

Attorney general quits

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He said the letter has been addressed to the president and would be forwarded to the president's office through the Prime Minister's Office.

Hassan Ariff served as Deputy Attorney General from August 1985 to March 1996 and as Assistant Attorney General between 1982 and 1985.

Asked whether his discord with the government led to the resignation, he answered in the negative: "I've enjoyed full cooperation from the government. There is no ministry that didn't assist in my works. I've received all sorts of cooperation I sought from them."

"I worked earlier with the government from 1991-95 and I faced no problem then. I did not face any interference in my works from any ministry. There should be no confusion about this," he said.

On whether the prime minister asked him to continue his job during their meeting Wednesday, he said: "She gave consent to my intention to resign."

"Since the Dhaka-10 by-election, there were many cases and contempt of court issues to deal with. The work pressure was immense, my health was repeatedly deteriorating," he said.

"My personal practice [has been] hampered due to the massive pressure."

Sources said the government was 'annoyed' with his role on several issues including Bangladesh Bar Council's cancellation of enrolment certificate for additional High Court Judge Faisal Mahmud Faizee, removal of additional High Court Judge Shahidur Rahman, interpretation of Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) Act, separation of the judiciary and appointment of law officers.

The Faizee issue has been learnt to have caused the latest discord as pro-government lawyers believe Hassan Ariff did not play an active role when the Bar Council held a meeting to cancel Faizee's enrolment. The attorney general skipped the meeting despite being the ex-officio chairman of the Bangladesh Bar Council. Sources said the government asked him to speak for Faizee at the extended meeting of the Council scheduled for May 13, which embarrassed Hassan Ariff.

The government was also disturbed by his not playing any role to

dissuade the lawyers from boycotting Faizee's court, sources said.

Hassan Ariff wrote a note to the government to challenge HC verdict that termed illegal the president's order to remove Shahidur, but the government decided otherwise, the sources said.

The attorney general, who is the chief law officer of the state, interpreted the ACC Act and said all staff of now-defunct Bureau of Anti-Corruption (Bac) would be absorbed in the ACC on Bac dissolution, the Cabinet Division contested his interpretation. The law ministry later also termed his interpretation wrong and said its decision on the matter is final.

Pro-government lawyers were also angered with Hassan Ariff, as he being the ex-officio chairman of the Bar Council kept 'aloof' when they moved to amend the voter list for the recently held Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) election. The High Court directed him to see if there were loopholes in the list, but he did not find any, much to the displeasure of the lawyers linked to the government, who later withdrew from the voting.

He also had a difference of opinion with the government when it asked him to appoint some 25 law officers to his office.

Finally, Hassan Ariff argued vehemently with Moudou over a wide range of issues, sources said.

Sources said Lawyers-Ministers Barrister Nazmul Huda and Barrister Aminul Haq, pro-government lawyers including TH Khan and Khondoker Mahbubuddin Ahmed met the law minister several times this week and discussed the issues.

Asked if Hassan Ariff's resignation had anything to do with his reported discord with the government over the cancellation of enrolment certificate for Faizee and SCBA's recent movement and election, the law minister told The Daily Star that the press has invented these rumours, which are totally false. The attorney general resigned purely on health grounds, he said, adding Hassan Ariff had been saying over the last six months that he wanted to resign on health reasons.

Sources, meanwhile, said some other law officers of the Office of Attorney General may resign soon.

Samad Azad

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to Sylhet in a helicopter, then to his ancestral village home in Sunamganj and brought back to Dhaka after several janazas there.

President Iajuddin Ahmed, ministers, leaders of different political parties, intellectuals, academics, lawyers and leading citizens and general people joined the namaz-e-janaza at Paltan Maidan at 10:55 am.

LGRD and Cooperatives Minister and BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, and Science and ICT Minister Abdul Moyeen Khan were among the ministers present.

Participants included former prime minister Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury, AL leaders Abdul Jali, Abdur Razzak, Amir Hossain Amu and Sheikh Fazul Karim Selim, Gono Forum chief Dr Kamal Hossain, CPB leaders Monjurul Ashan Khan and Mujahidul Islam Selim, Workers Party leader Rashed Khan Menon, JSD leader ASM Rab, Barrister Amirul Islam, Justice KM Sobhan, former finance minister AMA Muhith, JSD leader Sharif Nurul Ambia and Prof AK Azad Chowdhury.

The body draped in the national flag and party flag was then taken to Tejgaon helipad and flown to Sylhet and Sunamganj. At the helipad, a floral wreath was placed on the coffin on behalf of Prime Minister Khaleda Zia.

Earlier in the morning, party colleagues, leaders of other parties, heads of diplomatic missions in Dhaka and hundreds of others thronged the Kalabagan residence of Samad Azad and paid homage to him.

Leader of the Opposition and AL President Sheikh Hasina along with senior party leaders went to the leader's residence at about 8:45 am. She used to call him "chacha" (uncle) and always considered him as a guardian and a trusted party colleague.

Hasina placed wreaths on the coffin, stood in solemn silence and offered munajat.

A group of diplomats led by Dean of the Diplomatic Corps Shabta Zarab also placed wreaths and signed on condolence book.

Former chief adviser to the caretaker government Justice Habibur Rahman, Abdul Moyeen Khan, former president and Jatiya Party Chairman HM Ershad also visited Azad's residence.

His body was taken to the party central office on Bangabandhu Avenue at about 10.10 am. Party leaders and workers paid homage to him there.

Our staff correspondent in Sylhet reports: Thousands of people joined the janaza of Samad Azad at the government Alia Madrasa ground after John prayers. Imam of Hajrat Shahjalal (RA) Shrine mosque Hafiz Akbar Ali led the janaza.

Power cable

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Wednesday, Bangladesh submarine cable project sources said.

After the completion of equipment installation in the landing station at Jlongza in Cox's Bazar recently, Fujitsu, a Japanese telecommunication platform, is now testing those equipment.

The equipment are submarine line terminating equipment (SLTE), Synchronising Digital Higherarchie (SDH), Power Feeding Equipment (PFD), power station, including generators and rectifier.

Man kills wife

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Mownwara of the same village.

On the night, he stabbed Hajera and his four children, Jaba, Shova, Hasinur and Sumi. Hajera and Jaba died on the spot.

Hasinur, Sumi and Shova were rushed to Rangpur Medical College and Hospital where Shova died.

Munir, however, claimed that his wife and two daughters were killed by a gang of robbers at his house.

Police began an investigation and sent the bodies to hospital morgue for autopsy.

Ex-Nepal PM

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Deuba to one week's judicial custody for further investigation after he refused to testify on Thursday ... as there is a possibility of tampering with evidence if he is released," a commission official said.

Deuba's lawyers insisted he would not testify and have contested the legal basis of the commission.

"It is a seriously illegal and unconstitutional action of the commission to detain political leaders," said Srihari Aryal, senior legal advisor to the ex-prime minister.

2 'criminals'

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him to Tejgaon truck stand to seize his firearms at around 3:30am, police said.

"In a bid to snatch Delwar away, his accomplices opened fire on the police, who also retaliated," said the duty officer of Tejgaon Police Station.

He said Delwar received four bullets fired by his associates and died on way to Dhaka Medical College and Hospital.

Sub-inspector Sultan Mahmood and constable Rafiqul Islam also suffered minor injuries, he added.

Police seized a one-shooter gun with four bullets.

JESSORE

A Rab team arrested Royal, a notorious criminal and drugs and arms smuggler, at about 2:00am yesterday from his house in Sharsha with 210 bottles phensidyl, said a press release of the elite force.

The Rab was taking him to Navaron to seize narcotics and firearms when his accomplices opened fire on the team's vehicle on Kashiipur-Navaron road at around 4:00am.

The Rab returned fire and drove off the attackers. The Rab release said Royal was bullet-hit during the gunfight and declared dead at a local hospital.

Four Rab members also suffered injuries. The Rab seized a German pistol, an LG with four bullets, a live bullet and a cartridge.

Liaquat Ali

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Geneva and New York, and the Bangladesh High Commission in New Delhi in various capacities.

Liaquat Choudhury was appointed Bangladesh ambassador to the Netherlands in August 2003. He was promoted to the post of additional foreign secretary in September 2004.

Salehuddin

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new governor of Bangladesh Bank, putting an end to much speculation.

Dr Salehuddin, 56, will take his new office on May 2 Monday for a four-year term. He succeeds Governor Dr Fakhruddin Ahmed, whose term expires tomorrow, April 30.

Earlier, the finance ministry placed a proposal at the cabinet for extending the service age of the central bank governor from 65 to 67 years. But the cabinet turned it down and the ministry landed with a tough job to find a competent successor to the outgoing governor in a short time.

On the appointment of Salehuddin Ahmed as the new governor, some leading economists told The Daily Star he is a better choice for the government.

The appointment also came as a surprise to many, as his name was not on the list of hopefuls and probable ones.

An economist said, "We had been hearing the names of a precious few lobbying for the top banking job. Salehuddin Ahmed's name was not there. But he is a good pick." Salehuddin has been serving as the chief executive of PKSF, a non-profit organisation set up by the government for poverty alleviation, since September 1996. Before that he was the director general of NGO Affairs Bureau from November 1995 and the DG of Bangladesh Academy for Rural Development (Bard) from 1993.

He also taught economics at the Dhaka University from July 1970 to November 1971. He joined the Civil Service of Pakistan in 1971. He also served at Cirdap and BIDS in various important capacities.

Premier Bank MD

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remove an MD if it finds him involved in activities harmful to depositors' interest.

BB sources said Mazid can never become an MD because according to the 'fit and proper test' of the central bank, the central bank cannot approve appointment of a person to the post of MD of a bank if he has been removed or punished.

The central bank is also likely to take stern action against branch managers and other high officials of the private bank found involved in the irregularities.

The BB launched the probe on February 14 after the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) on February 12 suspended Premier Bank's Tk 55 crore IPO. The capital market watchdog froze the IPO following the unearthing of 25,000 fake beneficiary owners' (BOs) accounts in its preliminary investigation.

Meanwhile, at a farewell meeting with journalists yesterday, outgoing BB Governor Fakhruddin Ahmed said people expect the central bank to take stern action in case of any irregularities in the financial market. It will continue to do so to increase its reputation, he added.

On completion of its probe, the BB on March 13 served a show cause notice on the Premier Bank MD asking him to explain in a week why he should not be removed from job.

The MD sent his reply to a three-member BB standing committee headed by Deputy Governor Allah Malik Kazemi.

The committee also conducted a personal hearing of the MD but

found his explanation unacceptable. It then recommended to the BB governor that the MD be removed.

The removal order mentioned that the MD's version was not acceptable to the committee.

Article 2 of clause 48 of the Bank Companies Act 1991 provides that sacked chief executive of a bank can appeal to the BB board but its decision will be final. According to article 3 of clause 48 of the Act, no party can challenge the final BB action in any court, tribunal or other authorities.

The BB investigation into the Premier Bank IPO scam found gross violation of banking rules in the opening of around 17,000 accounts with different branches of the bank. The accounts were later found to be fake.

During the probe, branch managers of the bank told the investigators they were forced to open these accounts after they got verbal instructions from Mazid and manager of the bank's Banani branch Syed Nowsher Ali.

Sources said, the BB investigators did not pinpoint the mastermind who backed the MD in the mischief. "But we know there is a powerful person behind him. The central bank may file a case with a civil court, and follow-up investigations will unearth the powerful person's involvement," said a high official of the BB.

The SEC probe also held several directors and top management of Premier Bank responsible for the scam apparently to grab a major portion of the public offer.

Rejoinder, our reply

Protesting The Daily Star's reply to a Jamaat-e-Islami rejoinder published on Tuesday, the Sathkhira district unit Jamaat said none of their leaders and activists were involved directly or indirectly in laying siege to the Ahmadiyya complex in Jyotindranagar.

A statement signed by the Sathkhira publicity secretary of the party also termed false the information that local lawmaker Gazi Nazrul Islam directed the officer-in-charge of the local police station over the phone not to record any case when the Ahmadiyyas went there to file a case.

OUR REPLY

We stand by our report.

Tk 3.6cr

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mention his seat number and left the airport hurriedly without giving his identity, sources said.

A bomb disposal unit of the Bangladesh Army, members of the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) and police rushed to the scene on receipt of the information from airport security, and searched the plane thoroughly amid tight security.

The forces finally found a sack filled with eight separate paper packets of foreign currencies, included euros, pound sterling, riyals, dinars and dirhams worth Tk 3,63,43,741, under empty seats No D-30 and D-31.

Following the seizure, they detained Ashfiqur Rahman, passenger of seat No D-33. Chittagong Metropolitan Police (CMP) were interrogating Ashfiqur, son of Matiur Rahman of Rampura in Dhaka, as of the filing of this report.

Speaking with journalists, Ashfiqur denied his involvement in the currency smuggling, the biggest ever at the Chittagong airport, and said his purpose for visiting Dubai was only business. He claimed he was being implicated in the incident.

Ashfiqur also said he took the Muscat-bound flight as he had failed to obtain a ticket for a Dubai-bound direct flight in time.

Bandar police filed a case in this connection while customs officials were also preparing to file another case.

The Dubai-bound flight, boarding 161 passengers, finally left the airport at 2:25am, following a delay of nearly three-and-a-half-hours.

55 injured

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clash, which also left 25 Shibir men wounded at around 11:30am. Both the sides traded about 100 bullets during the clash.

University authorities were able to quell the situation at around 2:30pm but general students apprehend further conflicts, as the JCD is staying outside the campus.

The authorities have formed two committees of pro-BNP and pro-Jamaat teachers to bury the hatchet between the JCD and Shibir.

Fakhruddin

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by 11.4 percent, which is double that of the same period last fiscal year," Ahmed said explaining the background. From January to March alone, the growth rate was 3.35 percent. In February of this fiscal year, credit grew by 20 percent. "It can lead to problem," he said.

As a result of this, banks have exhausted their excess liquidity and do not have funds to lend. They are now left with two options -- reducing lending or increasing deposit.

There again is a daunting task. Market drive with the present deposit rate will not yield any success as deposit rate in real terms has turned negative now. The only option the banks now have is to offer higher rates on deposit and thereby increase lending rate too.

"I have advised the banks to be selective in reducing lending," Ahmed said. "They can check lending on consumer products and non-essential goods."

In the back of his mind, the ballooning import bill is also a nagging point. Import of food items has increased significantly. An increase in income has also changed the general consumption pattern and, so, sugar import most related to the beverage industry has gone up.

But, alongside, imports of capital and intermediate goods have also shot up.

"These surely indicate a high level of economic activities," the governor admitted. "I think an increase in interest rate may slow down the economy at the margin, but if this is not done it will have far reaching adverse impact on the economy."

He rationalised his action by comparing it with similar ones in other Asian countries. India has recently upped its reverse repo rate by 0.25 percent, Pakistan increased its discount rate by 2 percent and Thailand increased the base rate last year by 1 percent and will hike it further.

"The world is trying to adjust to a regime of potential high prices due to high petroleum price. We also have to get ready for that," he said.

Outlaws kill 3

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Jahid Master, a top leader of GMF, was killed in a 'crossfire' between police and his associates on April 24.

Sources said that the Mukti Fouz cadres used to use Badhsa's phone-fax shop to maintain communication with Jahid Master. The hotel of Ali Ahmed stands right beside the phone-fax shop.

Police reached the scene at about 6:00am and sent the bodies to Kushtia General Hospital for autopsy.

In Daulatpur, a gang allegedly belonging to an outlawed party called Aftab out of his home early yesterday. After dragging him to a nearby field, they hacked him to death.

Police recovered the body yesterday morning. They however could not confirm the motive for the murder.

KHULNA

Director transferred

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deputed for a month. It is looking for a technical director on contract basis although it has to deal with big power projects like the Meghnaghat-3 and Sirajganj 450 mw power plants, sources said.

Industry insiders term the transfer of technical director Alamgir Kabir to the PDB 'a serious technical loss' to the Power Cell.

Kabir has been assigned to the cell since its inception in the late nineties, during which he worked on a number of power projects, including the Haripur 360 mw AES project.

This incident also reveals a persisting conflict between the state minister for power and some PMO officials backing a business lobby to push the Meghnaghat deal by bending the rules, sources mentioned.

According to official documents, earlier this year the Power Cell was asked to review the unsolicited bid of US-Irish joint venture Cadogan

Mir Nasir

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chaired by Golam Kuddus, the RO and additional divisional commissioner of Chittagong.

The ruling four-party alliance candidate Mir Mohammad Nasir Uddin and 10 other mayoral candidates did not attend the meeting that discussed electoral rules and laws, code of conduct and formation of monitoring cells.

Deputy Election Commissioner, Chittagong Biswas Lutfur Rahman attended the meeting on behalf of the Election Commission.

Mohiuddin Chowdhury alleged that the alliance men and the police were harassing his supporters engaged in election campaign in different areas. He accused his rival Mir Nasir of violating election rules and code of conduct.

Other candidates present at the meeting were Abul Kasem Noori, Advocate Abu Naser Talukder, Haider Ali, Rezaul Karim, M Jamal Uddin, Dilip Bhadra, Mizan Chowdhury, Didarul Alam and Shahidul Islam Duldul.

Mir Nasir's personal secretary represented him at the meeting.

Didarul Alam accused two strong and influential candidates of taking undue institutional privileges and using public property in their campaign for the May 9 polls.

The RO will sit with the commissioner candidates of the CCC polls today.

Khulna tense

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National Prothom Alo, and Janakantha for 'manufacturing news stories to mislead the people as well as smear the outfit'.

He also threatened to file case against these newspapers, and said local correspondents of these papers will face dire consequences if they continue reporting against them.

The other speakers at the rallies demanded the authorities withdraw the cases filed against Khatme Nabuwat men by May 30. Otherwise, they will lay siege to the Ahmadiyya mosque at Jyotindranagar on June 1, they said.

Meanwhile, renewed threats by the bigots have caused panic among the Ahmadiyyas. A member of the Ahmadiyya sect seeking anonymity said that they felt frustrated to see the police guarding the zealots so that they could hold the meetings without any hassles.

Meanwhile, a combine of 28 women rights organisations from Sathkhira, Khulna, and Bagerhat districts held a rally at Sathkhira Poursava Auditorium in the town yesterday morning.

The women leaders condemned the attack on the Ahmadiyyas, which left 50 people including women and children wounded on April 17. They expressed deep concern over the role of police during the attack.

After the rally, they marched to the Sathkhira Deputy Commissioner's office and submitted 28 memoranda to Sathkhira DC and Superintendent of Police calling for them to take strong measures against sectarian violence.

Our correspondent from Khulna reports: Ujjal Bepari alias Tapan, 22, an armed cadre of outlawed Purba Bangladesh Communist Party (Janajuddho faction) was slaughtered in the early hours of Wednesday. Police recovered his body at 8:00am yesterday from Kalpataru Market compound in Daulatpur of Khulna city.

Tapan's father yesterday filed a First Information Report (FIR) with Daulatpur Police Station naming Hanif, Sony, and Mizan as the accused. The three, who took Tapan out of his home at about 10:00 pm on Tuesday, are absconding.

Officer in Charge of Daulatpur Police Station Makbul Hossain yesterday said that the murder might be a sequel to a long-running feud between the rival factions of the outlawed party.

Tapan was wanted in several criminal cases for extortion and murder.

Manning for the Meghnaghat-3 project. The PMO told the cell that it 'must' approve the project.

The cell reluctantly made a recommendation as desired by the PMO but in its report asked Cadogan Manning to provide a proper bid bond and follow the typical Independent Power Project (IPP) format.

The Cadogan-Manning bid, pushed by some businessmen close to an 'alternative centre of power', offered a conditional bid bond that should be considered unacceptable. The bid also lacked the conventional format and its pricing formula was also full of loopholes, sources pointed out.

The Power Cell report apparently angered the PMO and it asked the power ministry last month to fire the DG and transfer the technical director. The state minister opposed the transfer of the director and tried to calm PMO officials by firing the DG late last month.

The DG's job contract was due to expire next month.

Two weeks later, the PMO ordered the power secretary to transfer the technical director, after which he was then transferred.

The power ministry, meanwhile, formed a committee with PDB and Power Cell officials to push the Meghnaghat-3 project as fast as possible. It held a secret meeting with Cadogan-Manning group, one source said.

These developments have apparently come to the notice of a number of lawmakers. On Monday, they grilled the state minister about the project.

The state minister reportedly promised them proper bidding for the project.

Sathkhira killing

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Mostafizur Rahman, 45, son of Syed Ali of Balladanga in Sadar upazila, was gunned down by the BSF while he was going to his paddy field near subpipiers 2 and 3 in the morning. Later, the Indian border guards took away the body.

A tense situation is prevailing in area as the BSF has deployed additional troops along the border.

In Comilla, the BSF yesterday abandoned barbed wire fencing within 150 yards of Narayanpara Ashbari border in Brahmanpara upazila in the face of resistance by the BDR, according to the UNB.

Sources said the BSF started fencing at 2:00pm despite objection by the BDR. They, however, abandoned the work at 4:00pm.

US energy firm

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According to the Bol chair, the US firm seemed earnest in its intention and proposed to set up plants here within the next few months.

During the meeting, the GVEI top executives talked about the country's coal reserve, as they are interested to use coal for multifarious purposes including manufacturing of carbon-based organic fertiliser, Rahman said.

They told him, if the government allows, GVEI can launch its small