

# AL MPs oppose pay increase of PSC members

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League (AL) lawmakers yesterday opposed the proposed increase in salaries of the chairman and members of Public Service Commission (PSC) as, they said, the constitutional body has lost its integrity for irregular practices by its top brass.

AL lawmakers Abdus Shahid and AKM Jahangir Hossain gave a joint note of dissent to this effect at a meeting of the parliamentary standing committee on the establishment ministry.

Held at the Jatiya Sangsad, the meeting however approved for passage the Members of the Bangladesh Public Service Commission (Terms and Conditions of Service) Act, 1974 that include among others the proposals for salary hike.

Meanwhile, despite being on the agenda, the promotion policy in the government services was not discussed.

Committee Chairman Sardar Sakawat Hossain Bakul ended the meeting hurriedly, citing lack of quorum as the reason. But the AL lawmakers said there were three members when the chairman adjourned the meeting and three members (of a 10-member committee) are enough to make a quorum.

In the note of dissent the opposition lawmakers said the chairman of the PSC and its members are not fulfilling their constitutional obligations with honesty and neutrality. "They have even been involved in leaking question paper so that the candidates favoured by the ruling alliance pass the competitive tests for the government jobs," it said.

That is how the genuine and competent candidates have been deprived of the government service, the AL lawmakers observed.

The note says, "Prof Mafuzur Rahman, a member of the PSC, has

already declared in his constituency that he will contest the next parliamentary election."

It also noted that defying the convention for a person holding a constitutional post, the current chairman ZN Tahmina Begum met prime minister shortly after her appointment and sought direction to run the PSC.

Such instances have undermined the image of the PSC, it added.

Committee members State Minister for Public Works Alamgir Kabir, KM Anwarul Islam, Mohammad Ali Jinnah, Zahiruddin Swapon, Mia Golam Farwar and State Minister for Finance Abul Hossain (on behalf of the prime minister) were present while the bill proposing salary rise was being discussed.

But the ruling alliance lawmakers left the meeting just when the discussion on promotion policy was about to begin, sources said.

"As the government side became minority in the meeting, the chair ended it illegally," Chief Whip of the opposition Abdus Shahid told reporters after the meeting.

Shahid later called a press conference and alleged that the annual confidential reports (ACRs) of the officers concerned were tampered with during the recent mass promotion to the rank of deputy secretary.

"A number of dedicated officers have been deprived of promotion on political considerations," he alleged.

Shahid said, "Against 885 posts of deputy secretary rank, the present roll strength rose to 1,325 and as many as 174 promoted deputy secretaries were sent back to their original posts and asked to serve there."

He said the government was politicising the administration to materialise its blue print to rig the next elections.

## Beximco case

FROM PAGE 16  
shareholders of QC Container Lines Limited, filed the case with the High Court, accusing three brothers of Salauddin Qader Chowdhury, Giasuddin Qader Chowdhury, Saifuddin Qader Chowdhury and Jamaluddin Qader Chowdhury.

It was stated in the case that Jamaluddin Qader Chowdhury, managing director of the QC Container Lines Limited and its directors Giasuddin Qader Chowdhury and Saifuddin Qader Chowdhury had misappropriated Tk 95 crore of QC Container Lines Limited by showing additional fares from its four ships and siphoning off the money abroad.

Jamaluddin Qader Chowdhury submitted his reply to the High Court stating that Sohail F Rahman and Salman Rahman have filed the case by providing false information to the court.

Earlier, the High Court bench fixed January 30 for hearing the matter.

Barrister Rafique ul Haq will move for Beximco Holdings while TH Khan for three brothers of Salauddin Qader Chowdhury.

## Cabinet okays

FROM PAGE 1  
allowed the intelligence and law-enforcement agencies to tap telephone conversations of any individual.

Later, the ordinance was placed in parliament on the first day of its 20th session on January 23.

But the government later found flaws in the ordinance and felt the urgency of further amendment, as there was no punishable clause in it.

In yesterday's meeting, the cabinet also endorsed the draft of the Court Reform Implementation (Amendment) Act 2006 for extending the timeframe for execution of the Court Reform Implementation Act 2004.

Furthermore, the cabinet approved the draft of the Chittagong Veterinary University Act 2006 upgrading Chittagong Government Veterinary College to a university for "creating and extending opportunities of higher education and research in veterinary science," said an official announcement.

The meeting okayed the National Social Welfare Policy to conduct social welfare activities in a "well-planned way" in the country. It also approved the draft of the Birth and Death Registration Act 2006 for amending the Birth and Death Registration Act 2004.

## Paltan OC

FROM PAGE 16  
Aziz, Shahbuddin and Salim Uddoula.

Bahadur Mohammad Khan alias Nipu of Nayapaltan filed the case against them with the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court, Dhaka.

In his complaint, Nipu said a gang of robbers on January 15 entered his house around 9:30 pm and robbed Tk 5 lakh, gold ornaments worth about Tk 3.5 lakh and other valuables worth Tk 10 lakh. The gang attacked him, his wife Minu Begum and their 14-month-old daughter Shimu. They also broke his wife's right hand.

Nipu said the accused SI Alam was present near the spot along with his force but did nothing to stop the robbers. Moreover, they assisted the robbers commit the crime and made arrangements for the robbers' escape with the loot.

Nipu alleged that the accused even picked him up from the spot and forwarded him to the court implicating him in a false case. He said SI Alam told him to vacate the house as per directions of the OC. The SI also demanded Tk 20,000 as toll from him, the complaint alleged.

Following the hearing, Metropolitan Magistrate Mizanur Rahman directed the Additional Inspector General of Police of CID to take necessary steps against the accused after an investigation into the matter.

## Ramna blast

FROM PAGE 1  
Matiur Rahman, another of his cousins, was also arrested at Matuail Uttarpara Nurani mosque.

Swadhin was also placed on a five-day remand. The police on April 23, 2001 took him to a court after the remand. They told the court he suggested that he was aware of many things related to Ramna blasts.

He was sent to Dhaka Central Jail and was released on bail before submission of the chargesheet.

Swadhin was selected for the SI post among others in August last year and local police in Pirojpur reported in his favour.

On April 14, 2001, 10 people were killed and about 50 wounded in a blast at a cultural function at Ramna Batmul.

## Siddhirganj power

FROM PAGE 1  
government's willingness to accept the ADB conditions, the WB has expressed interest in funding a second 120 MW unit. A concrete understanding in this regard will be reached late next month.

The Siddhirganj plant site, located near the Sitalkhaya river, now accommodates another 210 MW unit over a 30-acre area. This site was chosen for the peaking plants because of available space and adequate gas supply facility.

A peaking plant generates power during the peak demand hours and such plants are usually made of 'simple cycle' generators in which gas consumption is very high.

## Fuel crisis continues

FROM PAGE 1  
in the rivers along the coastal belt areas and Teknaf, asked the Bangladesh Navy and Coastguard to submit a list of new water routes of smugglers and an action plan by today.

The smugglers are now using small dinghies and engine boats instead of ships so that they can sail across the narrow channels with fertiliser and oil, the National Committee to Prevent Smuggling was told yesterday.

State Minister for Home Affairs Lutfozzaman Babar, who chaired the meeting, also ordered all deputy commissioners (DC) and upazila nirbahi officers (UNO) to involve the community in waging an anti-smuggling campaign across the country. The DCs and the UNOs will sit at least once a week with local traders and leaders of cross-section of people to stop the smuggling of oil and fertiliser. The community involvement campaign will go on for three months.

Our Bogra correspondent reports that only 750 tonnes of diesel was released from the new depot at Kazirhat. Authorities were trying to bring fresh consignments of petrol and octane from Khulna to various northern destinations by rail wagons.

Our Rangpur correspondent reports that fuel crisis in the northern districts remained severe making serious trouble for irrigation in the boro fields.

## Meandering tragedy

FROM PAGE 1  
hectares of land during 1973-2004 and 12,490 hectares were accreted during the period.

"A total of 1,115 hectares of land was eroded along the right bank and 1,490 hectares on the left bank of the river in 2004," Maminul said. Moreover, 1,442 metres of district roads and 5,104 metres of embankments were eroded during the year.

"Erosion was the highest in Sirajganj (19,250 hectares) and Kurigram (19,110 hectares) and the least in Manikganj (5,770 hectares) and Pabna (3,093 hectares) during the last 31 years," the morphologist said referring to the study.

Knut Oberhagemann found river erosion as major threats to the country's two major irrigation projects -- Pabna Irrigation and Rural Development Project (PRDP) and Meghna-Dhona-Goda Irrigation Project (MDIP) -- which helped Bangladesh grow more crops on less land.

"Now we're trying to save these infrastructures by protecting river banks from erosion using low-cost technology of stacking sand-full geo-bags," he said.

Erosion has also a strong bearing on the livelihood of thousands of people in the districts along the porous 4,000-plus km Indo-Bangladesh border, experts said. They also pointed to the ground reality that erosion on both banks of the transboundary rivers quite often creates tension.

In the most recent case, Bangladesh's border force the BDR in an amicable settlement with the Border Security Force (BSF) of India on Sunday reclaimed the country's stake on 50 acres of land at Ramgarh in Khagrachhari. The land was under disputed possession for long due to erosion of the Feni river's bank inside Bangladesh.

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At many places farmers and vehicle owners were locked in altercation with the fuel dealers when they found the selling of diesel and petrol stopped. Most of the filling stations in these districts remained closed yesterday.

Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation (BPC), meanwhile, hoped that the fuel crisis in the north would be resolved within 24 hours after the commissioning of the temporary depot at Kazirhat. But it could supply fuel to meet the huge demand.

A large number of tank lorries from eight petroleum-hungry northern districts rushed to Kazirhat yesterday to procure fuel but the BPC failed to deliver fuel to the most of them, said the owner of Balaka Filling Station in Rangpur.

Meanwhile, a number of filling stations, which could reserve fuel, are selling diesel at higher rate. Petrol is selling at Tk 48 to 50 per litre while the diesel at Tk 38 to 40.

The farmers, who need diesel for irrigation, are in great anxiety for the fuel crisis.

Energy adviser Mahmudur Rahman last night told BBC Bangla Service that he was suspecting the current situation as an effect of fuel smuggling.

"In our estimate 50,000 tonnes of diesel has been withdrawn in the last four days," he said. "I simply don't understand where in Bangladesh such a huge quantity of diesel has been used," he added.

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Erosion has also a strong bearing on the livelihood of thousands of people in the districts along the porous 4,000-plus km Indo-Bangladesh border, experts said. They also pointed to the ground reality that erosion on both banks of the transboundary rivers quite often creates tension.

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## Dollar price

FROM PAGE 16  
"Dollar price continues to soar widening the export-import deficit. The government was forced to spend more importing petroleum products," said Khandkar Ibrahim Khaled, managing director of Pubali Bank Ltd.

The government should look for alternative ways to manage funds from foreign banks or Islamic Development Bank (IDB). Otherwise, dollar-crisis would not ease, he observed.

Trade imbalance during July-October 2004 was \$696 million, which increased to \$739 million during the same period in 2005.

The commercial banks opened LCs worth \$582 million for petroleum product imports during July-October period of 2005-06 financial year. This is almost a 28 percent or \$129 million increase from the amount in the previous year.

Finance and Planning Minister M Saifur Rahman on Sunday directed Janata and Agrani banks to open LCs for importing petroleum products. Bangladesh Bank (BB) will issue over-drafts in US dollar to help these two banks.

However, no such directive was given to Sonali Bank as it will not open any LCs for Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation (BPC) unless the state-run agency repays the outstanding amount of Tk 5,500 crore.

These three banks had been the major suppliers of the green-back in the inter-bank foreign exchange market but two of them have already turned into buyers and Agrani bank is now selling a limited number of dollars in the foreign exchange market.

## Deputy secretary

FROM PAGE 16  
Nargis, Yasmeen Sultana, Anis-uz-Zaman, Shaheul Karim, Taslimul Islam, Mofazzal Hossain, Anisul Hoque and Mazharul Hannan Khan.

On January 26, 378 senior assistant secretaries (AS) were promoted to the post of Deputy Secretary (DS). Now the total promoted DS are 384.

Most of these promoted officials were from 1985 batch. Sources in the establishment ministry said these officials' seniority was considered effected from their date of promotion.

The last time senior assistant secretaries were promoted to the post of deputy secretary was in May 2005, when 327 officials were promoted. In 2003, 493 officials were promoted to the post of deputy secretary.

## Charge framing

FROM PAGE 16  
tribunal Advocate Majibur Rahman Nantu said trial of this case must be completed within 135 (90+30+15) days and 19 days have already passed without any advance in charge framing.

Court sources said Mamun and Sultan, the two arrested accused were produced before the court at 10:00am, but were taken back to Barisal Central Jail within minutes after registering their presence in the tribunal amid hard security.

Meanwhile, the court letter sent to the inspector general of police requesting to make arrangements for producing Abdul Awal and Ataur Rahman Sunny, other two accused in this case in police custody in Dhaka, before this court for facing charge frame hearing is yet to be replied.

Court sources said if Awal and Sunny are not produced on the next date, the hearing on charge framing would be deferred again.

Other four charge sheeted accused in the case filed under Explosive Substances Act, Shaikh Abdur Rahman, Siddiqur Rahman alias Bangla Bhai, Molla Omar and Amzad, were present at the conference.

Sohrab Hossain, OC of Jhalakati Sadar Police Station and investigation officer (IO) of the case, said the murder case lodged in connection with the judges killing is still under investigation by Munshi Atikur Rahman, inspector of criminal investigation branch.

## Voter roll

FROM PAGE 16  
voter list undertaken by unilateral decision of the CEC began on January 1.

The HC on January 4 disposing two writ petitions asked the EC to revise the existing list. But the EC Secretariat continued the task, ignoring the court orders. It also asked the commission to call immediately a meeting.

But the CEC convened the meeting on January 19 after being sure of majority in the EC with the appointment of two new election commissioners.

Already bogged down in controversy, the field level task meantime continued at a very slow pace with a number of eminent persons along with others being left out of the list of voters for the next election.

## Shyamoli traders

FROM PAGE 1  
Jubadal, is using the influence of his position to arrange release of his brother. They also alleged that Bulu came to Ring Road yesterday morning and sent for the manager of Top Corporation, Azam Khan, who had filed a case with the Mohammadpur police station after the incident of shooting. He was sitting in his official vehicle parked 30 yards away from the showroom as a messenger went to bring Azam out of his office.

Later in court, Azam submitted a copy of affidavit saying Motiur Rahman Pintu was not involved in the shooting. He said Pintu was not present at the scene during the January 26 attack on the showroom. He also said he had no objection if the court granted a bail to Pintu.

During a visit to the area yesterday a number of businessmen told The Daily Star that garment factories in the area are the prime targets of the gang's extortion. Even the local tea stall owners do not get respite from its clutches.

If anyone dares to deny toll to the gang, he would either be attacked or would be forced to close down his business. Owner of a private gymnasium on Ring Road recently closed his business after the gang had ransacked the gymnasium about six months ago, local people alleged.

"The gang first calls its target and demands toll saying even the Rab would not be able to harm them. If anyone refuses they ransack his business and shoot at the targeted firm," said a businessman who had become a target of the gang a few months back.

Seeking anonymity a local tea stall owner said Pintu's men used to take goods worth Tk 60 to Tk 80 every day from his stall. "The gangsters threaten us with beatings when we refuse to pay tolls," he said.

Though Pintu is the alleged ringleader of the gang, the gangsters used to identify themselves as men of Nabi Hossain Nabi, an alleged top criminal in Mohammadpur area, who is believed to be hiding in India to evade arrest.

Pintu showed up in the scene of crime after BNP had assumed power and his brother Barkatullah Bulu was appointed as the state minister for commerce, said local residents.

His gang members started extorting the businessmen around two years ago after Nabi had gone into hiding.

Shyamoli Club, a local social club, is the den of the gang from where they conduct their activities, local people said.

The gang has been extorting money from businessmen in Shyamoli, Adabor, Mohammadpur, Panthapath and even Karwan Bazaar area.

## Hamas govt

FROM PAGE 16  
end up aiding terrorist elements, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert announced yesterday.

"It must be made very clear, we are not going to transfer funds which could finance terrorist attacks against our civilians," Olmert said on public radio.

Two hundred million shekels (35 million dollars) were due to be handed over to the Palestinian Authority on Wednesday.

In fresh violence about 30 Palestinian policemen stormed the parliament building in Gaza City on Monday, firing in the air, witnesses said.

The officers closed the gates behind them, and some climbed onto the roof. It was not immediately clear why they took over the building.

Hamas, or the Islamic Resistance Movement, won a decisive majority in last week's Palestinian legislative elections. The group, which has political and militant wings, will now take a large role in governing the Palestinians. The making of a new government is not clear.

The Islamic militants, who carried out dozens of suicide bombings and seek Israel's destruction, have said they oppose peace talks and will not disarm. Israel refuses to deal with Hamas.

Hamas' unexpected electoral victory raised questions about the future of the peace process between the Palestinians and Israel, and how the United States can influence such efforts or help impoverished Palestinians.

"We're going to review all of our assistance programmes, but the bedrock principle here is we can't have funding for an organisation that holds those views just because it is in government," Rice said.

The US, Europe and Israel list Hamas as a terrorist organisation; various Arab governments have contact with the group.

"It is important that Hamas now will have to confront the implications of its covenant if it wishes to govern," Rice said. "That becomes a primary consideration in anything that we do."

It is not clear that all European nations or the United Nations would cut off aid, let alone Arab governments that do not recognise Israel.

"I just think that anyone who is devoted to trying to bring Middle East peace between two states has an obligation now to make sure that anybody that is going to be supported is going to have that same goal," Rice said.

US aid is a small part of the \$1.6 billion annual budget of the Palestinian Authority.

About \$1 billion comes from overseas donors more than half of that from European nations. The rest is a mix of funds from international donor agencies, Arab and Asian governments, and the US, which gave \$70 million in direct aid to the Palestinian Authority last year.

Separately, the US spent \$225 million for humanitarian projects through the US Agency for International Development last year, and gave \$88 million for refugee assistance. (AP/APP)

## Greens protest

FROM PAGE 16  
Dhanmondi Paribesh Unnayan Jote (DPUJ) held a protest rally in front of the house on Road No. 11-A in Dhanmondi.

"The anti-people government is destroying nature," said Prof Serajul Islam Choudhury, who chaired the rally. "The people have to unite to resist government plans to hand public land to commercial developers instead of using it for the nation."

The government had earlier leased the abandoned house No. 90 to the Development and Environmental Conservation Centre (Debtec) for conducting research work.

As the government decided to build quarters for the staff of Public Works Department (PWD) on the land, it asked the Debtec to vacate the house in 24 hours.

After filing a writ petition, the Debtec got a three-month extension, but government workers have already cut down two trees on the land.

Dr Ferdousi Begum, plant bio-

technologist and executive director of Debtec, warned that the government move would affect their important research and damage tissues of endangered plants.