

# Free press under severe pressure: Hasina

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Free press is under severe pressure and the civil society activism under threat in Bangladesh, opposition leader Sheikh Hasina has observed.

She made the observation in a written speech at the concluding session of the Commonwealth Journalist association (CJA) conference in the city yesterday.

Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the parliament Abdul Hamid read out the speech in her absence.

Hasina, also former prime minister, was scheduled to attend the closing session as chief guest, but she is now in Saudi Arabia to perform Hajj.

"Since the assumption of office by the present regime, three journalists have been killed and twenty six press clubs have been forcibly occupied by the goons of the ruling parties," Hasina said.

In last year alone, 30 journalists

were arrested, three killed, 39 persecuted, 102 injured and 146 threatened. Besides, acid was thrown on one journalist and 143 cases were filed against journalists, she added.

"Reporters are threatened with sedition or conspiracy cases and torture in custody," she observed.

Direct and indirect military role for long has negated press freedom but provided an opening for a vibrant civil society.

But she said press freedom has been steadily gaining ground in Bangladesh since the end of military rule in 1990.

She claimed between 1996 and 2001, when Awami League was in office, a free and active press contributed to the improvement of the image of the country.

"Press freedom is a powerful instrument for good governance and as a nation we are beneficiaries of journalists' zeal for prevention of

economic abuse."

CJA President Hasan Shahriar said the new CJA leadership will always stand for the cause of the journalists. The CJA is committed to avoiding yellow journalism, which is unacceptable under any circumstances, he added.

Dale Lautenbach, chief of External Affairs, South Asia region of the World Bank, and Derek Ingram, founding president of the CJA, among others, spoke at the concluding ceremony.

## 10 hurt as BNP factions clash in Chittagong

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Rival factions of the ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) traded gunshots at Chandanaish in Chittagong on Friday night, leaving at least 10 people injured.

Two of the injured — Raja Miah and Nasiruddin — were bullet-hit and taken to the Chittagong Medical College Hospital (CMCH). The others were admitted to the local health complex.

Police arrested local BNP leader and Union Parishad chairman Nurul Anwar, his brother Jashimuddin and Javed Akhtar, an activist.

The Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development (LGRD) and Cooperatives has recently appointed Anwar administrator of the Chandanaish municipality.

Anwar claimed he had received the appointment letter from the Chittagong deputy commissioner on Thursday.

However, the next morning, Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) Faruq Hossain refused to hand over to Anwar the keys to the administrator's office, saying he had not received any official notification.

As Anwar and his supporter came out of the UNO office, the BNP action, allegedly loyal to former minister Oli Ahmed, attacked them, touching off a shootout that lasted for more than half an hour before police intervened.

## Sylhet city polls Nomination filing today

BSS, Sylhet

Prospective candidates for election to offices of the Sylhet City Corporation will submit their nomination papers today.

The additional divisional commissioner of Sylhet will receive the nomination papers as returning officer.

Elections to the post of Mayor, 27 general ward commissioners and nine reserved seats for women commissioners are scheduled for March 20.

There are roughly 1,81,000 voters under all wards of the Sylhet City Corporation, official sources said.

The date for scrutiny of the nomination papers is February 14 and withdrawal of candidature March 3.

The first-ever mayoral election of the Sylhet City Corporation has created much enthusiasm among local political leaders and voters.

## Body found in Dhanmondi Lake

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police yesterday morning recovered the body of a young man from the Dhanmondi Lake near the Baitul Aman Mosque at Road No 7.

The body was later sent to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital for autopsy. There were injury marks around the young man's lower lip, hospital sources said.

Dhanmondi police suspect the young man, whose identity could not be confirmed, might have been mentally challenged.

Locals had seen him moving about aimlessly over the last two days, they said.

## PM: Malaysia

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tries in the Malaysian capital. The NAM summit is taking place at a critical juncture of the forum's evolution and the global situation, particularly the volatile situation in the Arab world.

The PM's entourage includes Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan, Principal Secretary Dr Kamaluddin Siddiqui, Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to the UN in New York Dr Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury and PM's Political Secretary Mohammad Mosaddek Ali.

UN Secretary General Kofi Annan will also be present at the summit, which is likely to be attended by 60 heads of state or government of the NAM-member countries.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia is expected to return home on February 26.



Law Minister Moudud Ahmed addresses a special event in honour of guests at the Fantasy Kingdom in Ashulia yesterday evening. State Minister for Liberation War Affairs Redwan Ahmed, State Minister for Home Affairs Lutfuzzaman Babar, business leaders, former bureaucrats, elite and journalists also attended.

# Bangladesh battered

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one-day match at Potchefstroom last year.

Opens Herschelle Gibbs (49 not out) and Gary Kirsten (52 not out) later cashed in on some wayward bowling at Goodyear Park.

The victory kept the Proteas' hopes of a Super Six place alive.

The home side came into the match under pressure having earlier lost to both the West Indies and New Zealand and even decided to rest crowd favourite Allan Donald.

But as soon as Shaun Pollock won the toss it was business as usual for the South Africans.

Pollock removed both openers Al-Shahriar and Ehsanul Haque in his first four overs and Andrew Hall took two for 15 in six overs. Debutant Monde Zondeki who took Donald's place, celebrated with the prized wicket of Alok Kapali.

Only captain Khaleda Mashud (29) and Mahmud (23) managed to offer some resistance.

Bangladesh got into early strife when opener Al-Shahriar played a flat-footed swipe at Pollock and was comfortably caught by Robin Peterson at mid off to depart for a duck. Al-Shahriar's reckless shot selection set the tone for the rest of the innings.

Ashrafal began in confident fashion with a superb square cut off Ntini. But the pace demon got his revenge next over when the right-hander was caught behind for six.

Ehsanul was deceived by a slower delivery from Pollock and ended up spooning a simple catch at mid-on.

Just as Sanwar was gradually finding his feet Hall got the batsman to chase one.

And when Kapali fell to a brilliant catch in the slips by Boeta Dippenaar, the minnows were in deep trouble on 33-5.

However Mashud and Mahmud showed more patience than their teammates in a 35-run partnership, but Ntini returned to have captain Mashud caught behind by Boucher.

The Tigers crumbled after that with Mohammad Rafique run out by Peterson in the next over and Ntini claimed the wickets of Manjulur Islam and Mahmud to complete an impressive haul.

Mahmud's innings included a huge six over long on against left-arm spinner Peterson.

"I do not know why the batting collapses time and again. This is alarming and we will have to shuffle the order before our next match," said Mashud after the game.

"Going after the South African bowlers in the first 15 overs was a mistake. It was too small a total for a side like that."

A delighted Pollock said: "The game went according to plan, except I wanted the batters to get it over in 11 overs and they took 12."

"The crowd got its entertainment

and the early finish was just what we wanted. The guys did a great job."

South Africa must now defeat Canada and group B leaders Sri Lanka to seal their place in the next stage. On the other hand Bangladesh travel to Kimberley on Sunday to play New Zealand on February 26.

With the pressure off, Kirsten and Gibbs set about hitting the cover off the ball.

They cruised past 50 in the sixth over and went into the lunch break needing just 34 runs to win.

It took them just three more overs to do so.

Gibbs hit the winning runs from the last ball of the 12th over to inflict Bangladesh's fourth straight loss in the competition.

Kirsten moved to his half-century with two fours and a six off consecutive deliveries from the left-arm spin of Rafique, his 52 coming off 32 balls with nine boundaries and a six. Gibbs faced 40 balls, hitting eight fours and a six.

Their century partnership was their ninth in one-day internationals, moving them into third place above Australia's Mark Waugh and Adam Gilchrist in the all-time standings.

India's Sachin Tendulkar and Saurav Ganguly head the list with 17 hundred partnerships, with the West Indian pair of Gordon Greenidge and Desmond Haynes second on 15.

(Scoreboard on page 13)

# Rancour runs high

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mended confirmation of the services of eight judges but the government ignored the suggestions and appointed only two of them. The two took oath of office as permanent judge yesterday.

The six judges were appointed for two years at the fag end of the past Awami League rule.

Earlier, six other additional judges appointed by the Awami League government lost their jobs. The chief justice had recommended confirmation of services of three of them. Nine more additional judges appointed by the previous government are awaiting confirmation.

On the other hand, the government in July last appointed 11 new additional judges for two years amid protests by a section of the Supreme Court Bar Association.

Lawyers and judges have been accusing the government of grossly politicising the appointment and confirmation of judges for long.

The government did not confirm the dozen of judges just because the Awami League appointed them and at the same time, it was appointing judges who were well known as loyal to the ruling party, Supreme Court lawyers allege.

A High Court division bench last year recommended that the appointment of the judges be kept above political considerations. It also observed that the Supreme Court recommendations on appointment must be made effective and meaningful.

Lawyers and retired judges said they strongly believed political interference into the judges' appointments was contributing to the eroding public confidence in the judiciary.

"If the chief justice's recommendations for appointment of permanent judges is ignored, the judges waiting for confirmation are unlikely to perform their duties smoothly," said retired justice Golam Rabbani.

"The government is resorting to such actions in order to destroy the judiciary. It does not want separation of the judiciary," President of the Supreme Court Bar Association Ozaer Faruk, observed.

The Chief Justice heads the Supreme Court, the third organ of the state. So, ignoring his recommendations means ignoring the Supreme Court, he added.

"The government does not want any efficient judges at the Supreme Court. As part of a conspiracy, it is trying to place the party sycophants at the top tier of the judiciary," Faruk

alleged. "But we will how the whole thing stands in the end."

In May last year, similar crisis surfaced when the government declined confirmation of three judges. Senior lawyers of the bar association met the president, law minister and the chief justice who told them that the issue was up to the prime minister to settle. The prime minister however declined the appointments.

Law Minister Moudud Ahmed told BBC Friday that the government actions were in accordance with the constitution and laws of the land.

The constitution does not oblige the government to comply with the chief justice's recommendation. However, conventionally, the government followed the chief justice's suggestions.

Moudud's comments have enraged the judiciary. A former judge on condition of anonymity expressed his fears that the government might attempt to directly appoint a judge to the Appellate Division where the government so far has not interfered.

The former judge said no constitutional bar is there to hold the government from interfering in the Appellate Division.

"What prevents such practices is the good intention of the government. And Moudud's interview with BBC gives us the impression that the government has no good intention," he said.

"The constitution does not have everything written in it. It does not expect one to misuse power if he has the power. The constitution expects one to deliver the good for the country whether it is written or not," former justice Rabbani said.

The government cannot just appoint anyone just because the constitution provides it with the scope to do so, Rabbani observed. "Only the chief justice knows about the efficiency and performance of an additional judge. It is unfortunate when the chief justice's recommendation is ignored," he noted.

"The Supreme Court is the people's last resort to get justice. Yet, the government is doing dirty politics with it by appointing judges who are loyal to the ruling party," former law minister in the Awami League government Abdul Matin Khasru said yesterday.

# Collingwood stands

FROM PAGE 1

before trying to cut a ball from Waqar Younis and was caught by a diving wicketkeeper Rashid Latif.

Waqar's tactics were surprising. With his team in danger of failing to bowl their overs in time, he did not return to the bowling attack after taking two for 37 in a seven-over opening spell.

The Pakistan captain preferred to use Shoaib in the closing overs in tandem with spinners Saqlain Mushtaq and Shahid Afridi before Wasim came back at the end.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard of England innings in the World Cup Group A match against Pakistan at Newlands on Saturday:

ENGLAND		B	R	W
Trescothick c Latif b Wasim		1		
Knight c Razaq b Waqar		15		
Vaughan c Younis b Shoaib		52		
Hussain c Latif b Waqar		8		
Stewart b Afridi		30		
Collingwood not out		66		
Flintoff st Latif b Saqlain		26		
White c Younis b Afridi		15		
Giles c Afridi b Saqlain		17		
Caddick not out		3		

Extras: (lb-1, w-7, nb-5) 13  
Total: (For 8 wkts in 50 overs) 246

Fall of wickets: 1-7, 2-45, 3-59, 4-110, 5-118, 6-160, 7-194, 8-223

Bowler O M R W  
Wasim 10 1 37 1  
Shoaib 9 1 63 1  
Waqar 7 0 37 2  
Saqlain 10 0 44 2  
Afridi 8 0 36 2  
Razaq 6 0 28 0

Toss: England

PAKISTAN: Waqar Younis, Saeed Anwar, Younis Khan, Yousuf Youhana, Inzamamul Haq, Shahid Afridi, Abdul Razaq, Wasim Akram, Rashid Latif, Shoaib Akhtar, Saqlain Mushtaq.

Umpires: Rudi Koertzen (Rsa) and Brian Jerling (Rsa)

TV umpire: Steve Bucknor (Wls)

Match referee: Mike Procter (Rsa)

## Abbas

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tion about the gang members of Abbas and their links to other criminals.

"Abbas disclosed information about many of his dens and fire-arms. We raided these places, but the criminals have already gone into hiding after his arrest," Kohinour said.

Police raided a den behind the Ibrahimpur Bazar on Thursday and found a partly-burnt mask used by the criminals. However, no one was arrested.

"During interrogation, Abbas confessed that he has six such foreign masks which look real to hide identity," Kohinour said yesterday.

Abbas confessed that he was an "assistant" of notorious criminal Kala Jahangir. He is accused in 17 criminal cases, 13 of which are under trial and three under investigation.

One of the 23 most wanted criminals, Abbas was arrested along with a revolver with 23 rounds of bullets at a snack shop at Banani on February 14. Acting on his information, the DB recovered a double-barrel gun from Nartha in Gulshan on February 15.

## Rajshahi DC

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least nine reasons.

They alleged that in Joynagar union, supporters of AL-backed chairman candidate Abdul Majid were barred by BNP activists from casting vote in all polling centres except that at Kanpara school. Even Abdul Majid's wife was not allowed to vote.

Supporters of BNP-backed chairman candidate Abdul Karim Mollah forcibly drove out supporters of Majid from polling centres in presence of magistrates and law enforcers, they alleged. Even women voters were not spared, they alleged.

But the DC refused to talk to them when they wanted to apprise him of the violence by BNP activists just before the polls, they alleged.

They also alleged that the BNP activists stuffed false votes into ballot boxes in front of officials.

# Banned missiles

FROM PAGE 1

Minister Jose Maria Aznar, one of his strongest supporters on Iraq, at his Texas ranch to discuss the wording of the latest UN resolution.

British Prime Minister Tony Blair had a 30-minute private audience with Pope John Paul II, one of the staunchest opponents of military strikes on Baghdad, at the Vatican.

The head of the Roman Catholic Church urged Blair to make "every effort" to avoid going to war against Iraq as he came face-to-face with a leading protagonist of a military assault on Baghdad for the first time.

"The Holy Father hoped that, in finding a solution to the grave situation in Iraq, every effort be made to avoid new divisions in the world," the Vatican said.

Turkey was nearing an agreement with Washington for use of its strategic bases, ports and territory in an invasion.

Foreign Minister Yasar Yakis had said in Ankara that the two nations were "quite close" to a deal that would open his country to US troops and materiel, providing a vital northern flank for any invasion of neighbouring Iraq. "If there is a will, this could be finalised by working on Saturday and Sunday," he said.

Gulf newspapers yesterday accused Bush of being a "fanatical dictator" who wants to get hold of Iraqi oil reserves.

"To pretend that America's goal is not to invade Iraq and lay its hands

on its oil is a new trap designed to deceive a world public opinion that has understood the mentality of Bush, the Saudi newspaper Al-Riyadh said.

The Emirati daily Al-Bayan compared Bush to Saddam Hussein, saying the United States was run by a "fanatical and stubborn dictatorship which only sees things from its point of view".

Bush was more dangerous than Saddam, the paper said, "because he has the biggest nuclear arsenal in the world and is threatening international peace and stability."

Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak expressed fears that it was already too late to avoid a war in Iraq, as American and British troops in the region were already on a war footing.

In an interview in the German weekly Der Spiegel, to appear tomorrow, Mubarak said, "I cannot guarantee" that war can be avoided.

German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer called for non-military methods to be used to resolve the crisis over Iraq, stressing that such methods had not yet been adequately tried.

US intelligence information has entirely failed to help UN inspectors in their search for weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, diplomats said in Baghdad. "The Americans did not give anything," one diplomat told AFP.

# Nightclub fire

FROM PAGE 1

majority of these patients to survive," said surgeon William Cioffi of Providence Hospital, in Rhode Island.

"But these are serious injuries, especially the smoke inhalation." Cioffi said the victims in his care — some of whom suffered burns over half of their bodies — had a 50-60 per cent chance of survival, depending on their age.

Rhode Island Attorney General Patrick Lynch said band members were being questioned as accusations began to fly over responsibility for the blaze.

The band said they had permission to use the fireworks — an assertion disputed by the club owners through their attorneys.

"At no time did either owner have prior knowledge that pyrotechnics were going to be used by the band ... and no permission was ever given," the club's attorneys said in a statement.

The disaster came less than four days after 21 people were crushed to death in a stampede at a Chicago nightclub.

Brian Butler, a reporter for CNN affiliate WPRI, was inside the Rhode Island club filming a follow-up report on conditions at local dance clubs when the fire broke out.

"As soon as the pyrotechnics stopped, the flame had started on the egg-crate (foam) backing

behind the stage and it just went up the ceiling and people stood and watched it," said Butler.

"Some people were already trying to leave and others were just sitting there going 'Yeah that's great!' and I remember that statement because I was like, 'This is not great, this is time to leave.'" Butler said.

The lead singer of Great White, Jack Russell, said he had tried to put out the initial flames with bottles of mineral water he had on stage.

"I don't know what else I could have done ... there were no fire extinguishers," Russell said. The band's lead guitarist was among the missing.

Fire officials said the club did not appear to have had the certificate of competency or the permit needed to stage a firework display.

"It was an old building, not a high-ceilinged building, so I would say that to let off pyrotechnics inside you were asking for trouble, Carciari said.

"Somebody made a bad decision and we don't know whether they were permitted or not. It didn't need to happen. It shouldn't have happened," he said. "People were here to dance and enjoy themselves."

The worst nightclub fire in the United States was in 1942, when 492 people perished at a club in Boston.

## DHAKA TODAY

**Launching ceremony**  
Bengal Foundation will launch two CDs on Tagore and Mass song by Iqbal Ahmed. Venue: Bengal Shipalay, Dhanmondi. Time: 6.30pm.

**Publication ceremony**  
Bangladesh Writers Club organises the publication ceremony of a book titled "Biran Khamar" by Bashira Islam. Venue: National Press Club. Time: 5.00pm.

**Award giving ceremony**  
An award giving ceremony, organised by Natyadhara, will be held. It will be followed by a cultural function. Venue: Mohila Samity, Baily Road. Time: 6.00pm.

**Recitation**  
Uttarpush, a magazine on poetry, organises a session of recitation and discussion. Venue: Bishwa Sahitya Kendra, Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue. Time: 4.00pm.

**BP discussion**  
Bangabandhu Parishad (BP) organises a discussion on the occasion of Amar Ekushey. Venue: National Press Club. Time: 4.00pm.

**ESB discussion**  
Evergreen Society, Bangladesh (ESB), organises a session of recitation, discussion and cultural function on the occasion of International Mother Language Day. Venue: TSC auditorium of Dhaka University. Time: 2.30pm.

**Convention**  
The second National NGO Convention, organised by National NGO Coordination Committee, will be held. Venue: Indoor

Stadium, Mirpur-10. Time: 10.00am.

**Seminar**  
Department of World Religions, University of Dhaka, organises a seminar on the Academic Study of Religion. Venue: Seminar room of the department. Time: 12.00 noon.

**FICCI Meeting**  
Regular monthly meeting of Foreign Investors' Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) will be held. Venue: Sheraton Hotel. Time: 12.30pm.

**Anti-war rally**  
Anti-War Movement will hold an anti-war rally against the possible US attack on Iraq. It will be followed by a procession. Venue: Aparajeo Bangla, University of Dhaka. Time: 11.00am.

**Meeting**  
A meeting of the executive committee of Uttarbanga Janakalyan Samity will be held. Venue: 54, Dilkusha. Time: 4.30pm.

**Blood grouping**  
Rotary Club Stamford College organises a blood grouping programme on the occasion of Amar Ekushey. Venue: College campus, Dhanmondi. Time: 10.30am.

## DHAKA TOMORROW

**Film show**  
Arkka Film Zeal, a film club of the students of Peoples University, Bangladesh, will screen two Russian films titled "Ballad of a soldier" and "Cranes are Flying" to collect funds for the treatment of Shafina Mehrin Lira, a kidney patient now under treatment in Madras, India. Venue: Russian Cultural Centre, Dhanmondi. Time: 4.00pm.