

Biden mulling top staff

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Other roles could also be disclosed this week though Biden could still be weeks away from finalizing his slate of cabinet appointees.

None of the potential appointees could be reached for comment. A spokesman for Biden's transition team declined to comment.

Biden, a Democrat, is also set to receive a briefing on national security threats from his own advisers. Trump, a Republican who has not conceded the Nov 3 election, has blocked him from receiving classified intelligence briefings usually provided to the successor in a transition.

General Services Administrator Emily Murphy has not recognized Biden as the "apparent winner." A spokeswoman for Murphy said the administrator was following precedent and would "make an ascertainment when the winner is clear." Critics say Murphy is holding off under pressure from the White House, a claim rejected by administration officials.

The Republican Trump has remained angry and defiant on social media even as some prominent Republicans have asserted that Biden should be considered the president-

elect.

Trump's national security adviser, Robert O'Brien, said on Monday he would ensure a professional transition in the likely event that Biden is deemed the winner.

"If the Biden-Harris ticket is determined to be the winner, and obviously things look like that now, we'll have a very professional transition from the National Security Council," O'Brien told the Global Security Forum.

At a news conference on Monday, Biden again called upon Trump to cooperate with the transfer of power, saying that the resurgent Covid-19 pandemic meant lives were in the balance.

"More people may die if we don't coordinate," he said.

Though a definitive winner from the election did not emerge until four days later, Biden's victory has become clearer as more votes have been counted.

Biden won the legally meaningless but symbolically important national popular vote by at least 5.6 million votes, or 3.6 percentage points, with some ballots still being counted.



US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and his wife Susan visit the Patriarchal Church of St George in Istanbul, Turkey, yesterday. Pompeo paid a fraught visit to Istanbul yesterday that included no official meetings and an agenda focused on religious freedoms that Ankara dismissed as "irrelevant".

PHOTO: REUTERS

Human chain in favour

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They were asked to distribute the copies of the press release among journalists.

Soleman Mro, who along with other Mro community members were brought there, said "We were taken to Bandarban from Alikadam upazila by three buses in the morning. We were told that we would attend a government programme.

"But after we reached this place, we learnt that it was a human chain, not a government programme. We never want eviction of our fellow Mro community members in the name of tourism."

Another Mro community member, Menron Mro, echoed Soleman's words.

Seeking anonymity, several other Mro community members, who went there from Bandarban town, said that Ward Member Cha Hla Mong Marma told them that relief materials would be distributed in Bandarban Press Club area. But they later found out that it was a human chain.

Contacted, Cha Hla Prue, a member of the Marma community, said, "I told them about relief distribution following a directive from people from the local authorities. They didn't tell me about any human chain. They asked me to send around 30 people from my ward to a relief distribution programme."

Mro community members in Bandarban have been protesting against construction of a five-star hotel and creation of a tourist spot in Chimbuk hill area.

They have alleged that the Sikder Group and security forces moved to construct a hotel and create a tourist spot on about 1,000 acres of jhum land from Kapru Para Bazar to Jibannagar area.

Mro community members have urged Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to save eight of their ancestral villages in the hill area.

They submitted a memorandum to the PM through the Bandarban deputy commissioner on October 7.

Autonomy gone, efficiency too

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division; one water resources engineer; one water resources expert; one representative each from an NGO, Institute of Chartered Accountants and beneficiary organisations; director general of Water Resources Planning Organisation; and the BWDB director general.

According to the act, the council's chairman fixes the time and the venue and a meeting has to be held every two months. At least six members are required for a quorum.

Due to the non-functionality of the governing council, BWDB had to turn to the ministry concerned for major decisions and gradually became fully dependent on it.

Preferring to remain unnamed, the BWDB official said that in the first 28 years since independence, BWDB's performance as an autonomous body had ebbed and flowed.

Yet, he added, it has done some great jobs such as constructing the Teesta Barrage, and implementing the Coastal Embankment and Dhaka Integrated Flood Protection projects.

But things changed once it was made a statutory body, he said, adding that the BWDB has now become a less lucrative body due to job insecurity and the absence of technically qualified people in leading roles.

'BOARD' TO 'DIRECTORATE'

There have been recent attempts to address the problem of a non-functional governing council and other issues that impede better management of the organisation working to ensure the country's food and water security and minimise flood damage.

An 11-member committee was formed in April 2018 to amend the BWDB Act 2000. The committee, in its

fourth meeting on February 20, 2019, decided to transform the board into a directorate, and three sub-committees were formed in this regard.

In one of the meetings held on the formation of the directorate, 13 loopholes of the act and existing problems were identified.

One of these was that the governing council failing to comply with the act's mandate of meetings every two months is hampering BWDB activities.

Execution of important work like the annual budget, procurement, and additional work order or property handover requires approval from the governing council.

While the BWDB Act contained a provision over the formation of the governing council, no clear-cut directives were given over the formation of the BWDB itself.

Also, as a statutory body, BWDB's officials and engineers are not entitled to the rank their peers in equivalent positions in government agencies and departments receive.

This has created disparity in pay and rank and contributed to job insecurity, which the committee identified as another loophole.

BWDB Director General Engr AM Aminul Haque, however, said all these limitations will be solved with the formation of a directorate.

"That is why a move has been taken from both the water resources ministry and BWDB to transform the statutory board into a complete government organisation," he told The Daily Star recently.

"The communication between the ministry and us will be smoother. Our work will gain pace," he said.

"Officials are now working on the Bangladesh Water Resources Directorate Act 2019," the DG added,

without elaborating.

Pointing to the manpower shortage, he said many skilled officers quit BWDB jobs -- finding it non-lucrative as it is only a statutory organisation.

"But after the formation of the directorate, officials will get BCS rank. The problem will be solved then," he said.

Deputy Minister for Water Resources AKM Enamul Hoque Shameem, too, opined that transforming BWDB into a directorate will bring more dynamism.

"We need to take quick action. Under the ministry, the directorate will be able to function quickly," he said on November 10, adding it will also solve the issue of job dissatisfaction among officials.

But experts debated whether the formation of a directorate will make BWDB efficient in implementing the multi-billion dollar Delta Plan 2100 for example.

The government formulated the Delta Plan in 2018 to ensure water and food security, economic growth, and environmental sustainability, and reduce vulnerability to natural disasters and building resilience to climate change and other delta challenges.

Dr Abdul Matin, professor at the department of water resources engineering of Buet, said the job of BWDB is technical -- therefore, a technically qualified person should be in the leading role.

"A technical person used to lead it when it was autonomous and the country saw some tremendous work at that time."

The board will completely be under a bureaucratic grip after its transformation into a directorate, Dr Matin added.

Swedish support

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the discussion on Swedish assistance in long-term development plans of Bangladesh can be held when the documents on the five-year plan would be made available. He further assures that his government would fully support Bangladesh's membership to the United Nations.

23-NATION RESOLUTION IN UN

Twenty-three countries table a resolution for the consideration of the UN General Assembly favouring the admission of Bangladesh into the world body. The resolution reaffirms the principle of universality of membership of the United Nations and considers that the People's Republic of Bangladesh is eligible for membership in the United Nations. It also seeks to express the desire that Bangladesh will be admitted to the membership of the United Nations at an early date.

SUBIMAL CALLS ON BANGABANDHU

Indian High Commissioner Subimal Dutta calls on Prime Minister Sheikh Mujibur Rahman at the Gono Bhaban today. He is accompanied by JN Talukder, a retired chief secretary, West Bengal government, now on a visit to Bangladesh.

SOURCES: November 19, 1972 issues of Bangladesh Observer, Dainik Bangla and Dainik Ittefaq.

Bangabandhu

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Indian government and people for taking such initiative marking Mujib Borsho.

High Commissioner Doraiswami emphasised that along with being the Father of Nation of Bangladesh Bangabandhu is also a hero to the Indian people.

It is only natural that Indians also wish to celebrate Mujib Borsho with the same affection and respect as they did when he visited India in January 1972, en route to Bangladesh upon the country's liberation.

Prime Minister of India, Narendra Modi, had paid tribute to Bangabandhu during the commencement of Mujib Borsho on March 17, 2020.

Calling Bangabandhu a courageous leader, Modi had emphasised that Bangabandhu's life was an inspiration to all, he said.

These special edition watches were designed and manufactured in India for the High Commission by TITAN, the celebrated watchmaking division of India's multinational TATA Group.

Probe four cases

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(Ukhiya circle) of Cox's Bazar to investigate another.

Four people -- Abdul Amin, Sababuddin, Mizanur Rahman and Mahmudur Rahman, residents of different villages in Teknaf upazila -- were killed in separate gunfights.

Last September, relatives of the four dead people filed cases against Pradeep and some others with the same court.

The court took the cases into cognisance and asked Teknaf Police Station to submit reports on whether there were any investigations in this regard.

In response, the concerned police officials submitted the reports.

On Monday, the court came up with the latest directive, which ordered the investigation of the cases.

The plaintiffs' lawyer Abu Musa Mohammad said they are satisfied with the court order and hoped that the victims' families will get justice.

Threatening

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The letter was sent by Bangladesh Islamic Sochitan Dal on November 4.

The Daily Star obtained copies of the threatening letter and the GD yesterday. The letter also said the group is ready to "sacrifice their lives for Allah".

In the GD, the headmaster also named three villagers -- Abdur Razzak, Abdul Wadud and Ruhul Amin -- who had gone to the school on November 6 and also demanded a halt to the rehearsals.

Azim Uddin, officer-in-charge of Choraghat Police Station, said a GD was lodged over the issue on November 12 and police interrogated all three persons mentioned in the GD.

The OC said there was a land dispute between the three and the headmaster.

The headmaster, on the other hand, alleged that the issue had become more complicated due to the inaction of the police.

Razzak, one of those mentioned in the GD, said he had no knowledge of the letter.

Teacher gets life term

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sick. The girl's parents also disclosed the matter to some locals and relatives. Then, some furious locals and relatives vandalised the madrasa on October 5 evening.

The victim's father then filed a case with Mirpur police station the same night against the teacher.

The teacher fled the scene soon after the mob attack, but police arrested him around 9:30pm on October 5.

A judicial magistrate in Kushtia sent Quader to jail after police produced him before the court on October 6.

Evidence of rape was found following a medical test of the victim at Kushtia general hospital on October

7, said police.

The accused also confessed to raping her before the court, they added.

Police submitted the charge sheet on October 13. The court accepted it on November 12.

There were a total of 13 witnesses, all of them were students of the madrasa.

The judge at the court of women and children repression prevention Munshi Moshiur Rahman handed down the verdict in presence of the convict.

Lawyers and locals hailed the speedy verdict. Members from the victim's family also expressed satisfaction at it.

Delhi plans curbs

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On Monday, 7,810 new deaths and 529,892 new cases were recorded worldwide. Based on latest reports, the countries with the most new deaths were United States with 1,008, followed by France with 506 and Italy with 504.

The United States is the worst-affected country with 247,229 deaths from 11,206,054 cases. After the US, the hardest-hit countries are Brazil with 166,014 deaths from 5,876,464 cases, India with 130,519 deaths from 8,874,290 cases, Mexico with 98,861 deaths from 1,009,396 cases, and the United Kingdom with 52,147 deaths from 1,390,681 cases.

India added 29,163 cases over the past 24 hours for its lowest such increase since at least mid-July, government data showed.

Both infections and deaths in India have fallen from a mid-September high but the situation is different in Delhi, a city of 20 million swathed in air pollution, where crowds thronged markets for last week's Hindu festival of Diwali.

With his palms joined together during a live broadcast on Twitter, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal

pleaded for people to wear masks and maintain social distancing.

"If we see that social distancing and mask-wearing is not being followed in any bazaar and there's a possibility of those areas becoming a hotspot, we should be allowed to close them down for a few days," he added.

Kejriwal said he had written to federal authorities for permission to impose the curbs.

Since the middle of May, the capital has gradually opened markets and public transport shut during the early phase of the pandemic.

Delhi, which recorded its highest infections and deaths last week, reported on Monday a fall in new infections to 3,797, but federal authorities have warned it to be ready for as many as 15,000 cases a day.

As a popular time of year for weddings nears, Kejriwal's government has also asked federal officials for a further cut in the number of guests at such celebrations, to 50 from 200.

The Delhi government's online tracker showed just 116 beds available, from a total of 1,327 in intensive care units equipped with a ventilator. Federal officials have promised to make hundreds more available soon.

Solomon Islands prepares to ban Facebook after govt criticism

REUTERS, Sydney

The Solomon Islands is planning to ban the use of Facebook for an indeterminate period after inflammatory critique of the government was aired on the social media platform, the Solomon Times reported.