

Judge dies after falling over at secretariat

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

District Sessions Judge Mohammad Golam Mowla, a member of the Customs, Excise and VAT Appellate Tribunal, died as he fell over while entering a washroom at the home ministry office at the secretariat in the city yesterday.

Golam Mowla, 54, hurt his head badly when he fell over at about 1:00pm. He was rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) where the doctors declared him dead, his family members said.

Mowla came to the home ministry from the appellate tribunal in Dilkusha at noon, his driver Maznu Miah said.

Family members said Mowla had been transferred to the Customs, Excise and VAT Appellate Tribunal in deputa-tion from Bandarban a year ago.

Ghoraghat OC kills himself

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

Officer-in-Charge (OC) of Ghoraghat police station in Dinajpur committed suicide, firing a shot into his forehead at his in-law's house of Namaz Ghar area in Bogra town yesterday.

The dead was identified as OC Zakir Hossain, 45.

Zakir shot himself in the forehead at one stage of quarrel with his wife Nur Akhter Jahan Lipi around 9:15pm after his wife had complained to the additional superintendent of police of Dinajpur about his illicit relation with a woman.

Lipi told reporters that she complained to additional superintendent of police of Dinajpur yesterday morning stating that her husband has an extramarital affair with a woman that disrupted her family life.

Additional SP called Zakir following the complaint and rebuked him at noon, she said, adding that her husband came to her father's house in the evening and locked into a quarrel with her.

She said at one stage of quarrel Zakir pulled out his revolver from his waist and shot himself in the forehead.

Lipi said she lives in her father's house with her four daughters.

Iqbal Wahhab awarded OBE

METRO DESK

Restaurateur Iqbal Wahhab has been awarded an OBE in the Queen's New Year's Honours List for his public service duties as well as for services to the hospitality industry, says a press release.

Iqbal's parents are from Khulna and now retired living in London.

After working as a journalist in the national press for three years, Iqbal, a graduate of the London School of Economics, set up in 1991 his own PR firm that specialised in food, drink and restaurants. In 1994, he launched Tandoori Magazine.

Iqbal was recently made chair of the Mayor's Fund for London Business Club.

He sold out of the magazine to launch the multi-award winning Cinnamon Club in 2001 - a restaurant and bar.

He co-authored the Cinnamon Club Cookbook. In 2005, he opened Roast, a restaurant and bar in Borough Market celebrating the best of British cooking with the best of seasonal British produce.

13th NSU convocation today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The 13th convocation of North South University (NSU) will be held on its own campus at Bashundhara in the city today.

President Zillur Rahman, also the chancellor of NSU, will attend the convocation as the chief guest and confer degrees on 726 graduates.

Canadian High Commissioner in Bangladesh Robert McDougall will address the ceremony as the convocation speaker.

At a press conference yesterday, NSU Vice Chancellor Dr Hafiz GA Siddiqi said almost all preparations required for the celebration have been completed.

Multi-mode communication system on the cards

BSS, DHAKA

The government has taken up a master plan to develop a people-oriented, safe, cost-effective, environment-friendly, sustainable and multi-dimensional communication system within its five-year regime to ensure faster economic growth. Communications Minister Syed Abul Hossain told BSS yesterday.

The minister said the government is making all-out efforts to launch the construction work of the Padma Bridge by September this year and complete it by December, 2013.

Hossain said Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina laid the foundation stone of the 6.15-kilometer Padma Bridge on July 4, 2001, but the project made no headway during the last seven years.

The present government in its first cabinet meeting on purchase approved the appointment of international consultant for the Padma Bridge, he said.

He also said that the consultant has already prepared the final design of the project worth \$ 2.6 billion and donor agencies are keen to finance the project.

Hossain said the government has also taken preliminary steps for constructing the second bridge on the Padma at Paturia-Goalanda point, sensing the importance of smooth communication between the country's south and western region.

To carry goods from Mongla Port to Barisal, a 1550-meter long bridge would be constructed at Bikutia, he said.

The communication minister said that the cabinet committee has approved three expressway projects and metro-rail in the city to resolve the traffic problems.

The minister said the Dhaka-Chittagong highway, the main economic lifeline of the country, would be made a four-lane expanded road at a cost of Tk 2,300 crore.

The two-way national highway now carries goods of around Tk 4,000 crore annually, but about 400 to 600 people die every year in accidents. The cabinet has already approved Tk 1,655 crore for 192.3 kilometers of road and work orders have been issued, he said.

He expressed the hope that the construction work of the highway would start this month and they expect to complete it by 2013, which would make an immense contribution to the economic development of the country.

In addition to taking new road projects, the government in the last one year made its best efforts to complete the ongoing projects to develop the communication system.

Construction works of the Shaheed Buddhijibi Setu (third Buriganga Bridge) is now complete with financial supports from Kuwait, making communication of the western part of the capital with the

centre easier.

He said the construction work of the third Karnaphuli Bridge in Chittagong was also completed and it would be opened to traffic in April this year after completion of the approach road.

The government is trying to complete the construction of the 2nd Shitalakkha Bridge on the Kanchpur road by May this year while the construction of the Dapdapiya Setu on the Barisal-Patuakhali road, which is project worth Tk 298 crore, is going on in full swing.

The minister said the government allocated Tk 280 crore to complete the construction of 51 culverts in the country, which remained incomplete for years due to negligence of the past governments.

Besides, he added, the government has undertaken eight projects at a cost of Tk 2,229 crore under the Roads and Highways Division. This year, Tk 210 crore has been allocated for those projects.

With the financial supports of the JICA, the government has taken the "Eastern Bangladesh Bridge Improvement Project" at a cost of Tk 690 crore under which 136 medium size bridges would be repaired and reconstructed.

A bridge would also be constructed across the Arial Khan river at Kazirtek point of Madaripur at a cost of Tk 300 crore with financial supports of China, the minister also said.



Duncan Richard Weir, director of Golf Development Committee, Royal & Ancient, St. Andrews, Scotland, pays a courtesy call on Army Chief Gen Md Abdul Mubeen at the Army Headquarters at Dhaka Cantonment yesterday.

'Energy policy has to be devised on consensus'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A comprehensive national energy policy has to be devised on the basis of consensus to deal with the country's mineral resources, barrister Abdul Razzaq told the High Court yesterday.

The executive might abuse power in dealing with natural resources in absence of an appropriate policy, Razzaq said while placing arguments before the HC during the third day's hearing on a long-pending writ petition.

The writ petition was filed challenging the government move to sign production-sharing contracts (PSC) with foreign companies for gas and oil exploration in onshore blocks.

The HC on January 5 started the hearing following a government move in December last year to lift an HC injunction on onshore oil and gas exploration that resulted in suspension of all new PSC-based explorations since 2001.

The HC bench of justices Mohammad Anwarul Haque and AHM Shamsuddin Chowdhury asked Abdur

Razzaq, the counsel for the writ petitioners, to give opinion on whether this court can interfere in the state policy involving mineral resources.

Razzaq argued that the country's constitution has empowered the HC to examine whether the executive is properly dealing with the natural resources including oil and gas, since the people are the trustees and beneficiary of these resources.

The executive can sign PSC after ensuring protection of the people's interests, he said.

There was no proper guideline in the existing energy policy, formulated in 1995, added Razzaq.

Former secretary Shah Abdul Hannan, columnist Sadek Khan, journalist Amanullah Kabir, and Prof Abdur Rob jointly filed the writ petition as public interest litigation in 1998.

The HC in 2001 issued an injunction on oil and gas exploration in the country's onshore blocks.

The court fixed January 10 for further hearing on the petition.

CBA leader Bakir dies in custody

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Detai- ned former president of Sonali Bank Collective Bargaining Agent (CBA) BM Bakir Hossain, who was sentenced to 13 years in a corruption case, died at Apollo Hospitals in the city yesterday.

Senior Superintendent of Dhaka Central Jail Towhidul Islam told The Daily Star that the CBA leader, who was arrested on July 9 in 2007, died at around 2:00pm of cardiovascular disease.

Jail sources said the jail authorities rushed Bakir to Dhaka Medical College Hospital soon after he fell sick on December 22 last year.

He was then shifted to Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University and later transferred to Millennium Hospital at Lalmatia on December 25.

Afterwards, he was taken to Apollo Hospitals.

Sources said Bakir was arrested in connection with two corruption cases filed by the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) during the immediate past caretaker government regime. The court convicted him in a case while another case was under trial.

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia expressed her deep shock at his death.

BNP Secretary General Khandaker Delwar Hossain, however, termed the death questionable and a conspiracy.

He demanded fair investigation into the death since Bakir was in custody.

Obituary

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Shibly Sadiq, a renowned film director and former president of Bangladesh Film Directors' Association, passed away at a city hospital yesterday at the age of 68, says a press release.

He left behind his son, daughter and a host of admirers to mourn his death.

Bangladesh Film Directors' Association president and general secretary expressed deep shock at his death and prayed for eternal peace of the departed soul. They also conveyed sympathy to the bereaved family members.

209 judges appointed

ASHUTOSH SARKAR

The government has recently appointed 209 junior judges for the lower courts to address the shortage of judges.

The new judges will join their offices on January 17, according to law ministry officials.

As many as 416 posts of the lower court judges have been vacant for a long time, hampering the judicial work, sources said, adding that around 15 lakh cases are now pending in the lower courts across the country.

The capacity of the lower courts to deal with huge backlog of pending cases has increased with the appointment of the junior judges, Law Minister Shafique Ahmed told The Daily Star.

He, however, said fair dispensation of justice will depend on the integrity, efficiency

and sincerity of the judges.

The rate of disposal of cases at the lower courts will now increase, he added.

The Bangladesh Supreme Judicial Commission selected the new judges (assistant judges and judicial magistrates) through tests and examinations last year.

President Zillur Rahman approved the selection in December.

After receiving approval from the Supreme Court, the law ministry issued the appointment letters to the judicial officers with postings on December 30, according to the sources.

In 2008, some 394 assistant judges and judicial magistrates were appointed through the Bangladesh Judicial Service Commission during the tenure of the previous caretaker government.

REHABILITATION OF AILA-HIT PEOPLE

Minister admits failure

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Food and Disaster Management Minister Abdur Razzaq yesterday admitted that his ministry failed to rehabilitate the cyclone Aila-affected people in the coastal areas.

"Many people who were affected by Aila are still living on the embankments, as it was not possible to repair breaches. This was our ministry's failure," he said at a press briefing on one year of the government at his ministry.

The minister, however, could not say exactly how many people are still homeless.

According to the Power and Participation Research Centre, about 45,000 people are still living on the embankments under the open sky. Following a recent visit to the areas, the officials of the Centre said a new disaster might hit the people in Khulna and Satkhira districts if breaches at six major points of the embankments are not repaired immediately.

PM'S INDIA VISIT

'Be firm on national interest'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a discussion yesterday urged the prime minister to be strict regarding issues of national interest during her upcoming India visit, which begins on January 10.

They said there are a lot of unresolved issues with the neighbouring country that should be solved through mutual respect and the premier should not bow down before India.

The speakers also urged Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to raise the issues of justified share of water in the common rivers and maritime boundary.

Liberty Bangladesh, a pro-BNP organisation, organised the discussion at the National Press Club in the city ahead of the scheduled visit of the premier to India.

This is the first visit of Sheikh Hasina to India since she had taken office.

Former vice chancellor of Dhaka University Prof Emajuddin Ahmed was the chief guest at the discussion titled 'Prime Minister's India Visit: Concerns and Prospects'.

Emajuddin said there are some common problems in the South Asian countries, which could not be solved through bilateral framework. So, such problems, like water sharing and combating militancy, should be solved through multi-lateral framework.

He also urged the prime minister to be strict like her Indian counterpart on the Tipaimukh dam issue.

Former director general of Bangladesh Rifles Maj Gen (ret'd) ALM Fazlur Rahman and journalist Sadek Khan also spoke at the meeting with Prof Mahubullah in the chair.

ARREST WARRANTS AGAINST RID BOSS

Court asks OC again to submit report

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday again asked the officer-in-charge of Brahmanbaria Sadar Police Station to submit reports on execution of arrest warrants against the three Rid Pharmaceutical Ltd director and pharmacists who are accused of manufacturing toxic paracetamol syrup.

Judge Golam Mortuza Majumder of Dhaka Drug Court also asked the OC to submit report on the property attachment of director Abdul Gani, and pharmacists Mahbulul Haque and Enamul Haque as he failed to submit the reports on Sunday.

The OC was earlier asked to submit reports twice but failed.

Later, on October 14 and November 15 last year, he was asked to explain why he failed to arrest the accused and attach their properties.

But the OC did not pay heed to the court order.

New UAPF executives

METRO DESK

Engineer M Abu Taher has been elected chairman of the University of Asia Pacific Foundation (UPAF), says a press release.

Other office-bearers are Monzoor Ahmed Chowdhury - senior vice-chairman; architect Mahabuba Haque and Tashmeen Shayera Moyeen -- vice-chairmen; and KM Akhtaruzzaman -- treasurer.

Tender snatchers give death threat to bidder

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Criminals who snatched bid documents from Dhaka Power Distribution Company (DPDC) office at Paribagh on Wednesday had also issued death threats to a bidder the previous day.

The bidder, Md Abul Kashem, owner of Newaz Electrics Ltd., told The Daily Star yesterday that the criminals gave him threats over phone on Tuesday, warning him not to drop the tender schedule.

"Six companies, including my company, purchased the tender schedules and the cadres of a company snatched my documents," he said.

"I had assured the caller that they would be given some money if they do not disturb me," said Abul Kashem, who is a retired PDB engineer.

"I also heard that the criminals also took away bidding documents of another company before snatching my document in presence of police," he headed.

Wednesday was the last day for submitting tender schedules for the work order worth Tk 65 lakh. The job was to repair and maintain transformers for one year.

Meanwhile, the DPDC authorities and Abul Kashem filed separate general diaries (GD) with Shabbagh police in connection with the tender snatching.

But the statement of the DPDC in its GD differs from the statement of Kashem in his GD.

In the GD, Kashem mentioned that criminals snatched his documents when he was dropping it into the tender box.

On the other hand, DPDC Deputy General Manager (Technical) Jahangir Hossain mentioned in the GD that unidentified criminals got away with the bid documents kept on the top of the tender box.

Sub-Inspector Abdul Kaiyum of Shabbagh Police Station, who is investigating the snatching incident, said none of the bidders and officials raised an alarm or informed the police.

He also said the police are yet to identify the criminals.

Death anniversary

METRO DESK

Today is the second death anniversary of Md Idris Ali, a researcher and professor of Bangla department of Jahangirnagar University, says a press release.

A milad mahfil will be held at his village home at Kalamnagar in Aatghoria, Pabna. A Rural Information and Technology Practice Centre will also be launched in his memory.

Md Ziaur Rahman

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The first death anniversary of Md Ziaur Rahman (Rubu), a renowned cricketer of Bogra, will be observed today, says a press release.

A doa mahfil will be held at his house at 9/24 Humayun Road, Block-C, Mohammadpur in the city after Asr prayers. Relatives, friends and well-wishers are requested to attend the doa mahfil.

Mohammad Sirajuddin

METRO DESK

Today is the 34th death anniversary of Mohammad Sirajuddin, founder chairman and managing director of Modhumita Group, says a press release.

Relatives, friends and admirers have been requested to pray for eternal peace of the departed soul.

Engr Md Anwar Hossain

METRO DESK

Today is the third death anniversary of Alhaj Engr Md Anwar Hossain, former engineer of Power Development Board, says a press release.

On the occasion, a doa and milad mahfil will be held at his residence at 76 Barobagh, Mirpur-2 in the city.

Relatives and admirers are requested to attend the programme.

Mohammadpur High School reunion today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A reunion of the students of Mohammadpur Government High School will be held today, says a press release.

State Minister for LGRD Jahangir Kabir Nanak will attend the programme as the chief guest.

The programme includes discussion, blood donation and a cultural show.

WEATHER

Rise in temperature likely

UNB, Dhaka

Weather is likely to remain dry with temporary partly cloudy sky over the country in the next 12 hours as of 6:00pm today.

Moderate to thick fog may occur over the country during midnight till morning, met office said.

Prevailing mild cold weather over Rajshahi division and the regions of Mymensingh, Comilla, Feni, Barisal, Jessore and Kushtia may continue, it said.

Night temperature may rise slightly over the country.

The sun sets in the capital at 5:27pm today and rises at 6:43am tomorrow.

Country's highest temperature 28.0 degrees Celsius was recorded yesterday at Sylhet and lowest 8.4 degrees Celsius at Jessore and Feni.

Highest and lowest temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

City/Town	Temperature in Celsius		Humidity in percentage	
	Max	Min	Morning	Evening
Dhaka	25.6	11.7	88	64
Chittagong	23.6	12.8	81	54
Rajshahi	24.5	09.0	85	76
Khulna	24.5	11.7	95	82
Barisal	25.7	10.0	100	83
Sylhet	28.0	10.0	100	72
Cox's Bazar	27.0	15.0	75	86