

'Why magistrate won't be stripped of authority?'

HC on bail refusal to infant

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court (HC) yesterday ordered a metropolitan magistrate of Chittagong to appear before the court on April 23, and explain why he would not be stripped of his authority as a magistrate for refusing a six-month-old baby and his mother bail in a robbery case.

The HC division bench comprising Justices AK Badrul Huq and M Fazlur Rahman also asked former investigation officer (IO) of the case Sub-Inspector Zahidur Rahman Zahid to appear before the court in person the same day.

Besides, the court expressed resentment at Assistant Attorney General

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Rokan for taking defence from president during caretaker regime

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Immediate past Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) President Barrister Rokanuddin Mahmud yesterday said a dual administration exists during the caretaker government as the president remains in charge of the armed forces.

Rokanuddin, also vice-chairman of Bangladesh Bar Council, suggested that defence responsibilities should be taken from the president if the problem is to be overcome.

"The problem can also be resolved if the former chief justice who is going to head the caretaker government, according to the existing provisions, is made president," he told a press conference organised at Bangladesh Bar Council auditorium after he handed over the charge to the new SCBA president.

"The president should resign

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Thakurgaon OC closed for bribery

UNB, Thakurgaon

Officer-in-Charge (OC) of Balladangi Police Station was closed to the police Lines Friday on charges of demanding a bribe from a trucker.

A group of transport workers blocked the road of state minister for agriculture Fakhru Islam Alamgir protesting highhandedness of the OC, compelling him to walk half a kilometer for attending a meeting of party workers. When the OC resorted to lathi charge, the angry workers chased and confined him in a house.

The transport workers told the state minister that OC Akkas Ali seized a truck and demanded Tk 20,000 from the trucker. He was given Tk 6,000 to secure release of the truck with warning of blocking the way of the state minister if the vehicle was not released.

The truck was seized after it killed a housewife at Kadashuka on March 17. Senior police officers admitted the incident and said Akkas Ali was closed. They said allegations against him are under investigation.

New pay scale will inflame inflation

IMF mission warns Saifur, goes back on its advice to cut interest rates

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A visiting IMF mission yesterday questioned the rationale of the new pay scale being designed at the moment, saying it would only aggravate and whip up the galloping inflation.

The six-member International Monetary Fund Article 4 mission led by Adviser to the Asia-Pacific Department Nissanke Veerasinghe had arrived here last week to evaluate and update information on

Bangladesh economy. They met Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman at his Secretariat office yesterday.

"Pointing at the rising commodity prices right now, they wanted to know how we are going to deal with the more inflamed inflation that would follow the introduction of the new pay scale," Saifur told the press.

He said, "We told them we can minimise the adverse impact by implementing the pay scale in phases."

The mission members said the

country's monetary management is on the right path, but it needs some tightening. "If there is too much monetary expansion, it will have negative impact on the inflation," Saifur quoted the IMF officials as remarking.

They suggested that the minister adopt a restrictive fiscal policy to maintain budgetary discipline. But Saifur told them the government intends to continue the present monetary policy for a while.

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Govt absolves Pintu of another criminal case

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The government yesterday withdrew a criminal case, the second in the last two weeks, against ruling BNP lawmaker Nasiruddin Ahmed Pintu and a dozen others for assaulting and injuring police and Awami League members.

Only 11 days ago, on March 22, another case against him, for robbing at gunpoint bidding documents for auction of a bankrupt company's property, was retracted.

But, after arresting Pintu on December 26, 2001 for auction document snatching, the newly installed coalition government

categorically declared it would not spare any criminal, no matter which party he belonged to.

COP ASSAULT CASE

Chief Metropolitan Magistrate of Dhaka Zahangir Alam dismissed the case yesterday, more than one year after a home ministry letter had conveyed its wish to withdraw the case.

The ministry in a letter on March 18 last year informed the district magistrate of Dhaka that it had decided to take back the charges against Pintu and the 12 others, as those were 'politically motivated'.

The ministry asked the district

magistrate to hand over the affair to the district public prosecutor (PP), who would arrange withdrawal of the case with permission of an appropriate court.

PP Abdullah Mahmud Hassan then submitted a petition to the chief metropolitan magistrate along with a photocopy of the home ministry's missive for revoking the charges against Pintu.

Pintu has been on bail. The 12 other accused have been on the run since getting bail in 1998.

In the case filed with Lalbagh Police Station, Sub-Inspector (SI)

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Dhaka committed to strengthening Saarc

PM tells new secretary general

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday said Saarc process should progress unhindered and reaffirmed Bangladesh's commitment to strengthening cooperation in all potential areas under the aegis of the

seven-nation forum.

She reiterated that poverty alleviation should be the achieving goal of the Saarc region as agreed in the last summit of the forum in Islamabad.

The prime minister was talking to the newly appointed Secretary

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JU meet today to select more teachers than vacancies

JU CORRESPONDENT

The Syndicate of Jahangirnagar University (JU) meets today to finalise the selection of candidates for 15 faculty positions, of which 10 are vacant regular posts, while the

rest have been added in violation of the rules.

The recruitment process has drawn flak and triggered strong protest among teachers and different student organisations.

Several selection committees have selected the 15 candidates -- seven for botany department, two for English, four for Bangla and two for mathematics -- until March 20.

The JU authorities in vacancy announcements, however, asked for five faculty members for botany and three for Bangla and English departments, while they did not make any announcement for mathematics at all.

Students of botany today besiege the administrative building, where the syndicate meet is scheduled to be held at 4:00pm, to protest selection of two 'less-qualified' candidates without any advert.

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Rajuk distributes Uttara plots

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Rajdhani Unnayan Kartripakkha (Rajuk) today distributes plots among applicants under the third phase of Uttara residential area project through a computerised lottery.

The Rajuk had asked for application in 12 categories and will conduct the lottery for the applicants of non-government service holders, businesspersons and industrialists and others.

The Rajuk has recently allocated 100 plots in Gulshan, Banani and Uttara among ministers and lawmakers of the ruling parties and mostly to the people loyal to them.

Rajuk sources said the ministry concerned has officially directed them to conduct the lottery of the third phase in presence of applicants, reporters, its representatives and high Rajuk officials.

9 Australians die in copter crash in Indonesia

AFP, Sydney

An Australian military helicopter carrying specialist medical staff to aid victims of a massive earthquake in Indonesia crashed yesterday, killing nine of the 11 people on board, the Australian national news agency reported.

Australian Associated Press quoted the captain of the Australian naval ship HMAS Kanimbla, Commander George McGuire, as saying nine of the 11 people aboard the Sea King helicopter died when it crashed on approach to a village on the remote west coast of Nias island.

McGuire said two on board the helicopter survived and were airlifted back to the Kanimbla for emergency surgery by the ship's second helicopter, which landed with a medical team after seeing smoke from the crash site.

"They are in a serious condition

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Parody poster costs his life

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

One physically challenged Master's student was killed allegedly over pasting of a parody poster at Bandar Police Station area in the city early yesterday.

The victim Jabhed Jahangir, 25, a student of Chittagong Government Commerce College and his companions prevented some locals from pasting "parody posters" on a wall at Pashchim Goshaidanga in Banmaking at around 12.30am.

As Jabhed and others went to the guardians of the people who tried to paste the posters that mocked a local leader, Jabhed with thin legs lagged far behind.

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PHOTO: STAR

In absence of traffic police, the busy intersection near Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy at Segunbagicha in the city becomes a mess yesterday morning with vehicles and rickshaws moving in every direction.

5 kidnapped in Bandarban

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bandarban

Armed criminals abducted five people including three indigenous persons in Roangchhari upazila in the early hours yesterday.

Up to eight criminals abducted the five at gunpoint from a labour shed in Bangchhari, 15km off the upazila headquarters, sources said.

The people taken hostage are bulldozer driver Mohammed Helal, his assistant Mohammed Belal and three unidentified indigenous locals, the sources added.

No-one has yet claimed responsibility for the abduction, but the sources suspect a guerrilla group from Myanmar has kidnapped them for ransom.

They said a Myanmar-based guerrilla outfit had demanded toll from Advocate Kazi Mohotul Hossain, owner of a construction firm, a few days ago.

High officials of army and police have visited the spot.

MANPOWER EXPORT

Clampdown on travel with free visa

RAFIQ HASAN

In a bid to bring discipline to the country's manpower export system, the government has imposed restrictions on individuals migrating abroad with individual free visas.

The restriction will be applicable to job seekers who migrate abroad without prior confirmation of a job.

Under the provision of the individual free visa, a citizen of the

country concerned can sponsor a person by showing requirements for his individual purposes and by sending a visa advice notice to the embassy of his country in Bangladesh.

The job seeker then obtains permission for entering into the sponsor's country with clearance from the ministry of expatriates' welfare.

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AHSANULLAH MURDER

Accused say they are victims of harassment

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Almost all the accused in the Awami League (AL) lawmaker Ahsanullah Master murder case yesterday said they were implicated in the incident to harass them falsely.

The prime suspect Jatiyatabadi Jubo Dal leader Nurul Islam Sarker and 11 others said this yesterday when Judge Shahed Noor Uddin of the Speedy Trial Tribunal-1 asked them to reply to the statements of 34 prosecution witnesses.

Four accused -- Mohammad Ali, Monir, Mahub and Dulal -- submitted a list of defence witnesses for giving their statements yesterday.

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Prayer Timing		
April 3		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fair	4-40	5-15
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-45	5-00
Maghrib	6-21	6-24
Esha	7-45	8-15
Source: Islamic Foundation		