

Barack Obama sworn into new era of hope

AP, AFP, Washington

Stepping into history, Barack Hussein Obama grasped the reins of power as America's first black president yesterday, saying the nation must choose "hope over fear, unity of purpose over conflict and discord" to overcome the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression.

In frigid temperatures, an exuberant crowd of more than a million packed the National Mall and parade route to celebrate Obama's inauguration in a high-noon ceremony. They filled the National Mall, stretching from the inaugural platform at the US Capitol to the Lincoln Memorial in the distance.

With 11 million Americans out of work and trillions of dollars lost in the stock market's tumble, Obama emphasised that his biggest challenge is to repair the

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Barack Obama is sworn in as the 44th US President by Supreme Court Chief Justice John Roberts in front of the Capitol in Washington yesterday.

President, PM greet Obama

UNB, Dhaka

President Iajuddin Ahmed yesterday congratulated Barack Hussein Obama on his assumption of office as president of the United States, and said the world sees in

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Govt mulls MP power back in upazila

May modify ordinance to ensure their authority over local govt

M ABUL KAMAL AZAD

The newly elected Awami League (AL)-led alliance government is likely to modify the Local Government (Upazila Parishad) Ordinance to bestow some authority on lawmakers which the immediate-past caretaker government removed by promulgating the ordinance.

LGRD and cooperatives ministry sources say the Ordinance might be passed in parliament incorporating some roles of lawmakers in local development in the face of pressure by many MPs.

Giving the impression, LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Syed Ashraf Islam yesterday said, "The MPs should not play their role in making only laws. They have also made some pledges to the people of their constituencies."

Some AL lawmakers told The Daily Star last night the matter whether MPs should have a role in local government bodies would be debated in parliament before the ordinance is ratified.

Talking to reporters at his ministry yesterday, Ashraf said achievement of overall devel-

opment is not possible ignoring the lawmakers. He however said his government would strengthen the local government bodies.

Earlier, US Ambassador James F Moriarty, Indian High Commissioner Pinak Ranjan Chakravarty and UN Resident Coordinator Renata Lac Dessallien called on the minister at his Secretariat office separately and expressed their keen interest in strengthening the local government system in Bangladesh.

Ashraf said the role of MPs in the local government affairs will be discussed and redefined in parliament. "I have discussed the matter with the local government commission and more discussions are needed. A decision will be made considering every aspect."

He said the ruling AL has no objection to any provisions of the Ordinance promulgated by the caretaker government excepting the provisions for the role of MPs.

Citing an example of India where MPs get a special allocation of about Tk 2 crore for local development, he pointed out that MPs of the country should also have an opportunity for local development work.

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TRAWLER CAPSIZE

22 bodies found in Meghna

A CORRESPONDENT, Chandpur

Twenty-two bodies among 25 missing day labourers were yesterday recovered from the earth-carrying trawler Sabbir-1 capsized in Meghna river in Doshani area under Matlab upazila early Monday.

The deceased among others were identified as Masud, Akkas, Mukul, Altaf, Amirul, Arif, Ashraf, Joymal, Alaj, Farid, Liton, Mizanur, Rabiul, Monir, Noor Mohammad, Nayeb, Alauddin, Zahirul, Atahar, Nabir, Ripon and Shah Alam. All hailed from Chatmohor upazila of Pabna district.

Fire service, coast guard men and divers of BIWTA located the sunken trawler in the river at about 12noon after 35 hours of the accident and recovered 22 bodies till filing of the report at about 6.00pm.

But the trawler is yet to be salvaged while three more day labourers are still missing.

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Recovered illegal money to remain in state coffer

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Finance Minister AMA Muhith said yesterday the government has no plan to return to the individuals the ill-gotten money recovered in the anti-corruption drive during the state of emergency.

"The money they deposited either willingly or for any other reason went to consolidated government fund. It is now the government's money," Muhith told reporters after a meeting with the ADB vice president.

He said, "I don't know

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No breakthrough in railway break-in

Probes not over, but secretary says no file lost

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Before proper probes into the break-ins of Bangladesh Railway offices in Dhaka and Chittagong, the communication secretary yesterday said no important files and documents were stolen, adding confusion to the mysterious incident early Monday.

Initially it was suspected that the criminals broke into the offices to steal documents or records related to railway's land properties, lease of land or documents of different projects to hide monetary corruption.

Communication Secretary Iqbal Mahmud told reporters in a rushed briefing at the secretariat, "No important documents went missing from Dhaka Railway Bhavan according to the information we have got so far."

Terming the incident mysterious, unfortunate and shameful, he said the burglars stole Tk 92,719, a laptop and four cellphones

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CUBCL snaps phone lines of VC office

4 asst proctors resign

CU CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Chhatra League activists of Chittagong University (CU) unit snapped telephone lines to the vice-chancellors' office and drove the deputy registrar of the office out yesterday afternoon.

Four assistant proctors of the university submitted their resignation letters to the vice-chancellor (VC) yesterday and the VC accepted letters of three of them.

The new developments came after the university

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UPAZILA ELECTION AFTER 19 YEARS

Campaign stops, stage set for polls

SHAKHAWAT LITON and SHARIFUL ISLAM

With everything set for upazila elections after around 19 long years, the time for formal electioneering ended midnight last night, 32 hours before voting begins tomorrow morning.

Though non-partisan legally, the local government polls over three weeks after the national polls will see another contest between the political parties.

Those in contention are mostly grassroots level leaders of Awami League (AL), BNP, Jatiya Party and others.

Organising or attending rallies or processions within election areas is banned since zero hour today. The curbs will be in force till 64 hours after the start of polling at 8:00am.

However, candidates and their workers might still carry on door-to-door canvassing in last-ditch try to woo voters.

All but one of the total 481 upazilas are going to polls this time. Vote at Dighinala upazila of Khagrachhari has been suspended.

The military forces will help the law enforcers maintain law

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Admission rules of 7 DU depts illegal

Declares HC; suggests Madrasa Board to revise syllabus

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court (HC) yesterday declared illegal the Dhaka University's (DU) new admission rules that disqualify madrasa students for admission to the university's seven departments.

An HC bench of justices Mir Hasmat Ali and Shamim Hasnain, however, observed that the Madrasa Education Board should consider revising its syllabus to meet the prerequisites for admission to general academic courses.

The lawyers concerned said following the HC verdict, there is no legal bar now for madrasa students having passed Aleem exams to getting admitted to the university's seven departments.

The HC verdict came following a writ petition filed by five DU admission seekers including Ibrahim Khalkil, who secured GPA-5 in Aleem exams under the Madrasa Education Board.

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KOKO-LINKED NEW MOORING PORT PROJECT

Tk 57cr loss over delay by Chinese company

ABDULLAH AL MAHMUD in Ctg and SHARIER KHAN in Dhaka

The China Harbour and Engineering Company Ltd, which bribed Arafat Rahman Koko and other influential persons of the four-party alliance government to get the New Mooring Container Terminal (NCT) Project, inflicted a loss of Tk 57 crore on the country by failing to complete the project in time.

The Chittagong Port Authority (CPA) had to bear the loss as China Harbour failed to complete the project by August 16, 2006. China Harbour handed over the project to the CPA in an incomplete state in December 2007.

Following a tender in July, 2003, the CPA signed an agreement with China Harbour on January 29, 2004, for constructing the NCT at a cost of Tk 331.99 crore payable in US dollars and local currency. China Harbour actually realised Tk 388 crore as construction cost before handing over the project in December 2007, sources said.

Project officials, however, claim that they "were not aware of any underhand dealings" in the project, and that the loss would be Tk 37 crore since China Harbour had quoted a price of Tk 351.99 crore for the job. Project Director engineer Khademul Basher says that when the

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A ship waits to offload containers at the controversial New Mooring Container Terminal at Chittagong Port.

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