

INDEPENDENCE AWARD Ministers' names on list protested by colleagues

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two ministers yesterday expressed their reservations about the inclusion of three cabinet ministers on this year's Independence Award short list, saying that it would politicise the prestigious award.

Fisheries and Livestock Minister Abdullah Al Noman and State Minister for Sports Fazlur Rahman raised the objections at the cabinet committee meeting on National Award, which was chaired by Environment and Forest Minister Tarique Islam.

Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman, Water Resources Minister Hafizuddin Ahmed and State Minister for Religious Affairs Mosharef Hossain Shahjahan have been nominated for this year's Independence Award.

The cabinet committee, however, did not exclude the ministers' names and sent the list to the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) for final approval.

Five ministers were also nominated for Ekushey Award earlier, but the prime minister dropped those names.

The other nominees for this year's Independence Award are -- Prof Emajuddin Ahmed for education, Prof Anwarul Karim for research, Dr Ashraf Siddiqui and Al Mahmud for literature, Murtuza Bashir for art, Col (rtd) Oli Ahmed MP for his role as a freedom fighter, and Bangladesh Betar for its role in the Liberation War.

Biman gets MD after 21 months

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The national flag carrier, Biman Bangladesh Airlines, has finally got a fulltime managing director after long 21 months.

The government yesterday appointed Bangladesh Road Transport Authority Chairman Dr MA Momen as the managing director of the trouble-torn airlines, official sources said.

Since June 14, 2004, Biman's Director (Marketing) Lt. Col. (retd.) Mahmoodur Rahman had been working as acting chief of the carrier.

Reveal names of JMB patrons within govt

Fazle Hossain Badsha demands

STAFF CORRESPONDENT,
Rajshahi

Workers Party Politburo member Fazle Hossain Badsha yesterday demanded revelation of identities of those in the ruling alliance and

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Prayer Timing		
March 6		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-10	5-45
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-30	4-45
Maghrib	6-07	6-11
Esha	7-30	8-00
Source: Islamic Foundation		

50 Taliban militants killed by Pak troops

AFP, Miranshah

At least 50 pro-Taliban militants and five Pakistani soldiers were killed in one of the heaviest clashes in a restive tribal region bordering Afghanistan, officials said yesterday.

The fighting erupted Saturday afternoon and raged through the night in the towns of Miranshah and Mir Ali in North Waziristan tribal district.

A military statement said the security forces retaliated after militants attacked army and paramilitary camps from three directions with rockets and small and heavy arms.

"The security forces responded effectively and inflicted heavy casualties on them," the statement said, adding the miscreants had

been evicted from a telephone exchange and other government buildings they had seized on Saturday.

The statement did not give figures of casualties, but a senior security official told AFP "at least 50 militants were killed in the retaliatory fire."

Interior Minister Aftab Sherpao said the fighting had subsided and telephone communications were being restored.

"There is no fighting now and authorities are working to restore the telephone link with Miranshah," Sherpao told AFP.

Sherpao said the army used artillery and gunship helicopters to restore peace and order in the area.

Officials said five soldiers were killed, including two paramilitary troops when militants ambushed

their convoy in Mir Ali. Some 14 troops were wounded.

The fighting came three days after Pakistani forces smashed a suspected al-Qaeda training camp in Saidgai village in North Waziristan killing 40 militants, including foreigners.

Wednesday's attack coincided with the visit of US President George W. Bush to Afghanistan. The latest clashes occurred as the US leader was in Islamabad for talks with President Pervez Musharraf on intensifying the war on terrorism.

Bush, who left Pakistan late Saturday, pressed Musharraf to do more to defeat al-Qaeda and Taliban, whose leadership is believed to be hiding somewhere in the rugged mountainous border

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PHOTO: STAR

The embankment area at Kattali on the outskirts of Chittagong City is being deforested as nearby brick kilns are burning trees as fuel. The deforestation, if continues, may damage the embankment and under construction port link road.

LPG price spirals out of reach

KAUSAR ISLAM AYON

Price of Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) has gone beyond the reach of its consumers.

The abnormal price hike is forcing a few of the LPG importers to consider withdrawing themselves from the business as the number of consumers is decreasing everyday.

The price of a cylinder of LPG has increased by 120 percent in the last 16 months and the traders fear that the price would see another hike within the next week.

In October-November 2004 the price of a 12.5kg cylinder of LPG was Tk 340-360. A same size cylinder filled with gas is now selling at Tk 765-790.

"LPG mainly is a by-product of petroleum, with the price hike of the mother component on the international market and devaluation of our currency against dollar, the price of LPG is increasing," said Mohammed Nizam Uddin, sales and marketing manager of Kleenheat Gas Bangladesh.

Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation (BPC) produces 21 metric tons of LPG a year meeting 25 percent of the country's total demand.

Although BPC sells a cylinder filled with the gas at Tk 457 to its dealers, there is no control on the retail price. BPC's cylinders are now selling at Tk 720 to 730 a piece on the market.

Seventy five percent of the LPG that is on the market is imported. In 2005 Bangladesh had a demand for 82 thousand metric tons of the gas.

Sources in the government said Bangladesh could have produced LPG from natural gas if a proposed Natural Gas Liquid Fractionation Plant at Ashuganj was established that would produce the gas at an affordable cost saving a lot of foreign currencies.

"For more than a decade the project has remained an idea only. No government took steps to establish such a plant," said a source in the power, energy and mineral resources ministry.

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A party unhappy with Rahman's capture: PM

Bss, Nandail, Mymensingh

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday alleged that an opposition political party is unhappy over the arrest of terrorist kingpin Shaekh Abdur Rahman as it wants terrorism to continue and innocent people killed by the terrorists.

"All quarters, including political parties and religious leaders, have congratulated the government on its success in capturing Rahman, but they [opposition] are unhappy," she said addressing a public meeting at Shaheed Smriti Model School ground.

None of the terrorists would be spared, the prime minister said and expressed firm optimism that the remaining members of the terrorist gang would be arrested and brought to book soon.

Khaleda said the main opposition party cannot tolerate welfare of the people. While in power, they established a reign of terror and they want it to continue.

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KILLING OF PROFESSOR RU grinds to halt for teachers' strike

RU CORRESPONDENT

Rajshahi University came to standstill as Rajshahi University Teachers' Association (Ruta) observed a strike yesterday.

Ruta had called for the strike demanding immediate arrest and punishment to the killers of Professor Taher Ahmed and Professor Muhammad Yunus.

No classes were held and exams were postponed. Ruta President Nazrul Islam told The Daily Star yesterday Ruta would form a human chain on the Rajshahi-Dhaka highway every Saturday until their demands are met.

Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) of Rajshahi University staged a demonstration on the campus yesterday demanding immediate arrest of Islami Chhatra Shibir leader Mahbub Shalehi, a suspect of Taher murder case. BCL

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Another robber lynched in Ctg

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Mob lynched a robber at a Hathazari village yesterday, about 13 hours after similar incident that left two robbers dead at Lohagara upazia in the district.

Around 15 robbers were about to enter one Mohammad Solaiman's house at the Shikarpur village at around 3:00am and the inmates, sensing their presence, began to shout for help.

The locals soon hemmed in the house to catch one of the robbers. The unknown robber died on the spot in

Mob beating.

The other members of the gang managed to flee.

Police recovered the body at around 5:00am.



PHOTO: PID

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia looks over a sculpture at Osmani Memorial Auditorium in the city after inaugurating the 12th Asian Fine Arts exhibition yesterday.

Season's first tornado kills 4 in Bagerhat

BONEWS, Bagerhat

A tornado swept through six villages on Saturday night killing four people and injuring 50 others in Sharankhola upazila in Bagerhat while another tornado injured 12 people in Khulna.

The tornado in Bagerhat lasted over a minute and lashed Khejuria, Rehia Rajapur, Dhansagar, Bandhaghata, South Badhal and Savarer Par villages near the Sundarbans around 9:00pm, locals said.

The dead were identified as Abdul Gani Hawlader, 70, Jamal, 45, and madrasa students Russel, 15, and his brother Mahidul, 10.

More than 500 houses, schools, madrasas, mosques, temples were flattened by the tornado. Hundreds of trees were uprooted and crops

were also levelled.

"The four died as houses or trees collapsed on them," M Enamul Haque, officer-in-charge of Shorankhola Police Station said.

Deputy Commissioner (DC) Md Mainuddin, who visited the area yesterday, said at least 500 families were affected by the tornado. "The injured were given treatment and relief materials were distributed among the people," he added.

The district and police administrations distributed cash and rice to the affected villagers.

Sources said Upazila Nirbahi Officer Swapan Kumar Baral failed to inform the DC about the tornado and the damage done by it. The DC went to the spot after being informed by journalists, they added.

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IAEA meets today to make way for action against Iran

Tehran still defiant

AFP, Vienna

The UN atomic watchdog opens a meeting today that is expected to clear the way for the UN Security Council to consider acting against Iran over fears it seeks nuclear weapons.

Iran stuck to its hard line yesterday, saying it had the right to uranium enrichment as part of a peaceful energy programme, although the United States and Europe fear enrichment could be used to make atom bombs.

"Nuclear research will go on, and threats, propaganda and bullying will not affect us," foreign ministry spokesman Hamid Reza Asefi said in Tehran.

"If the atmosphere gets tense, the other side will lose," he warned. "It is not the Islamic republic alone which will lose."

The board of governors of the UN watchdog International Atomic Energy Agency meets this week in Vienna to consider a report from IAEA chief Mohamed

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Court rejects Bidisha's plea to go abroad

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday rejected the petition filed by former president HM Ershad's estranged wife Bidisha Ershad and her son Eric to go abroad for treatment.

Metropolitan Magistrate Suzayet Ullah rejected Bidisha's petition as she is on bail in a money laundering case filed with Gulshan Police Station.

Earlier on February 22, Bidisha's lawyer Kamruzzaman Mahboob submitted the petition. The petition said Bidisha and Eric are ill and they would only be cured if they were treated abroad.

Following the hearing, the court directed the investigation officer (IO) of the case to submit a report within a week whether her travelling abroad would have any

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Radio collar attached to second tiger

AFP, Dhaka

Bangladesh wildlife experts have fitted a radio collar on a second Royal Bengal tiger living in a dense coastal mangrove forest to learn more about the habits of the elusive cats, officials said yesterday.

The tiger called the Queen of Shapla Khali was the second to be fitted with a radio collar after the first -- the 12-year-old Queen of Jamtala -- died suddenly, leaving the task of learning about more about the critically endangered species unfinished.

Tagging the eight-year-old Queen of Shapla Khali would help experts learn more about the animals' sexual habits and prey targets, chief forest officer of the Sunderbans, Shaikh Mijanur

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