

Lucky new 7



Tofail Menon Inu MK Alamgir Mujibul

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Menon and Inu are presidents of the Workers Party of Bangladesh and Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal respectively. They are also lawmakers from the AL-led alliance and have been vocal against the government on some major issues such as the stock market and Hall-Mark scams.

Sources said the five senior leaders would be made ministers while Faruk and Hyeed would be inducted as state ministers. If all the seven take the oath of office today the size of the cabinet, including the prime minister, will be 51.

Government sources said some of the low-performing ministers, such as the home minister, might get reshuffled.

A senior minister told The Daily Star that the size of the cabinet would be kept within 50 and in that case one or two ministers might be dropped.

Sources hinted that a few controversial advisers to the PM might also be dropped. The PM now has seven advisers, six enjoying minister-level and one state minister-level status.

This will be the third expansion of the cabinet. The premier last expanded her cabinet on November 28, 2011 by incorporating Suranjit Sengupta, now



Omor Faruk Abdul Hyeed

criticism at home and abroad over some crucial issues, including cancellation of the Padma bridge loan by the World Bank, Hall-Mark and share market scams and unrest in different educational institutions.

Sources said state minister for LGRD and Cooperatives Jahangir Kabir Nanak might be upgraded to minister and given a new portfolio. The new faces will be given charge of railways, information and communications technology, and public administration ministries.

Besides, food and disaster management ministry and post and telecommunications ministry might be split and new faces might be given charge, hinted the sources.

Contacted, Menon said he was informed by the cabinet secretary last night but he was yet to decide on taking oath. "I will hold a meeting of my party tomorrow [today] and there will be discussion on whether I will join the cabinet at this period of time," added the key leader in the 14-party combine.

With the new expansion, all components of the AL-led grand alliance government -- Jatiya Party, Workers Party, JSD and Samyabadi Dal -- have been given one ministerial berth each.

The cabinet expansion comes at a time when the government is facing huge

US envoy killed

FROM PAGE 1
Ambassador Chris Stevens, Obama said in a White House statement.

It was not immediately clear precisely how or where California-born ambassador Stevens was killed during the assault. Stevens was a key player when the Obama administration supported the anti-Gaddafi insurgency.

The Associated Press news agency said Ambassador Stevens and his staff went to the consulate in an attempt to evacuate the site after it was attacked.

However, witnesses said he was killed when angry Islamists attacked the consulate with rocket-propelled grenades before looting and torching the building.

A Libyan doctor who treated him in hospital said he died of severe asphyxiation, apparently from smoke inhalation, with no other injuries.

Libya's deputy ambassador to the United Nations, Ibrahim Dabbashi, said up to 10 Libyan security personnel were also killed or wounded in the violence.

Reports said a militia known as the Ansar al-Sharia brigade was involved in the attack, but the group has denied the claim, the BBC's Rana Jawad in Tripoli said.

Meanwhile, Libya apologised to the United States for the incident.

"We present our apologies to the United States, the American people and the entire world for what happened," Mohamed al-Megaryef, president of Libya's highest political authority the General National Congress, told reporters in the capital.

Libyan authorities were quick to point finger of blame at supporters of ousted leader Muammar Gaddafi's regime and at al-Qaeda for the deadly attack.

"What happened yesterday coincided with September 11 and has a clear significance," he said implicating possible al-Qaeda hand in the attack.

While paying tribute to the slain envoy, however,

US President Obama and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said US mission would not waver in its support for Libya's shaky attempt to build democratic rule.

The US Secretary of State said the killings should "shock the consciences" of people of all faiths but vowed that the actions of "a savage and small group" would not make Washington turn its back on Libya.

President Barack Obama ordered all flags on US government buildings to half mast to honour Americans slain in Libya.

A US marine anti-terrorism team is being sent to Libya to bolster security after the attack, a US defence source told reporters in Washington.

Meanwhile, the killing has prompted a global outrage.

The UN Security Council and UN leader Ban Ki-moon yesterday hit out at the killing of the US ambassador in Libya as "unjustifiable."

Russia also condemned the killing and said the incident underlined the need for Moscow and Washington to join their efforts in fighting extremism. China expressed shock at the killings.

Dhaka has also strongly condemned the terrorist attack.

In a letter to US Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton yesterday, Foreign Minister Dipu Moni said Bangladesh rejects such cowardice and mindless killings in the name of religion or any other cause or ideology, and denounces terrorism in all its forms and manifestations.

"We express our deepest sympathies to the bereaved families of US Ambassador Stevens and his colleagues," the letter reads.

"Bangladesh stands by the US in this hour of grief and mourning," it added.

Condemnation of the violence also poured in from US ally Britain, France, Canada, Germany Italy. Nato and EU also condemned the "unjustifiable" attack.

Meanwhile, the Vatican

yesterday slammed anti-Muslim "provocations" and the resulting "unacceptable violence" after the deadly attack.

"The serious consequences of unjustified offence and provocations against the sensibilities of Muslim believers are once again evident," Vatican spokesman Federico Lombardi said in a statement.

Tuesday's attack came just hours after Islamists also stormed Washington's embassy in the Egyptian capital Cairo in a similar protest against the movie.

Egypt's powerful Muslim Brotherhood called for nationwide protests tomorrow after the film sparked the deadly attack in Libya and furious protests in Cairo.

According to the Wall Street Journal, the film "innocence of Muslims" was made by an Israeli-American who describes Islam as a "cancer", reports AFP.

The film is said to have been produced by a 52-year-old US citizen from California named Sam Bacile, and promoted by an expatriate Egyptian Copt.

A trailer of the low-budget movie, which correspondents said is highly provocative and insulting to Muslims, has appeared on YouTube translated into Arabic.

The violence in Libya also threatened to spread to other Muslim countries yesterday.

By nightfall, 24 hours after the attacks in Egypt and Libya, police were firing teargas at angry demonstrators outside the US embassy in Tunisia.

In Kabul, the Afghan government gave orders for the video-sharing website YouTube to be closed to the public until the offending film was removed.

Dozens of Palestinians in the Gaza Strip burned American flags and chanted "Death to America," reports AP.

Analysts said the attack will raise serious new concerns about stability in Libya and the ability of the new Libyan administration to maintain security.

Patients suffer at CMCH

Striking interns give 24-hr ultimatum for arrest of BCL man

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Around 300 interns of Chittagong Medical College Hospital continued their indefinite strike for the second consecutive day yesterday, protesting Chhatra League attack on one of their colleagues.

Considering the sufferings of patients, they, however, opened the emergency department of the hospital, nearly one hour after they had locked its gate around 11:00am.

The agitating interns also allowed the CMCH authorities to open all the wards around 1:00pm following a meeting with the director of the hospital, said Golam Kibria Chowdhury, convener of the interns association.

The agitators, however, said they would not return to work until their five-point demands, including arrest of the BCL activists within 24 hours and their punishment, were met.

They said a special squad of honorary intern doctors would be on duty today to treat the patients.

Since 11:00am, when the interns formed a human chain on the hospital premises, many patients could not enter the hospital as its entrances were locked.

Rabeya Khatun with her three-month-old ailing baby had to wait around half an hour outside the hospital like other patients.

"We came here from long distance for good treatment and expect proper service from the doctors," said Rabeya expressing dissatisfaction over the situation.

"If they [doctors] do not give us proper service where will we go?" she asked.

Rabbi Hossain, relative of a patient who was admitted to Cardiology Ward, said he could not go outside for buying essential medicine for the patient as the gates were locked.

The strike began on Tuesday afternoon when some BCL men of Islamia Degree College swooped on intern doctor Mizanur Rahman in front of an operation theatre at the CMCH, alleging that he was "slow" in treating one of their fellow activists, witnesses said.

When the BCL's CMCH unit President Sohail Parvez Sumon went to Mizanur's rescue, the attackers beat him up as well, police said.

Around 11:00am yesterday, some 100 interns formed a human chain on the hospital premises demanding security at workplace.

Coming to the spot, the CMCH director, and leaders of Bangladesh Medical Association (BMA) and

Swadhinata Chikitsak Parishad (SCP) expressed solidarity with the agitators and calmed the situation.

On assurance of punishment of the attacker BCL activists, they agreed to open the emergency department around 11:45am.

Around 12:00 noon, representatives of interns, BMA and SCP sat in a meeting that lasted for two hours.

Their other demands are deployment of more security guards on the campus, allowing two attendants for each patient at the wards, ensuring work environment and providing the doctors with sufficient instruments and medicine.

Over 300 killed

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basement were unable to escape when it filled with smoke, said the top firefighter in Karachi, Ehtisham-ud-Din.

The building only had one accessible exit, and all the other doors were locked, said Sheikh.

Relatives of the victims said the factory owner locked the exit doors in response to a recent theft, thereby endangering the workers inside.

Workers on higher floors of the five-story building struggled to make it out of windows that were covered with metal bars.

"There were no safety measures taken in the building design. There was no emergency exit. All the people got trapped," said senior police official Amjad Farooqi.

Also on Tuesday night, a fire swept through a four-story shoe factory in the eastern city of Lahore, killing 25 people. Some died from burns and others from suffocation, said senior police officer Multan Khan.

The factory was illegally set up in a residential part of the city. The fire broke out when people in the building were trying to start their generator after the electricity went out.

Sparks from the generator made contact with chemicals used to make the shoes, igniting the blaze.

One of the workers, Muhammad Shabbir, said all the chemicals and the generator were located in the garage, which was also the only way out of the building.

A firefighter at the scene, Numan Noor, said the reason most of the victims died was because the main escape route was blocked.

Firefighters broke holes in the factory's brick walls to reach victims inside. At the morgue, bodies were lined up on a hallway floor, covered with white sheets.

Pakistani Prime Minister Raja Pervaiz Ashraf expressed his shock and grief over the deaths.

Road bridge

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A double-decker bridge with two levels -- upper level for vehicles and the lower for railway. It is something new for Bangladesh," said Hasina while replying to lawmakers' queries.

Alongside, she said: "We have prepared another design to construct only a road-bridge for vehicles. It will require less amount of money."

The premier said she had already talked to the Bridges Division and her government was prepared for both the options and was working to that end.

"If better funding is not available, we will build the road-bridge with our own money for quick construction," she mentioned.

Asked when the construction of the main bridge would begin, she said a series of preparatory works, including acquisition of land, rehabilitation of affected people, and dredging and training of river Padma was underway.

"The work for construction of the main bridge will start, 'Inshallah'. We must build the bridge by any means," she said.

Hasina made the statement in the context of the cancellation of a loan agreement by the World Bank with her government for the funding of the Padma bridge over what it called a "conspiracy of corruption."

However, the government is still negotiating with the WB for a revival of the loan agreement.

She said the WB had come forward willingly to provide funds for the construction of the Padma bridge. Citing the agreement, she said the level of funds promised by the WB was the highest in the global moneylender's history.

The premier reiterated that the reasons the WB had cited for the cancellation of the loan agreement were "not justified and irrational".

The WB's decision has delayed the construction of the bridge for the time being, she added.

She said the WB was yet to release money from the loan agreement.

However, the prime minister said, the Asian Development Bank had released \$26.46 million under two technical loan agreements of \$27.6 million signed with the Bangladesh government in 2007 and 2009. The money was spent on carrying out pre-feasibility study and preparing a design, she said.

The WB released \$1.75 million under a loan agreement signed in 2008 for carrying out preparatory works, which has been spent already, Hasina added.

About the alternative funding proposal by the

Malaysian government, she said her government was scrutinising the draft of the "concession agreement" submitted by the Malaysian government.

Besides, she said, the process of a construction of the bridge with the country's own money was also going on. "We will agree to the proposal, which will be acceptable, economical, and may expedite the task."

In response to lawmakers' queries, the premier described her government's various measures taken in the last three and half a years. In a scripted answer, she portrayed a rosy picture of the country's economy, flow of remittance, agricultural production, education, health, social safety and women empowerment.

She also informed the House about her government's plans for the improvement of the country's communications network.

Remain alert

FROM PAGE 1
He was talking to 32 vice-chancellors at a meeting held at the Ministry of Education yesterday where he discussed the problems they were facing and welcomed their suggestions on resolving those issues.

"We have cautioned the VCs to take immediate steps to avert recurrences of such violent incidents on campus," the minister told the journalists after the meeting.

"Besides, we talked about improving the quality of education," he added.

In the last two days, Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL), a pro-Awami League student body, attacked activists of Jatiyabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) a pro-BNP student body in Dhaka and Rajshahi universities, leaving at least 17 JCD activists injured.

Nahid believes counselling might help prevent if not reduce the violence over trifling matters. However, clashes between student bodies have been continuing for years and it is not possible to solve such problems overnight, he added.

The minister also asked the VCs and syndicates to follow the university acts properly.

Some VCs suggested introducing e-tendering at public universities as clashes often occur centring there.

Talking to The Daily Star, a vice-chancellor wishing anonymity said the rise of fundamental student organisations is making the situation worse as they take advantage of the internal feud of BCL.

University Grants Commission Chairman Prof AK Azad Chowdhury and Education Secretary Kamal Abdul Naser Chowdhury were present, among others, at the meeting.

Outlaw killed in 'shootout'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

A regional leader of outlawed outfit Gono Mukti Foj (GMF) was killed in a "shootout" between Rapid Action Battalion and his gang in Kumarkhali of Kushtia early yesterday.

The deceased was identified as Tofazzal Hossain alias Tofa, 40, of Khoksa upazila.

Tofa was the prime accused in a triple-murder case of Ambaria Union Parishad Chairman Nurul Islam, 48, and his two assistants. He was also accused in seven other cases of murder, extortion and abduction, Rabsaid.

Ahmed Naimul Hassan, commander of Rab-12 and also ASP in Kushtia, said they raided Char Sadipur around 5:00am on a tip-off that the gang was holding a secret meeting there. They opened fire on Rab personnel.

The Rab team in self-defence returned the fire, Naimul claimed.

After an hour long "gunfight", Rab personnel found the bullet-riddled body of Tofa at the spot. They also recovered five light guns, two bullets and five machetes left by the gang, he added.

Babar asked

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reply to a question from defence lawyer Khondaker Mahub Hossain.

Mizanur, now on leave preparatory to retirement, said during his 23-day tenure as the acting commissioner, he constantly looked into the matter.

"On the day of the grenade attack, Babar hurriedly directed army experts to destroy two live grenades that had been recovered from the spot, even though I had told him the grenades were substantial evidence..." Mizanur added.

Judge Shahed Nuruddin of the Speedy Trial Tribunal-1 recorded Mizanur's statement and fixed September 16 and 17 for the next hearing of the case.

The IMF team will be cross-examined on those days.

The attack was aimed at assassinating Sheikh Hasina, Awami League president and then leader of the opposition. Even though it was a close call for her, 24 Awami League leaders and activists were killed and 300 others injured.

Ivy Rahman, a top Awami League leader and wife of now President Zillur Rahman, was one of the 24 slain in the attack.

IMF concerned

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Cowen, met the BB governor and his deputies at the bank headquarters in Dhaka.

The meeting kicked off the IMF's two-week mission in Bangladesh to review the implementation of its conditions ahead of releasing \$141 million, the second instalment of its \$987 million loan, scheduled for November.

BB officials said the IMF team wanted to know of the central bank's actions in the wake of the scam that helped the Hall-Mark Group and five other companies swindle Tk 3,606 crore out of the Ruposhi Bangla Branch of Sonali Bank.

The central bank explained in detail the steps it had taken since the scam was exposed and its next plan of action.

The central bank officials assured the IMF team that despite this being the biggest banking scam in the country's history, the acts of theft would have little impact on the banking sector on the whole.

The BB officials told the team that the central bank had asked Sonali Bank to suspend the officials involved in the scam and to file criminal cases against them, and also asked the government, in a letter, to reconstitute the bank's board.

The IMF team told the BB officials that the central bank would have to be cautious in order to stop a recurrence of such incidents in future.

NBR SCANS HALL-MARK FILES

The National Board of Revenue is examining the tax records of the Hall-Mark Group and its sister concerns, the group chairman and its managing director, to detect possible tax evasion by the textile-based company.

"Whatever we do is rou-

tine work. The CIC [Central Intelligence Cell] does it on its own. I cannot say anything about it," NBR Chairman Nasiruddin Ahmed told reporters.

Hall-Mark Group's Managing Director Tanvir Mahmud paid Tk 3.08 crore and his wife and group chairperson Jasmine Islam paid Tk 3.59 crore in personal income tax in the past three years, NBR sources said. The tax includes Tk 1.5 crore on their advance income tax.

The couple declared that their incomes came mainly from fixed deposit proceeds.

The NBR found they had concealed information of FDRs at several banks.

Of the 80-odd concerns claimed by Hall-Mark Group, only 14 obtained tax identification numbers from the NBR tax zone 7, the sources added.

None of the firms, however, submitted any tax returns.

"Non-submission of returns indicates a motive for tax evasion," said an official of the NBR, who preferred not to be named.

Tanvir was called on his mobile twice yesterday but he did not answer.

However, Tushar Ahmed, general manager of the Hall-Mark Group, said the group was negligent when it came to handing in tax returns of a couple of firms registered as companies in 2007-08.

"We will submit the returns of these firms this year. In fact, we have already started the process in this regard," he added.

Ahmed further said submission of tax returns of most of the associated companies of the group were only due from the beginning of fiscal 2011-12.

"We are preparing for the submission of returns of these companies as well."

Asked, he said 28 firms of

the group had been registered as limited companies with the Registrar of Joint Stock Companies and Firms, while six had proprietorship.

With regard to the nearly 80 enterprises that the Hall-Mark Group claimed earlier, Ahmed said most of them were in the process of establishment.

In another development, the Anti-Corruption Commission secretary said the commission would interrogate 31 more Sonali Bank officials in connection with the Hall-Mark Group loan scam.

The anti-graft body has already questioned 31 persons, including 21 Sonali Bank and seven Hall-Mark Group officials, in this regard.

"It [the Hall-Mark Group scam] is a huge scam. Apart from the Sonali Bank officials, many others are involved in the swindle," Faizur Rahman Chowdhury, ACC secretary, told reporters at the commission's Segunbagicha office in the capital yesterday.

US urges calm in China-Japan row

BBC ONLINE

The US yesterday called for "cooler heads to prevail" as tensions intensify between China and Japan over disputed islands in the East China Sea.

China sent two patrol ships to islands - known as Senkaku in Japan and Diaoyu in China - on Tuesday.

This came after Japan sealed a deal to buy three of the islands from their private Japanese owner.

Washington will not take sides in the matter, said Assistant Secretary of State Kurt Campbell.

More planets

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far-away solar systems that are capable of supporting life.

Estimates of habitable planet numbers have been based on the likelihood of them having surface water.

But a new model allows scientists to identify planets with underground water kept liquid by planetary heat.

The research was presented at the British Science Festival in Aberdeen.

Water is fundamental for life as we know it. Planets too close to their sun lose surface water to the atmosphere through evaporation.

Surface water on planets located in the more frigid distant reaches from their sun is locked away as ice.

The dogma was, for water to exist in its life-giving liquid form, a planet had to be the right distance from its sun -- in the habitable zone.

As Sean McMahon, the PhD student from Aberdeen University who is carrying out the work explained: "It's the idea of a range of distances from a star within which the surface of an Earth-like planet is not too hot or too cold for water to be liquid."

"So traditionally people have said that if a planet is in this Goldilocks zone -- not too hot and not too cold -- then it can have liquid water on its surface and be a habitable planet"

But researchers are starting

to think that the Goldilocks theory is far too simple.

Planets can receive two sources of heat -- heat direct from the star and heat generated deep inside the planet.

As you descend through the crust of the Earth, the temperature gets higher and higher. Even when the surface is frozen, water can exist below ground.

Immense quantities of water in fact -- teeming with primitive life.

Prof John Parnell, also from Aberdeen University said: "There is a significant habitat for micro-organisms below the surface of the Earth, extending down several kilometres."

So the Aberdeen team are developing models to predict which far-flung planets might harbour underground reservoirs of liquid water with the possibility of alien life.

Explaining their rationale, McMahon said: "If you take into account the possibility of deep biospheres, then you have a problem reconciling that with the idea of a narrow habitable zone defined only by conditions at the surface."

Even a planet so far from the star that it receives almost no solar heat could still maintain underground liquid water.

According to Mr McMahon, "There will be several times more [habitable] planets"