

Top changes in admin

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government yesterday made some top-level changes in the civil administration by transferring two secretaries and six joint secretaries, promoting one as secretary and posting an officer on special duty (OSD), who was previously secretary.

Secretary in-charge of the Ministry of Shipping Ismail Zabihullah has been transferred to Economic Relations Division (ERD) under the Ministry of Finance and Secretary in-charge of the Ministry of Food, Disaster Management and Relief Siddiqur Rahman Chowdhury to the Ministry of Commerce.

Earlier this month, Siddiqur was first transferred to the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education, then to the Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock, and finally to the food ministry, cancelling the previous two orders.

About a year ago, he was transferred to the Ministry of Commerce but was also cancelled.

Director General of the Directorate of Food Muhammad Fazlur Rahman has been made secretary in-charge of the Ministry of Food, Disaster Management and Relief.

No decision was taken till yesterday about appointing secretary in the Ministry of Shipping.

Azizul Islam, previously a secretary

Contaminated

FROM PAGE 1 been supplying the building with water from their mobile water tankers and has promised to continue until the problem gets solved.

"We always boil the water before drinking, but we use the direct tap water to do the washing," Mrs Hasan said.

Shahidur Rahman Pradhan, chief engineer of Wassa, said that the contamination was probably caused by leakage in the water pipe somewhere in the area. He said that workers working in Dhaka City Corporation's (DCC) drains might have damaged the pipes.

"We have ensured that there is no excreta getting into the supply water but we cannot yet advise the locals until we receive the reports on water condition of the area from our laboratory," Pradhan said.

Hasina Emran Chowdhury, a resident of House-12, Road 99, said that she had just returned from a hospital after one month of treatment for jaundice. She said her employees too have been ill for the last few months.

"I smell a foul odour while washing, but it never came to my mind that the Wassa water could cause these diseases," Hasina Emran added.

Guards at the residence of the Turkish Embassy at Road 96 were also unaware that they were consuming contaminated water and it in fact had resulted in jaundice and other diseases among them.

Sadrudin Ghauc, a resident of House 11B, Road 94, said that his entire family including his elderly mother was suffering from severe diarrhoea. "I am not sure though that the illness has resulted from the contaminated supply water," he said.

At House-8 of Road-96, a resident said that there have been outbreaks of hepatitis and typhoid in the area.

He however said he does not know what caused the outbreaks.

"When many of our relatives and friends on Roads No 104, 105 and 106 complained of gastrointestinal complications over the last few months, we thought it was only a natural phenomenon," a resident said requesting anonymity.

Wassa's acting Managing Director, CR Barua told The Daily Star that a group of Wassa experts had already visited the area and taken necessary measures to contain the contamination. He said that Wassa's mobile water tankers supply water in the area every day.

Khaleda blasts opposition

FROM PAGE 1 people are leading a peaceful and happy life and want this situation to prevail, an opposition party stands against this situation. "Our opposition does not want peace--- they want terrorism and so they are harbouring terrorists."

Khaleda, the chairperson of the ruling BNP observed that the Awami League, during its last five-year rule, had presented the country with terrorism, corruption and unfair means at public examinations.

On the contrary, she said, the three-year-old BNP-led coalition government has given roads, bridges, new schools, universities and employment and curbed crimes and formed independent anti-corruption commission to eradicate corruption from the country.

"BNP wants peace, welfare, progress and development while the opposition wants unrest and terrorism to take the country backward that's the fundamental difference between the two," said the prime minister.

The rally was addressed, among others, by Shipping Minister Akbar Hossain, also president of BNP Comilla district (south), Prime Minister's Political Secretary Harris Chowdhury, BNP leader Rabeya Chowdhury, Mohammad Shahajan MP, Monirul Islam Chowdhury MP and Principal Yunus MP.

Earlier, the prime minister inaugurated works of the 15-km Nangalkot-Doukhar-Boxganj road at Haripur in the upazila by unveiling a plaque. The project involves Tk 8.25 crore.

and now an OSD, has been made a member of the Privatisation Commission.

According to official notifications, Abu Zafar, joint secretary of the Ministry of Labour and Employment, and Director General of Food Planning and Monitoring Unit Yeakub Ali have been made OSD.

OSD Chowdhury Mohammad Ziaul Haq, previously joint secretary, has been posted in the Ministry of Religious Affairs.

Joint Secretary of the Ministry of Religious Affairs Fazlur Rahman has been transferred to the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Director of the now defunct Bureau of Anti-Corruption Sirajul Islam Khan made managing director of Jibon Bima Corporation and Joint Secretary of Ministry of Commerce Elias Ahmed made director general of the Directorate of Food.

Moreover, Director at the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) Anisuddin Mandal has been made deputy commissioner of Munshiganj and Senior Assistant Secretary Dr Abu Yusuf made director at the PMO.

Meanwhile, sources at the PMO said the government has already finalised the decision to bring more changes in different ministries, including the Ministry of Expatriates Welfare and Overseas Employment, Energy and Power divisions and Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation (BPC).

Secretary in-charge of the Power Division Shamim Ehsan will be transferred to the Ministry of Expatriates Welfare and Overseas Employment as the second term of contract job incumbent Secretary of the ministry Daili Uddin Mandal expires on February 7, the sources said.

Secretary of the Energy Division Nazrul Islam is likely to be transferred to the Power Division while Chairman of the BPC Zafarullah Khan may be made secretary in-charge of the Energy Division.

Defiant JMJB

FROM PAGE 1 Dewan and injured 30 others while running away from a foiled attempt on the life of Sripur UP Chairman Mokbul Hossain Mirshah.

Rahim, an office assistant at Bhalukgram Madrassa under Gomo star upazila in Chapainawabganj, was present with a group of JMJB activists at Rajshahi Medical College and Hospital morgue yesterday when relatives received the bodies.

On Rahim's command, the bodies were wrapped in shrouds without washing -- a major burial ritual avoided only in case of martyrs -- on the morgue premises, witnesses said.

A microbus took the bodies to their village homes at Konabaria and Tegachi Senopara of Bagmara and Adamdighi in Bogra. They were buried there amid religious fervour in presence of JMJB cadre, witnesses said.

Family members of the lynched JMJB men expressed pride over the deaths. "I am lucky enough to be a father of a son who has sacrificed his life for religious cause," said Ershadur Rahman, father of Abdul Rahman, one of the dead.

Bagmara AL leader Anil Kumar Sarker said they were forced to withdraw the hartal for 'lack of security'. "Many AL supporters in the area are fleeing their homes as JMJB cadre have started to openly patrol as before, spreading panic."

However the local AL claimed in a press release it has withdrawn the hartal at the request of businessmen.

Besides Abdus Sattar Master, who was arrested later, JMJB leaders Prof Lutfor, Mustaque, Abdus Subhan, Abdul Halim and Sajedur Rahman were seen leading patrols in Hamirkutsa, Sikdari, Jhikra, Jhargam and Jatragacha villages.

She also distributed cows, goats and rickshaws among poor people at the meeting venue under her government's poverty-alleviation programme.

Hajis return

FROM PAGE 12 and transport facilities provided by the hajj mission were of very poor quality.

As the Bangladeshi hajj camp stood at a far corner of Mecca, many elderly and women hajis and their relatives found it hard to spot it amid a mammoth crowd, they complained.

Some 40,000 Bangladeshis went to Saudi Arabia this year to perform the Hajj Hajj. Among them, 5,000 went under government management while the rest under private. Biman transported 23,822 pilgrims including all government-managed hajis to Jeddah while Saudi Arabian Airlines and others flew the remainder.

Biman's return hajj flights will continue until February 18. As in the past, Biman will operate 12 direct hajj flights from Jeddah to Chittagong. Earlier, Biman started hajj flights from Dhaka to Jeddah on December 23, 2004 and continued until January 15.

State Minister for Civil Aviation Mir Mohammad Nasiruddin, Chairman of Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh Zahed Qudus, Managing Director of Biman Mahmoodur Rahman were present at ZIA to welcome the hajis on their arrival yesterday.

Outlaw, criminal flee from police van

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

A regional leader of outlawed Biplobi Communist Party and a listed criminal of the area fled from a police van yesterday.

Kushtia Police said they arrested Shah Alam Jamal, an accused in at least 12 cases including five of murders, at Hili border area under Dinajpur district on Monday afternoon and were taking him to Kushtia on a microbus.

A wheel of the microbus punctured when it reached Iswardi highway and as the police became busy with the microbus, Jamal jumped from the microbus and managed to escape, they said.

But sources in the Kushtia police said the policemen concerned let Jamal flee.

A joint team of Kushtia and Iswardi police conducted raids in different parts of the two districts but failed to trace out Jamal till writing of this report.

Following the incident, Kushtia joint forces' Camp Inspector Motiur Rahman, Sub Inspector Abdul Aziz and four constables were closed.

A three-member investigation committee led by Assistant Police Superintendent (Circle) Walid Hasan has been formed to probe the incident.

'Aviator' gets 11 Academy Award nods

AP, Beverly Hills

The Howard Hughes epic "The Aviator" led Academy Awards contenders with 11 nominations Tuesday, including best picture, plus acting honors for Leonardo DiCaprio, Cate Blanchett and Alan Alda and a directing slot for Martin Scorsese.

The boxing saga "Million Dollar Baby" and the J.M. Barrie tale "Finding Neverland" followed with seven nominations each, among them best picture and acting nominations for Clint Eastwood, Morgan Freeman, Hilary Swank and Johnny Depp.

Eastwood also got a directing nomination for "Million Dollar Baby".

The other best-picture nominees were the Ray Charles portrait "Ray" and the buddy comedy "Sideways."

Along with Eastwood, Jamie Foxx also scored two nominations, as best actor for the title role in "Ray" and supporting actor as a taxi driver whose cab is hijacked by a hit man in "Collateral."

Foxx's dead-on emulation of Charles has made him the front-runner in the lead-actor category.

Starring as aviation trailblazer and Hollywood rebel Hughes, DiCaprio also was nominated for best actor. He and Foxx will compete against Deppe in "Peter Pan" playwright Barrie in "Finding Neverland"; Eastwood as a cantankerous boxing trainer in "Million Dollar Baby"; and Don Cheadle for "Hotel Rwanda," starring as hotel manager Paul Rusesabagina, who sheltered refugees from the Rwandan genocide.

The best-actress category presents a rematch of the 1999 showdown, when underdog Swank won the Oscar for "Boys Don't Cry" over Annette Bening, who had been the front-runner for "American Beauty."

This time, Swank was nominated as a bull-headed boxing champ whose life takes a cruel twist in "Million Dollar Baby". Bening was chosen for "Being Julia," in which she plays an ageing 1930s stage diva exacting wickedly comic revenge on the men in her life and a young rival.

Both actresses won Golden Globes for the roles, Swank for best dramatic actress, Bening for actress in a musical or comedy.

Also nominated for the best-actress Oscar were Catalina Sandino Moreno as a Colombian woman imperilled when she signs on to smuggle heroin in "Maria Full of Grace"; Imelda Staunton as a saintly housekeeper in 1950s Britain who performs illegal abortions on the side in "Vera Drake"; and Kate Winslet as a woman who has had memories of her ex-boyfriend erased in "Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind."

Do or die

FROM PAGE 1 coverage from country's second Test venue.

Bangladesh is expected to make one change but more importantly the Tigers need a disciplined approach to turn the tide after their two dismal chases. In both Dhaka and Chittagong Habibul Bashar's men faltered under self-inflicted pressure despite getting off to good starts.

Besides, the home side will be hoping to restrict the free-scoring Zimbabweans in the final ten overs after fireworks in successive games by number six batsman Elton Chigumbura. Zimbabwe skipper Tatenda Taibu, who has been in terrific form both in the Test and one-day series, on the other hand will be looking to win the toss for the third game in a row and also take an unassailable 3-0 lead in the 16th meeting between the two light-weights.

Although Bangladesh won the Test series 1-0, they have been unable to carry the winning form in the abridged version against an inexperienced but improving southern African nation. Their only victory against Zimbabwe was away in Harare last March.

Hasina blames government

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activists had brought out a procession in Rajshahi city in April last year carrying firearms and other weapons. There were also reports of secret meetings of the extremist group with ministers and high officials of police in Bagmara of Rajshahi, she added.

Some police high-ups openly lauded activities of Bangla Bhai and his followers, who are involved in killings and extortion, and set up camps to give their activists arms training, the AL chief alleged.

The statement also protested murder of AL leader Mahubur Rahman and attack on Sripur Union Parishad chairman Mokbul Hossain of Bagmara by JMJB cadres on the Eid day.

Hasina referred to the bomb blasts in Dinajpur, Mymensingh, Tangail, Khulna, Joypurhat, Bogra and Sylhet and alleged extremist groups are involved in the incidents.

The government did not unearth any of the crimes including the August 21 grenade attacks on the AL rally last year and grenade attack on the British high commissioner to Bangladesh because it was involved

in the incidents, she said. "This has encouraged extremist groups and they have intensified their activities."

The opposition leader said Bangladesh has been branded as a 'terrorist country' abroad because of 'government patronisation' of Bangla Bhai who was trained by Taliban forces in Afghanistan, and for giving him 'licence for mass killings'.

10 BCL

FROM PAGE 12 while Hafizullah, Khoka, Milon, Masud, Nurul Islam, Nazrul, Kakul and Alamgir to three years.

The court also fined Anwar and Ranjit Tk 5,000 each, in default, they are to suffer five years more in jail.

According to the prosecution, the BCL and Jubo League activists ransacked and set the Jamaat office ablaze after Ahsanullah Master was shot dead by unidentified assailants on May 7, 2004.

After the verdict, local units of the BCL and Jubo League brought out a procession at district headquarters.

Dhaka to press

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These issues are likely to come up at the official talks between Dhaka and Kuala Lumpur during the February visit, diplomatic sources said.

The Ministry of Expatriate Welfare and Overseas Employment would present a detailed report on manpower export to Malaysia at the joint economic council meeting.

Malaysia is yet to resume hiring workers from Bangladesh although a memorandum of understanding (MoU) was signed between the two countries in October 2003.

Export of Bangladesh manpower to Malaysia has remained suspended since 1997 following influx of a large number of undocumented workers. During the mid-90s, the number of Bangladeshi workers in that country was over half a million.

The number has now come down to 1.13 lakh as Malaysia cracked

down on illegal workers several times and expelled a large number of them. Kuala Lumpur had earlier committed resumption of import of Bangladesh manpower after streamlining the process of hiring foreign workers. It has already taken a number of steps to this end.

Dhaka now expects implementation of the MoU and resumption of manpower export to Malaysia on a large scale.

Meanwhile, trade between Dhaka and Kuala Lumpur was heavily in favour of Malaysia. But recently export from Bangladesh showed an upward trend. Its export rose to \$8.65 million in fiscal 2003-04 from \$4.71 million in the previous year.

In 2002-03, Bangladesh's import totalled \$169.42 million while Malaysia invested over \$530.4 million in Bangladesh's telecom, power and infrastructure sectors.

Wetland development

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also its members. The water resources secretary is member-secretary of the body, said a report submitted to the parliamentary committee.

At yesterday's meeting, the House body asked the water resources ministry to repair the damaged embankments immediately.

Matin said, "We must go for permanent structures to save the crops in the haors. Otherwise, we have to face food crisis."

Officials of the water resources ministry informed the meeting that Tk 10 crore was released to implement projects in the haor areas by February. They however mentioned that the ministry is facing fluid crisis to implement the projects.

Committee members said it will be difficult to repair the damaged embankments after February as

farmers will start growing new crops at that time and they will not allow digging their lands for the repair work.

Water Resources Minister Hafiz Uddin Ahmed told the meeting that a master plan involving Tk 85 crore was finalised for development of the haors in the first phase. "We have sought financial assistance from donor agencies to implement the plan, and we hope they will provide funds," sources quoted the minister as saying.

The parliamentary body asked the ministry to maintain financial transparency in implementing the projects.

"We discussed measures to ensure accountability and transparency in implementing the projects," Awami League lawmaker and former water resources minister Abdur Razzak said after the meeting.

Dhaka rebuffs New York

FROM PAGE 1

"Nearly 1,400 foreign journalists visited Bangladesh in the last three years. Reports by only three or four of them have been regrettable," Haq said referring to a portion of the January 23 report that claims, "Foreign journalists in Bangladesh are followed by intelligence agents; people that reporters interview are questioned afterwards."

The report narrates, "It is possible to travel through Bangladesh and observe the increased political and religious repression in everyday life. The global war on terror is aimed at making the rise of regimes like that of the Taliban impossible, but in Bangladesh, the trend could be going the other way."

Referring to such statements Haq said, "The NYT reporter came a long way but failed to portray the real picture of Bangladesh," adding, "To suggest Bangladesh is becoming a Taliban country is humorous at best and is the result of ill-motives."

He termed the report's allusion to government collusion with Bangla Bhai and his organisation -- Jagrata Muslim Janata -- motivated and said, "The first secretary of US Embassy in Dhaka visited the area mentioned in the report and found no consolidated existence of Bangla Bhai following there."

"Bangla Bhai gained the support of the local police -- until the central government, worried that Bangla Bhai's band might be getting out of control, ordered his arrest in late May," reads the report.

The author, Eliza Griswold, a freelance writer, also says in her report, "The Bangladesh government's arrest warrant doesn't seem to have made much difference, although for now Bangla Bhai refrains from public appearances."

On these points, Haq said the government is determined to tackle these issues and has already arrested 66 operatives of Bangla Bhai.

"The author of the report chose a single village, Bagmara, out of the 70,000 villages here. The situation there does not represent all of Bangladesh," he added.

The report says, "Last Spring, Bangla Bhai, whose followers probably number around 10,000, decided to try an Islamist revolution in several provinces of Bangladesh that border India."

Two Bangladeshis go missing as boat capsizes off Lebanon

AFP, Beirut

Two Bangladeshis were missing Monday after a North Korean registered cargo boat capsized off the coast of Lebanon, officials said.

Rescue teams were alerted at dawn when residents in Khalde, south of Beirut, saw the 25-metre (82-foot) Mary capsized in rough seas.

A civil defence team managed to fish three Georgians out of the sea, including the captain and two crew members, but two Bangladeshi sailors have been reported missing, the sources said.

The boat capsized after wires got entangled in its propeller and was left badly damaged, according to the initial findings of an investigation.

The captain told police that the Mary left Port Said in Egypt for Latakia in Syria on Saturday.

CTGARMS HAUL

Court defers bail hearing to Jan 29

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Cg

A Chittagong court yesterday deferred the hearing for bails of six accused in the country's biggest-estern arms haul as there was huge rush of cases in the court.

The six, now in jail, appeared before the court of Metropolitan Sessions Judge Khademul Islam Md Belal with bail prayers yesterday.

But as the court was under pressure to deal with a number of cases scheduled earlier, the acting judge Mohammad Shahjahan fixed January 29 for hearing of their bail petition.

Police on April 1 midnight last year seized ten truckloads of sophisticated firearms from the Chittagong Urea Fertiliser Limited jetty area.

Then Criminal Investigation Department (CID) Assistant Superintendent of Police (ASP) and Investigation Officer (IO) of the case AKM Kabiruddin submitted the first charge sheet on June 11 in which 42 people were accused and 71 made witnesses.

But there were many loopholes and discrepancies in the charge sheet, allegedly done intentionally by the first IO.

Following the allegations, the government changed the IO and gave then ASP of CID in Sylhet Zone Mir Nawsher Ali the responsibility to prepare a fresh charge sheet.

In the supplementary charge sheet, Nawsher Ali included another person, raising the number of accused to 43. He also increased the number of witnesses from 71 to 114.

Later police arrested 21 of the 43 from different parts of the country. Of them, 15 were granted bail from the court.

IMF defers \$70m

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government had to fulfil four major conditions by January. These included bringing Rupali Bank to a point of sale by issuing an information memorandum to the public, adopting resolution strategy for the nationalised commercial banks (NCBs) as part of a privatisation process, expanding the Large Taxpayers Unit and making the Central Intelligence Cell at the National Board of Revenue fully operational.

The government fulfilled three out of these four conditions. But it stumbled over the privatisation of Rupali Bank.

The government last year had appointed a British consultant on privatisation of Rupali Bank. The adviser had submitted a report outlining a course of action for the government to follow prior to initiating the privatisation.

The consultant had reportedly told the government that restructuring of the Rupali Bank would cost about Tk 3000 crore. The amount would be needed to cover the losses caused by default loans, staff loans and pension funds. The government could neither afford it nor find it rational to pump so much money into privatisation of a bank, said the finance ministry source.

"This is why the government is now seeking an alternative solution," the source added.

Blindfolded

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Fancy was admitted to the DMCH. "The patient (Fancy) has marks of old and fresh wounds almost all over her body and flesh in the left shoulder was exposed and infected," said Dr Bilkis Begum of One-Stop Crisis Centre (OCC).

"I have been working in that house since July 1 last year and have suffered tremendous torture," Fancy told reporters in a weak voice. "They did not let me see my parents, who live nearby, and did not even pay my salaries," she added.

"They (Shayesta and Miraj) used to beat me with sticks and pierce kitchen utensils into different parts of my body for minimal mistakes," she said, adding, "Couple of days back they cut my lips with a knife as some food was missing from the kitchen."

Miraj used to threaten her of slaughtering when she wanted to go away from the house, she said.

The arrestees, however, denied torturing the house help, police said. Asked about her wounds, they said she had been suffering from acute skin diseases and they had dropped her at Hazaribagh as she became ill.

Nationwide alert against

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to investigate the outbreak of such communicable diseases as the only government laboratory remains in a state of disability for years.

In order to probe any unusual disease outbreaks and to obtain reliable data from surveillance on the exact nature and sources of 'unknown' diseases, the government set up a research laboratory in 1976.

Its main objective was to investigate the possible transmission of any disease that may threaten public health in large scale.

But the government seems to care little to strengthen or capacitate the only public research laboratory under the Health Directorate that has remained practically non-functional as seven of its branches have left without any scientists for years.

The post of chief scientific officer (CSO) remained vacant ever since the last serving officer in the same position retired.

Six other position of principal scientific officers in epidemiology, virology, entomology, zoonosis, parasitology, and microbiology departments are also vacant, some are for years.

Apparently, research activities in these departments are very rare as financial support for reagents and solutions and repair works for deli-

Resistance

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They expressed concern over the killing of Teherpur Awami League (AL) leader Mahub Hossain and attack on Sreepur Union Parishad Chairman and AL leader Mokbul Mirshah by the cadres of Bangla Bhai on Saturday.

Workers Party of Bangladesh President Rashed Khan Menon and General Secretary Bimal Bishwas criticised the government for its indifference and asked why the Rapid Action Battalion do not arrest the cadres of Bangla Bhai.

They demanded taking immediate effective steps to eliminate Bangla Bhai and his gang for the greater interest of the country.

Praising the people of Rajshahi for taking actions against the Bangla Bhai men, Mukti Joddha Samannoy Parishad leaders demanded scrapping of the law on state religion and urged all pro-liberation forces to be united against the religious fanatics.

Judge, 11 Iraqi cops killed

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his car with bullets in an attack