

Zuma forms his cabinet

AFP, Pretoria

South African President Jacob Zuma unveiled an inclusive and vastly changed cabinet yesterday, with the closely watched finance ministry changing hands for the first time in 13 years.

One day after his swearing in, Zuma announced a restructured cabinet including minority party members and leftist allies, establishing a powerful planning commission which will be headed by the hugely popular former finance minister Trevor Manuel.

Zuma said the strategic planning body would "enable us to take a more comprehensive view of socio-economic development in the country."

Former tax boss Pravin Gordhan, credited with improving tax collection during his time at the helm of the country's revenue service, will take over in steering the crucial ministry through a global economic crisis.

Kgalema Motlanthe, who the outgoing president seen as a benchmark after his predecessor Thabo Mbeki was forced to resign, will be deputy president.

Zuma, who campaigned hard on a pro-poor platform promising change and a renewed focus on service delivery warned civil servants that "the era of hard work has begun."

"We reiterate that we will not tolerate laziness and incompetence and that we will emphasise excellence and achievement from the cabinet and the public service," he said.

"With these objectives in mind, I am confident that the new structures of government will enable the state machinery to speed up service delivery."

The key health ministry has also changed hands, going to relatively unknown provincial education head Aaron Mokoalele Mediwe. Barbara Hogan - in the health job for only six months -- was moved to the key public enterprises post.

Mbeki's denialist policies saw the AIDS crisis spiral out of control, giving the country one of the world's worst infection rates while his health minister promoted vegetables instead of medicine.

Zuma also split the minerals and energy ministry into two, believed to give better focus to the key energy industry which was marred last year by mass blackouts.

The education department was also divided into two, with close Zuma backer Blade Nzimande -- the head of the

South African Communist Party -- named chief of higher education.

A new ministry focusing on women, youth and children was also created along with a ministry of economic development.

Zuma named the head of one of the smaller white minority parties, Pieter Mulder of the Freedom Front Plus, as deputy minister of agriculture. Many white Afrikaans farmers have complained their views are not heard by government.

While campaigning Zuma appealed to minority groups who may feel sidelined, promising a more inclusive approach to government.

South African media called on Zuma to watch his cabinet ministers closely and replace those who did not perform. Mbeki who was frequently criticised for keeping an under-performing ministers.

"Corrupt ministers and officials must be fired, not redeployed or allowed to fight on endlessly at the public's expense," said the Sunday Times.

Zuma's team takes office as South Africa is sliding toward its first recession since the fall of apartheid 15 years ago.

"We must acknowledge that we find ourselves in difficult economic times," Zuma said in his inaugural speech Saturday.

"We will not be spared the negative impact, and are beginning to feel the pinch. This will require more hard work than ever before."

Top JMB

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morning and arrested him. Mohammad Abul Khayer, officer-in-charge of Basail Police Station, told The Daily Star that Yunus is a JMB cadre and he had been absconding since the serial bomb blast incident on August 17, 2005.

He said Yunus is accused in at least seven cases in connection with militant activities in different districts. Of the cases, three were filed in Mymensingh, three in Netrakona and one in Jyurbhat.

Yunus was involved in different militant activities including arms loot and assaults on police in Jyurbhat, bomb blasts at four cinemas in Mymensingh, and bomb blast on Netrakona Udichhi premises, said sources in Basail police.

Tangail police are interrogating Yunus under tight security.

Khaleda

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to the MPP seeking his opinion. On receiving the MPP's opinions, the district magistrate will send those to the home ministry, which would then place the cases before the high powered committee led by the law ministry for review.

The government law official, who alone is authorised to file petitions with competent courts for withdrawal of cases, has already recommended that 11 cases against Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina be withdrawn.

In defence of his recommendation, he said the cases were filed to "tarnish the image of the Awami League chief and her previous government".

On April 30, the BNP chairperson and her two sons, Tarique Rahman and Arafat Rahman Koko, filed petitions with the Dhaka district magistrate for withdrawal of 20 cases filed against them during the rule of the last caretaker government.

Khaleda, also a former prime minister, stands accused of graft in four cases. Her elder son Tarique faces 11 cases--seven on extortion charges, three on corruption and one on tax evasion charge, while her younger son Koko is accused in five cases--three on corruption and one each on money laundering and extortion charges.

Three corruption cases against Khaleda were quashed during the last BNP-Jamaat alliance government.

Since the government's announcement to review "politically filed" cases around 1,300 petitions have been filed with district magistrates, seeking withdrawal of cases. Many political bigwigs and businessmen have filed such petitions.

AIRBUS PURCHASE SCAM CASE

The now defunct Bureau of Anti-Corruption (Bac) filed the Airbus purchase scam case in 1998 during the previous Awami League rule, reports our staff correspondent.

The four-member full bench of the Appellate Division, headed by Chief Justice MM Ruhul Amin, passed the order yesterday upon a leave-to-appeal petition filed by the government against the HC verdict.

The apex court also condoned the government's delay in filing the leave-to-appeal petition against the HC verdict. Upon a quashment petition, the HC on September 10, 2003 quashed all proceedings of the Airbus purchase corruption case against Khaleda Zia.

The Bac filed the case with Motijheel Police Station on August 30, 1998.

Bac stated in the case that Khaleda, her cabinet colleagues and Biman officials during her 1991-1996 rule purchased two old airbuses with the connivance of others, violating rules and causing a loss of about Tk 175 crore to the state.

Bac also brought graft charges against the then finance minister M Saifur Rahman, former state minister for civil aviation and tourism Abdul Mannan and seven others.

The immediate past caretaker government filed a leave-to-appeal petition with the SC on March 23, 2008 against the HC judgment.

The hearing of the leave-to-appeal petition was held yesterday.

Deputy Attorney General (DAG) ASM Abdul Mobin appeared for the government while barrister Jamiruddin Sircar and barrister Moudud Ahmed argued for Khaleda Zia.

Bomb-making

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Khawaja Moeenuddin Madrasa compound in the city yesterday afternoon.

The district Quami Madrasa Oikya Parishad uses the madrasa as a temporary office. Rab recovered half a kilogram of chemicals, six capacitors, one six-volt battery, electric circuit boards, a watch, components of a watch, a remote control unit, large marbles and splinters and 13 leaflets.

Acting on a tip-off, Rab searched the madrasa compound in Bazar Road area and found a sack in the corridors leading to the toilets on the ground floor, sources said. The sack contained the confiscated items.

Lt Col Mamunur Rashid of Rab-8 told The Daily Star that no one had yet been arrested in this regard. Rab was examining the materials found in the sack, he said.

Maulana Abdul Majid Talukdar, principal of the madrasa, told The Daily Star that the madrasa was closed on Thursday last for the annual summer vacation and there were no students or teachers in the madrasa or its hostel.

He said certain 'vested quarters' had planted these items inside the madrasa to malign the image of the quami madrasa.

PROPOSED PAY SCALE

PRESENT SCALE	2009 (PROPOSED)	PROPOSED INCREMENT
13,750	26,230	770
11,000	20,800	665
9,000	16,900	565
7,400	13,750	510
6,800	12,900	455
5,100	9,300	390
4,100	7,000	350
3,700	6,400	320
3,500	6,000	290
3,300	5,600	270
3,100	5,300	240
3,000	5,000	210
2,850	4,700	180
2,600	4,400	170
2,500	4,200	155
2,400	4,000	140

Proposed salaries

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The Pay Commission for the administration recommended implementation of the hike in either of two ways.

In scenario one, the commission took into cognisance the pressure from the administration to increase retirement age to 60 from 57 years. If the government increases the retirement age, the expenditure for pension will drop for this year. As a result, the overall expenditure will increase by Tk 6,602 crore to Tk 27,263 crore.

If the retirement age remains unchanged, pension cost will increase by Tk 1,800 crore, resulting in a total expenditure of Tk 29,063 crore.

According to the Pay Commission report, there are 7,61,214 employees in government institutions against 8,79,545 approved posts. The government will need to spend Tk 4,790 crore more for these employees' annual cost of Tk 17,070 crore.

There are 3,03,220 employees in different autonomous institutions. The pay hike demands Tk 566 crore over their annual cost of Tk 1,986 crore.

There are a total of 5,54,282 education sector employees who draw government pay cheques under Monthly Payment Order (MPO). The pay hike demands Tk 1,902 crore more for their annual cost of Tk 6,051 crore.

There are 4,24,285 pensioners who are drawing Tk 2,811 crore in the current fiscal year. If the Pay Commission recommendations are implemented increasing the retirement age, the next year's cost will drop to Tk 1,688 crore. But if it goes on as usual, the total cost will increase to Tk 3,488 crore.

The Pay Commission also calculated that Tk 467 crore will be needed for increments to government employees in the next fiscal year.

Shake-up in police

FROM PAGE 1
public relations officer of Bangladesh police, told The Daily Star yesterday.

Additional Police Commissioner of Rajshahi Metropolitan Police SM Hafizur Rahman was transferred to Khulna Metropolitan Police, Additional DIG of Rangpur PTC Mili Biswas to Dhaka Range as Additional DIG, Additional Inspector General (AIG) of police headquarters Mohammad Siddiqur Rahman to Khulna Range as Additional DIG, SP of Jhalakathi Mohammad Shafiqur Rahman to DMP as Joint Commissioner, SP of Comilla Intiaz Ahmed to DMP as Deputy Commissioner (DC), Special Police Superintendent (SSP) Mosharrar Hossain of SB to Sirajganj as SP, SP of Madaripur Devdas Bhattacharya to Police headquarters as AIG, SP of Brahmanbaria Lutfor Rahman Mondol to Police Headquarters as AIG, SP of Chittagong railway police Nibash Chandra Majhi to Pabna as SP of Pabna Jamil Ahmed to Laxmipur as SP, SP of Jamalpur Khandaker Golam Faruque to Mymensingh as SP, SP of Mymensingh Mohammad Rafiqul Islam to Dhaka CID as SSP, AIG of Telecom Mohammad Abdul Alim Mahmud to Moulvibazar as SP, SP of Khulna YM Belalur Rahman to Dhaka Telecom as AIG, DC of DMP Mohammad Abdul Malek Darji to Khulna as DC, SP of Bogra Akram Hossain to DMP as DC, SP of Laxmipur Mir Ashraf Ali to Bogra (west) High Way Police as SP, SP of Bogra Mohammad Shahnari to Magura as SP, SP of Bandarban Mohammad Shamsuddin to Khulna as SP, SP of Cox's Bazar Matur Rahman Sheikh to Dhaka Police Staff College as SP, SP of Dhaka Police Staff College Sheikh Omar Faruque to Dhaka Urban Transport Project as SP, SP of Kishoreganj

Faruque Ahmed to Chittagong Metropolitan Police (CMP) as DC, DC of Khulna Metropolitan Police Shahadat Hossain to Gaibandha as SP, SSP of Dhaka CID Nazmul Karim Khan to Khulna as Commandant (SP) of RRE, SP of police headquarters Mahfuzul Islam to Jamalpur as SP, SP of police headquarters Mahbub Alam to police headquarters as AIG, Commandant (SP) of Khulna APBn Habibur Rahman to Chittagong Railway police as SP, SP of Gaibandha SM Moniruzzaman to Satkhira as SP, SP of Satkhira Abu Sufian to police headquarters as OSD, SP of Sirajganj Alamgir Hossain to Jhalakathi as SP, DC of CMP Shakhawat Hossain to Cox's Bazar as SP, SP of Habiganj Rezaul Karim to Police headquarters as AIG, AIG of police headquarters M Humayun Kabir to Bogra as SP and SP of Jhenidah Jahangir Hossain Matabbar to police Headquarters as OSD.

Extortionists

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sleeping at the labour shed in the under-construction building.

As Abdullah and Sharif raised a hue and cry, the extortionists opened fire on them before fleeing the scene. Injured Sharif and Abdullah were rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) where on duty doctors declared Sharif dead.

Abdullah, who sustained bullet injuries in his chest, is undergoing treatment at DMCH.

An official of the construction firm, seeking anonymity, said the extortionists had been threatening the firm for the last 10 days, demanding a sum of Tk 20 lakh. They claimed to be members of the Raja gang.

The man who contacted them over a cellphone identified himself as Mamun and threatened to 'kill people' if they were not paid. Following the repeated threats, an employee to the firm filed a general diary (GD) with Kafur Police station last week.

The Officer-in-charge (OC) of Kafur station said following filing of the GD, he had visited the spot several times with a team of police.

Another gang of extortionists last night shot a security guard of an under construction building at Kathaltola of East Monipur in Mirpur.

Mehedi, 30, was rushed to DMCH with three bullet injuries.

Police and locals said a gang of five to six armed criminals went to the construction site and asked for the contractor. They later left the spot spraying bullets at Mehedi around 11:30pm.

In another incident, miscreants took away a laptop and Tk 10,000 stabbing a homeopathy doctor and his patient at Senpara-Parbat in Mirpur.

Doctor Iqbal Hossain, 35, and Hafizul Islam, 22, were admitted to DMCH.

They said a gang of three to four stormed the chamber and attacked them around 11:00pm.

US won't stop airstrikes despite Afghan anger

AFP, Washington

The United States will not hamper its forces in Afghanistan by banning airstrikes but will redouble efforts to limit civilian casualties, National Security Advisor James Jones said yesterday.

"We can't fight with one hand tied behind our back," General Jones said on ABC, arguing that Afghan President Hamid Karzai "understands that we have to have the full complement of our offensive military power when we need it."

"We're going to take a look at trying to make sure that we correct those things we can correct, but certainly to tie the hands of our commanders and say we're not going to conduct airstrikes, it would be imprudent," he said.

Karzai, who was in Washington last week, called for a halt to the airstrikes after alleging that one had killed up to 130 Afghan villagers including women and children.

"That's part of the combined arms package and so we probably would not do that," Jones said of the strikes.

"But we are going to take very seriously the (criticism) and redouble our efforts to make sure that innocent civilians are not killed."

2,000 civilians

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At the height of their power in 2006, the Tigers -- who want an independent Tamil homeland in the Sinhalese-majority island -- controlled roughly a third of the island.

The Sri Lankan government has refused all international calls for a ceasefire despite reports from the United Nations last month saying up to 6,500 civilians may have been killed and 14,000 wounded in fighting since January.

It has also turned down requests by the UN to send humanitarian officials into the rebel territory, where the UN estimates about 50,000 civilians are trapped.

The government says the number of civilians being held by the Tigers as "human shields" is less than 20,000.

Defence officials reported on Sunday that troops had advanced further despite fierce resistance.

The Sri Lankan army also said it had uncovered a bizarre contraption that could have been intended as an underwater bunker for the elusive leader of the rebels.

The 360-foot (110-metre) long railway carriage-like construction may have been designed to be wheeled under the sea as a hiding place for Velupillai Prabhakaran, the army said.

Prime Minister Ratnasiri Wickremesinghe told parliament last week that Prabhakaran, 54, was still leading the fight.

Prabhakaran has not been seen for more than 18 months, and speculation has been rife that he may have been killed or already fled the island.

Third HC bench

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Talking to reporters on the court premises, Khan said, "The judges are oath-bound to dispense justice without fear or any other emotion. But they, one after another, are feeling embarrassed to hear Khaleda Zia's petition. Does she not deserve to seek justice?"

Attorney General Mahbubey Alam said the latest notice by the Directorate of Military Lands and Cantonments has rendered Khaleda Zia's writ petition ineffective.

She will now have to file a fresh petition, he added.

In the second notice served on May 7, the leader of the opposition in parliament has been asked to show cause within the next 15 days why she should not be directed to return the estate, including the house.

Talking to The Daily Star in the afternoon, Additional Attorney General M Enayetur Rahim clarified the current status of Khaleda's writ petition.

He said the cause of action on which she filed the petition has lost effect with the issuance of the show cause notice.

"According to article 102 of the constitution, no writ petition is maintainable against a show cause notice, since the latter does not curtail anyone's fundamental rights," he said.

A group of pro-BNP lawyers led by TH Khan met the chief justice by his Supreme Court (SC) office yesterday afternoon. They prayed to him to constitute a fresh bench to hear Khaleda Zia's petition.

Earlier on May 3, two separate benches felt embarrassed to entertain the petition.

The bench of Justice Zinat Ara and Justice Abdul Hakim that day accepted her petition and adjourned hearing on assurance from the attorney general that the government would not move in a week to evict her from the Shaheed Mainul Road residence.

Fighting, mortar attack on Somali mosque kill 39

AFP, Mogadishu

A mortar shell hit a mosque in the Somali capital Mogadishu yesterday, killing at least 14 people and raising to 39 the death toll from fighting between Islamist rebels and government forces that flared up on Thursday.

The mosque was hit just as worshippers were filing in for the afternoon prayers, witnesses said.

"The mortar shell struck at the gate of the mosque. I counted about 14 people who died instantly and 10 others were wounded," Hassan Abdifatah, a worshipper at the mosque in southern Mogadishu, told AFP.

"There was blood and body parts everywhere," Mumin Haji Yusuf, another worshipper, said. "I was inside the mosque when I heard a heavy explosion and shrapnel was flying everywhere killing many people."

The fighting -- with both sides using heavy machine guns, artillery and anti-aircraft weapons -- erupted on Thursday, but escalated on Saturday as the two sides clashed over key positions in the war-ravaged Mogadishu.

The Islamists said they had taken control of contested areas in southern Mogadishu, but the government dismissed their claim.

"We have taken control of the areas we fought over with the enemy of Allah," Sheikh Ali Mohamed, the rebel Islamist official in charge of Mogadishu, told reporters.

Seized, he said, were Mogadishu stadium, the defence ministry building and a key road -- a claim confirmed by several witnesses.

But at a news conference Information Minister Farhan Mohamud said the insurgents "did not take any position from the government forces."

"This war is led by foreign fighters who want to take control of Somalia," he said. "They waged a full attack on govern-

ment positions and this is what he had planned in order to overthrow the government."

Police, hospital officials and witnesses said nearly 200 people have been wounded in the fighting.

Thousands of residents, with belongings on their heads or strapped on their backs, were seen fleeing their homes. Others found themselves trapped amid the fighting.

"It was shocking last night here in my neighbourhood -- a mortar hit a house killing four family members on the spot," said resident Husein Mohamed Waberi.

"It was shocking last night here in my neighbourhood -- a mortar hit a house killing four family members on the spot," said resident Husein Mohamed Waberi.

Another billboard injured in two other incidents in the city on May 3 and yesterday. A billboard broke down in front of Siddheswari Girls High School on Bailey Road on May 3.

A billboard fell on the Mirpur-Jigatala 33-kv overhead line at about 5:30am yesterday, disrupting electricity supply in parts of Dhanmondi and Hazaribagh areas, said Ziaul Hasan, deputy manager (technical) of Dhaka Power Distribution Company (DPDC).

Authorities restored power supply in the areas at 7:15pm. Residents got poor electricity supply all the day.

Ziaul Hasan said they supplied electricity to Dhanmondi and Hazaribagh through alternative ways but the supply was insufficient.

Sources in the outpost said police authorities had given permission to set up three billboards, including the collapsed one. Last year, they renewed the permission for another year till 30, 2009.

The billboard broke down mainly because of faulty design, DPDC sources said.

At least two people were also killed and several others injured in two separate incidents of billboard collapse in May and June in 2006.

me. It is everybody for themselves. I am willing to sit even on the roof of the bus, but there is no place."

The government has said it is bracing to cope with half a million people displaced by the fighting.

"The crisis threatens to be the largest man-made humanitarian disaster in Pakistan's post-independence history," the British-based charity Muslim Aid said in a statement on Sunday.

Information minister Mian Iftikhar Hussain on Saturday appealed to the international community to help Pakistan cope with the flood of refugees.

"The situation at the camps is very worrisome because the weather is hot and people are facing many difficulties," Hussain told a news conference.

Thousands of Pakistani troops backed by warplanes and helicopter gunships are involved in the massive operation against Taliban and extremist fighters in the area, where jet fighters were pounding suspected rebel hideouts.

Local administration chief Khushhal Khan said the government had made no arrangements for the transportation of the fleeing civilians, but had set up five more camps in North West Frontier Province where they will be lodged.

Pakistani security forces mounted operations across three northwestern districts late last month after the hard-line Taliban advanced to within 100 kilometres of Islamabad, despite a February peace deal.

Premier Yousuf Raza Gilani said Saturday that the army would minimise civilian casualties while the government would look after the displaced, but people streaming out of the area say homes have been razed with many killed.

Pakistan's military claims to have killed nearly 400 militants since Friday -- including 180 to 200 in the past day alone -- although the death tolls could not be confirmed independently because of the ongoing military operation.

The fighting has sunk the controversial February deal between the government and a pro-Taliban cleric that aimed to put three million people under sharia law in a bid to end the deadly insurgency.

Critics in Washington said the deal emboldened the Taliban and have welcomed the renewed military offensive.

"There is nobody to help

DCC sitting

FROM PAGE 16
rooftops of roadside buildings and on both private and government lands, many of them have very poor foundation, said an official of DCC.

He said, as per DCC count in October 2008, the total number of billboards in the city was around 2200. Of which 485 were on roofs of DCC buildings or their lands and 1695 were on roofs and lands of private owners and other government agencies.

The number has increased a lot after that, he added.

At least two people were also killed and several others injured in two separate incidents of billboard collapse in May and June in 2006.

The number of billboards on roofs of private buildings is more than on the lands. The DCC failed to take any steps in pulling down those structures due to legal tangle, he said.

The DCC, as per its decision in July 2007, asked building owners through an advertisement published in a number of national dailies to pull down all hoardings and signs immediately.

Rajuk in a notice on September 9, 2007 published in several national dailies also asked all building owners to remove hoardings from its jurisdiction of 1530 square kilometer by September 16, 2007.

The initiatives of the DCC and Rajuk to pull down hoardings from rooftops had come to a halt following a High Court stay order against the moves, said Maksudur Rahman Chowdhury, chief waste management officer of DCC.

The High Court on September 20, 2007 asked authorities concerned not to pull down hoardings and signs for 14 days which was later

extended after a writ petition filed by the Outdoor, an advertisement owners' association, said the official.

"We cannot take steps in many cases against illegal billboards due to legal complication," he said.

A committee is likely to be formed