

COUNCIL OF MINISTERS

Surprises in reshuffle

New ministers, state minister given portfolio; changes in ministries held by leaders of AL's alliance partners

RASHIDUL HASAN

It was around 1:30pm. Civil Aviation and Tourism Minister Rashed Khan Menon was briefing Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on the activities of the national flag carrier Biman Bangladesh after the weekly cabinet meeting at the PMO yesterday.

Till then, Menon had no clue that the PM had already decided to transfer him to the social welfare ministry. He learnt about it only after the cabinet secretary announced the decision about an hour later.

The PM's New Year surprise didn't end there. The portfolios of two other high-profile ministers and a state minister have been changed.

Menon, also president of the Workers Party, has been replaced by a little-known figure in national politics -- ATM Shahjahan Kamal -- president of Laxmipur district Awami League.

"Shahjahan Kamal, who became a lawmaker for the second time in 2014, expressed his interest to the PM to work at the civil aviation and tourism ministry following his inclusion in the council of ministers on Tuesday," said an AL presidium member seeking anonymity.

Shahjahan is not a member of the parliamentary standing committee.

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PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

Policemen charge truncheons on the people going along BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia's motorcade near the High Court Mazar yesterday. Khaleda was heading home after appearing before a court at Bakshibazar.

PINAKI ROY with MOHAMMED ALI JINNAT, from Cox's Bazar

The 450 Hindus who would be taken back by Myanmar in the first batch on January 22 know little about their repatriation, and officials concerned here are also in the dark.

Myanmar's minister for social welfare, relief and resettlement, Win

Myat Aye, made an announcement on December 28 following a meeting in Naypyitaw that repatriation would start on January 22 with the group of Hindu nationals.

When asked about the matter, foreign ministry officials yesterday said what Myanmar announced was not decided in any joint meeting of the two countries.

The Democratic Voice of Burma, a Myanmar news organisation based in Thailand, also reported that Myanmar had even sent verification forms for its

Hindu nationals.

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They announced it on their own and Bangladesh does not know anything

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SC authority over lower courts intact

Says the apex court accepting rules for lower court judges; BJSA withdraws Dr Kamal, Barrister Amir from Masder Hossain case

ASHUTOSH SARKAR

The Supreme Court yesterday accepted the disciplinary rules formulated by the government for the lower court judges.

The rules will uphold the supremacy of the SC, and it has not lost its powers over the subordinate courts because of them, the apex court said.

A five-member bench of the SC, headed by Justice Md Abdul Wahhab Miah, now discharging the duties of the chief justice, passed the acceptance order during a hearing in the Masder Hossain case, popularly known as the separation of the judiciary case.

The apex court, however, kept the Masder Hossain case as a continuous mandamus, meaning that this court can pass any further order on the issue if deemed necessary in future.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh Judicial Service Association (BJSA) yesterday decided to withdraw Dr Kamal Hossain and Barrister M Amir-Ul Islam from the responsibility of conducting Masder Hossain case on behalf of the BJSA.

The decision came two days after six leading jurists, including Dr Kamal and Amir-Ul Islam, said in a joint statement that "the lower courts have been made subordinate to the executive by three cardinal rules".

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