and 52 to Elton Chigumbura, but the rookie seamer

## Palestinians vote

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and took other measures to facilitate the voting in the West Bank, Gaza Strip and east Jerusalem, with 1.8 million Palestinians eligible to cast ballots. Hundreds of international observers from Europe, Japan and the United States also were on hand.

Palestinian police officer Mohammed Juma was one of the first voters at the Jall school in Gaza City. He turned his pistol in at the entrance before casting his vote for Abbas, who is widely known as Abu Mazen. "I believe he is the only one capable of taking us to the safe side of this ocean of conflict," he said.

According to opinion polls, Abbas holds a clear lead over his main challenger, democracy activist Mustafa Barghouti, and five other candidates.

Analysts cautioned, however, that Abbas would need a strong showing perhaps up to two-thirds of the vote to go forward with this agenda.

Abbas has made it clear that his fundamental goal is the same as Arafat's: an end to Israeli occupation and a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, with Jerusalem as its capital. He also hopes to reform his government.

But he faces a difficult balancing act and is likely to encounter resistance from within the trouble-riddled Palestinian Authority and militants intent on attacking Israel.

Abbas also is under heavy pressure from Israel to crack down on the militants.

"After the elections, we want to see... a strategic decision to fight the terror and incitement," Israeli Foreign Minister Silvan Shalom told Israel Radio. "The elections are only the first step in the required direction."

Abbas has so far resisted calls for a crackdown. Instead, he hopes to persuade militants to halt their attacks on Israel. Part of that task will involve dealing with the Islamic group Hamas, which boycotted yesterday's election.

Zakariye Zubeydi, a senior gunman from a refugee camp in the West Bank town of Jenin, showed up with 15 armed militants from the pro-Pal Ahl Al Asma Martyrs' Brigades to vote at a school. "I voted for Abu Mazen," he declared.

## Fire tamed

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On Friday night, Niko's drilling operators felt a sudden kick of gas that they tried to control by burning the gas coming out with a tremendous force. On Saturday morning, there was a big bang at 5:00am which was heard eight kms away. Two hours later, the fire broke out prompting about 10,000 locals to flee their homes in panic.

It is not known why the fire has come down so much more quickly than the 30 to 45 days that experts and the state minister for energy on Saturday had estimated. "It may have been a small pocket of gas in the upper layer of the well that started the fire," the Petrobangla chairman said.

"Another possibility is that an internal landslide has suppressed the gas pressure from a much lower level."

"We have to remain cautious regardless of whether the flames have come down or not. The damaged well should be sealed off by drilling a remedial well," he added.

Yesterday, two Canadian drilling experts along with a Niko official arrived at the spot. The Niko official said the situation has improved much and "the fire will go out soon" while the experts said they would not make any comments then.

The Niko team returned to Dhaka in the evening and is expected to submit a report to the government suggesting the next course of action, the Niko official added.

The government has formed a six-member committee headed by Additional Secretary at the energy ministry Ehsanul Fatah to investigate the blow-out. It will submit its report by January 20.

The committee members are Petrobangla Chairman SR Osmani, Strategic Policy Expert of Hydrocarbon Unit Moimul Huq, Managing Director of Sylhet Gas Field Rahman Morshed and representatives of the environment ministry and

failed to hold on to both return catches.

Chigumbura, who returned with 5-54 for his maiden five-wicket haul in Test cricket, however had the last laugh when Bashar got a leading edge while trying to flick, giving Masakadza a simple catch between square-leg and short mid-wicket.

Earlier, coming in as a makeshift opener for Javed Omar, Rajin Saleh gave Bangladesh an ideal start with a quickfire 28 that included five exquisite boundaries.

Bangladesh lost wickets at regular intervals while trying to up the tempo as Zimbabwe countered with some stunning ground fielding.

The best example came in the fourth over of the Bangladesh innings when Taylor, standing at second slip, plucked the ball one-handed in mid-air to get rid of opener Nafees Iqbal for a duck.

Zimbabwe captain Tendai Taibu also clung on to a low diving catch to see the back of a menacing Mohammad Ashraful, who smacked Christopher Mpofu for six off the previous ball.

Mohammad Rafique, who limped off the ground at the end of the Bangladesh's innings sending shockwaves through the Tigers' tent, returned much to the relief of the whole nation as the champion left-arm spinner bowled in tandem with Enamul without showing any problem with the hamstring. Rafique took 5-65 in the Zimbabwe first innings, his fifth 5-wicket haul in 17 Tests.