

Christensen takes oath as US envoy to Bangladesh

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Brent Christensen, a career foreign service official, was sworn in as the new US Ambassador to Bangladesh on Friday.

The oath of office was administered to Christensen by Deputy Secretary of State Michael R McFaul at the State Department's Foggy Bottom headquarters.

"A m b a s s a d o r Christensen brings deep experience and expertise in US-Bangladesh relations," the US Bureau of South and Central Asia said on X.

"We look forward to his leadership in strengthening our trade partnership and promoting US interests in Bangladesh."

Christensen now heads to Dhaka with over 20 years of experience working on US policy towards Bangladesh across his foreign service career, including a prior tour in Dhaka.

He is expected to join the US Embassy in Dhaka on Monday.

On X, it said the US Embassy in Dhaka is pleased to welcome Christensen as the newly sworn-in Ambassador to Bangladesh.

"I am thrilled to return to Bangladesh, a country I know so well. I am excited to lead a great team at Embassy Dhaka, Americans and locally employed staff alike, to enhance US-Bangladesh relations, advance President Trump's agenda, and work hard every day to make America safer, stronger, and more prosperous," the ambassador said.

Land for Sale

Land for sale in Uttara, Sector:15. Size-16.24 katha, with RAJUK 22 feet road. NoMedia, call:01301320455



Risking accidents, people cross a railway line by ducking under a safety gate lowered for an approaching train at the Bhadra rail crossing in Rajshahi yesterday.

PHOTO: AZAHAR UDDIN

Roadwork disrupts classes, puts students at risk

MINTU DESHWARA, Moulvibazar

Road development work in front of Gobardhanpur Government Primary School in Narendrapur village of Moulvibazar's Kamalganj upazila has been disrupting academic activities and posing health risks to students.

The ongoing road project from Kamalganj upazila to Adampur involves daily construction work, including burning fires to melt pitch, directly in front of the school's main gate. Thick black smoke, dust and ash from the work are spreading across the school premises and entering classrooms, corridors and teachers' rooms.

During visits to the area, pitch-melting operations were seen being carried out during school hours, with smoke billowing into classrooms.

Teachers said students frequently suffer from coughing, eye irritation, breathing difficulties and dizziness, while excessive noise from construction work is also affecting their concentration.

"Many students fall sick during classes. Even after closing doors and windows, smoke and dust still enter the classrooms. This is extremely harmful for young children," said a teacher.

Headteacher AKM Manjur Moul



Chowdhury said all construction equipment had been placed in front of the school, worsening the situation.

"We have informed the upazila education officer and the engineer, but no effective steps have been taken so far," he said.

Parent Mifta Mia described the situation as "inhumane" and demanded the immediate removal of construction materials from the front of the school, calling for urgent measures to ensure a safe learning environment.

Upazila Primary Assistant Education

Officer Soma Bhattacharjee said the issue had been reported to higher authorities for immediate action.

Upazila Engineer Saiful Azam said the space was being used temporarily due to a lack of open areas along the road. He added that the school was reportedly closed earlier and that the project was now nearing completion, expected to finish within a week.

Kamalganj UNO Md Asaduzzaman said the administration was looking into the matter and taking necessary steps.

Level playing field

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observe processes such as voter registration and appeal procedures.

On the role of law enforcement agencies, Ijabs said electoral violence is a widespread concern in Bangladesh's political culture. He said the mission's legal analysts are examining the balance between maintaining law and order and political neutrality, an issue that will become increasingly relevant as election day approaches.

Asked about the EU EOM's perspective on the banning of the Awami League and its inability to take part in the polls, Ijabs said issues of transitional justice are painful for many countries. "We are here to look at how to make the current process participatory, credible, and trusted by citizens, rather than focusing on past legal proceedings," he said.

On recent violent protests and killings that have created fear among the public, he said such violence is extremely worrying, as fear may discourage people from turning out to vote.

"We will pay attention to the opportunities for all groups -- including women and ethnic or regional minorities -- to participate in the polls," he said.

He suggested that law enforcement agencies maintain law and order but refrain from involvement in the political process on behalf of any particular group.

"This is a crucial

question we will pay a lot of attention to," he added.

On the role of information and disinformation surrounding the elections, Ijabs said the issue has been debated for years in the European Parliament.

"The problem is that policy regulations always lag behind technological progress," he said, suggesting greater engagement with NGOs and fact-checking organisations to counter disinformation.

He also said governments should maintain direct communication with social media platforms to ensure regulation.

On the role of free media, Ijabs said the EU EOM is concerned that political unrest is endangering media freedom, particularly following the attack on The Daily Star and Prothom Alo office buildings.

Asked if he had any message for voters, he said, "Make an informed choice and do not be afraid to participate."

Democracy is a learning process. You must take previous decisions into account and learn from mistakes to grow and become fit for these turbulent times."

PRAYER TIMING

JANUARY 11

Faz Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha
AZAN 5:30 12:45 4:00 5:36 7:00
JAMAT 6:05 1:15 4:15 5:40 7:30

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

Educating women key to a kinder

FROM PAGE 3

their country and lead their nation. Nine

students have come from the Rohingya camps, also a place where a brutal line is drawn between need and deprivation. Seven garment factory workers are receiving degrees today; these students once thought their lives would remain limited only to sewing machines," said AUW Vice-Chancellor Rubana Huq.

AUW conferred

honorary doctorates on

seven notable figures for

their contributions to

humanity, education, and

peace.

Oxford University

Chancellor Irene

Tracey was awarded a

Doctor of Science and the

Advancement of

Humanity; University

of Tokyo President Teruo

Fujii received a Doctor of

Science; Japan's former

First Lady Akie Abe was

conferred a Doctor of

Humanity Letters; UK

House of Lords member

Janet Annie Royal

received a Doctor of

Arts for Leadership and

Educational Equity;

Bangladesh's former

education minister M

Osman Faruk was awarded

a Doctor of Science in

Creative, Responsible and

Courageous Journalism.

Receiving

his

honorary degree, Matiur

Rahman spoke on the

importance

of

independent

journalism,

expressing

concern

over recent attacks on

major media houses like

Prothom Alo and The

Daily Star, but remained

hopeful. "When times

are difficult, independent

journalism must be

indispensable. Without

freedom of thought,

democracy cannot

survive. I do not lose hope

because young people

have not abandoned their

hope for a humane and

just society," he said.

He added, "I am not

accepting this honour

only for myself; I am

accepting it on behalf

of the journalists of

Bangladesh who work

every day in search of

truth, often at personal

risk."

Former

education

minister Dr M Osman

graduates respond where

crises happen.

Faruk called the passage

of the AUW Act, which

established it as an

independent university

free from government

intervention, one of his

best achievements while

in cabinet.

Of the 235 graduates,

152 were from

Bangladesh. The class

also included students

from Afghanistan, India,

Laos, Myanmar, Nepal,

Pakistan, Sri Lanka,

Timor-Leste, Vietnam,

and Yemen.

AUW Founder Kamal

Ahmad reflected on

the university's growth

over 18 years, expanding

from 127 students to over

2,000 from 22 countries,

and emphasised AUW's

commitment to educating

and professionally placing

displaced and refugee

women. "Refugee camps

are not temporary stations

in life. We have students

who were born in refugee

camps and who go back to

visit their parents," he said.

Presiding

over

the

ceremony,

AUW

Chancellor Cherie Blair

reminded

graduates

that