

Education quality

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"We need to have a consensus first whether we want to have a corruption- and violence-free campus for a modern and scientific education system," Bhuiyan said.

CPD Executive Director Dr. Debapriya Bhattacharya, who coordinated the dialogue, called upon the civil society to work as a pressure group to bargain with the government on different education issues.

"Education sector could get rid of the vicious circle of politics if the civil society remained vigilant against it," he observed.

Supporting the demand for higher salary for teachers, he said, "Without giving due recognition and social security to teachers, we can't expect better education. Trained teachers are the driving force of human resource."

Dr. Kaniz Siddique of North South University, Dhaka, mentioned that there was a World Bank-aided programme under secondary education reforms to harmonise teachers' salaries in the public and private schools.

Mozzlem Hossain said the standard of education is being affected as students passed the primary level with 'only 17 competencies out of a total of 50'. This also creates problem in secondary and higher education, he added.

Secondary education lacks proper academic supervision, he said. "The existing monitoring is administrative rather than academic."

He pointed out that the country does not have a 'fully-fledged education policy' even 32 years after independence.

Prof. Khandaker Khalilur Rahman said to draw highly talented persons into teaching profession, teachers should be given higher salaries and other benefits. "We got a total of eight education policies, but none of those were properly implemented."

Prof. Mohammad Masum of economics department at the Jahangirnagar University presented a progress report on the CPD task force on education sector. Although there has been a remarkable achievement in enrolment for primary education, the

standard remained very poor, he noted.

He mentioned that only one per cent students were able to 'achieve the 50 competencies' in five years of primary education. There is session jam even at primary educational institutions and five-year courses take more than six years to complete, he said.

Prof. Masum criticised the government's 'cash for education programme' for primary level, involving Tk 623 crore in five years. This would not bring a positive impact on education as students of secondary level are usually lured by labour market.

There are 6.3 million child labourers in the country. "So the government should think about 'cash for education programme' for secondary level students," he observed.

Advocate Firoz Ahmed said there should be a unified curriculum for both public and private universities for at least five years.

Some speakers proposed a teacher exchange programme between reputed schools and the others not so.

The other speakers included Shahidul Islam of the Teachers-Employees United Council, Sheikh Didarul Alam, Dr. Gazi Mizanur Rahman, Dr. MMA Hasem, Jannatul Ferdous Rehka, Kazi Wahiduzzaman, Ahad Ali, Dr. GC Ghosh, Dr. Shibendra Shekhar Shikder and Rizia Parveen.

Empower women

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Zakia Akhter, the uncton was addressed, among others, by Associate Professor of North South University Dr. Kaniz Siddiqui, Professor of Women Studies at Dhaka University Sania Nishat Amin, chairperson of Women Chamber of Business and Industries Selina Ahmed, Advocate Taslima Khatoun Chanda, local Ward Commissioner Ruma Khatoun, former ward commissioner Rosy Rahman and Field Officer of Rupantar Rizia Parveen.

The speakers said violence-free fair polls must be ensured for women voters and womens' demands should be incorporated in the election manifestoes of political parties.

"Those who do not show respect to women should not be given nomination," they demanded.

They said women should be involved in all political decision-making and treated at a par with their male counterparts in law courts.

They demanded trial of rape cases in camera and equal rights of women to public and private jobs.

Morshed

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countries would kindle a ray of hope to the countries of South Asia," he observed.

The foreign minister hoped that both India and Pakistan would be able to resolve their problems through discussion and would remain engaged in negotiations till the problems are solved.

Khan said resolution of the Indo-Pakistan conflict would remove the obstacles that frequently impeded the holding of SAARC summit and create an environment of economic cooperation among the member states.

In reply to a question about the possible visit of US Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage to South Asia, Khan said as far as he knows, the US minister would be travelling to India and Pakistan.

On the necessity of a new world order after the US-led war on Iraq, Khan said, "it's too early to comment."

Pakistan opens door

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there could be a meaningful engagement at the highest level," spokesman Navtej Sarna said. Government sources here said the reply "could neither be seen as a rejection or an acceptance" of Jamali's invitation.

Meanwhile, a dozen Pakistani parliamentarians will travel to India next week for unofficial meetings with their counterparts to discuss peace and democracy, peace activists said yesterday.

"The objective of the politicians' visit to India is to promote people-to-people contact in an unofficial setting," Hamid Khan, coordinator of the Pakistan-India People's Forum for Peace and Democracy, told AFP.

The forum, established in 1994 to work for peace between hostile neighbours, has arranged the week-long visit from May 8, Khan said.

The forum is a non-government, non-profit voluntary association with representatives from both South Asian countries.

The Pakistani delegation will be headed by ruling party senator and former law minister Khalid Ranjha.

"The purpose of our visit is certainly peace," Ranjha told AFP.

"It is in the interests of both India and Pakistan that they spend less on defence and more on poverty reduction and population control," he said.

The MPs' visit comes amid dramatic peace overtures between the nuclear rivals, who have been locked in a dangerous stand-off for 17 months.

a million troops by both sides to their common border, where they teetered on the brink of war until last October.

"Both the countries will benefit from peace," Ranjha said.

Another report adds: a key anti-India Islamic guerilla organisation yesterday welcomed peace gestures by India but warned peace would remain elusive unless the dispute over Kashmir was resolved.

"We can see a ray of hope," Syed Salahuddin, supreme commander of Kashmir's dominant Hizbul Mujahedin group said in response to India's restoration Friday of diplomatic and air links with its nuclear rival Pakistan, 17 months after they were cut. But he warned: "Peace will remain a distant dream if it is not resolved for good in accordance with the aspirations of the Kashmiris."

"The Kashmir issue can destroy peace not only in South Asia, but global peace faces a potential threat from it as well," the Pakistan-based guerilla leaders said. "It's only the unresolved Kashmir issue that has kept the two neighbours on the warpath ever since their (1947) freedom."

Salahuddin said the only way India could contribute to peace was by resolving the Kashmir dispute "in consultation with Islamabad and the Kashmiri leadership."

"Otherwise, a little flare could turn out to be the basis of a nuclear holocaust in the region," he warned. "We hope that Indian leaders will not avoid the bitter realities and read the writing on the wall."

Police murder Microbus owner Shimul held in Khulna

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Police yesterday arrested Faizul Huq Shimul, 40, owner of the microbus used by PBCP activists to kill two policemen and loot their arms at Fakhirhat bazar on the night of April 27.

Khulna thana police raided Darogapara area in the morning and nabbed Shimul. He was taken on a three-day remand.

Police also picked up a leader of JCD Fakhirhat upazila unit for questioning in connection with police murder case.

Listed criminal

Amjad held

in Khulna

BSS, Khulna

Police arrested listed criminal S M Amjad Hossain alias 'Kala' Amjad, 30, son of Deen Mohammad from Anjuman Road under Daulatpur police station in the city yesterday.

Sources said police conducted a raid and nabbed the criminal at about 3pm. A leader of Purbo Banglar Communist Party (PBCP), Amjad was wanted in nine cases including a murder.

Abducted journalist yet to be traced

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Sitakunda Press Club president and correspondent of Bengali daily the Itfaq could not be traced even 72 hours after his abduction on Wednesday evening.

Atahar Siddiq Chowdhury (Khosru) was reportedly kidnapped while he was going to a relative's house at Maderbari from the city's Dewanhat area at around 10pm.

Khosru's family members and local journalists blamed criminals led by Sitakunda upazila BNP general secretary Nurul Islam for the abduction.

Journalists of Sitakunda in memorandum to the deputy inspector general (DIG) and superintendent of police (SP) of the district yesterday alleged that Nurul Islam masterminded the abduction. They demanded immediate rescue of Nurul and arrest and punishment of the persons involved in the kidnap.

Bush vows

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helping terrorists or pursuing weapons of mass destruction. Bush said the United States would not stand idly by in the face of serious danger from the spread of nuclear, biological and chemical arms.

"Our government has taken unprecedented measures to defend our homeland, and more importantly, we will continue to hunt the enemy down before he can strike," Bush said.

The President also paid tribute to allies who offered military help in the war on Iraq, singling out Australia, whose prime minister, John Howard, is a guest at Bush's 1,600-acre (547 hectare) ranch near Crawford this weekend.

The two leaders flew together from California, where Bush declared an end to major combat operations in Iraq from the deck of a homebound US aircraft carrier, to central Texas aboard Air Force One on Friday evening.

Howard is the last of a trio of stalwart war supporters to win coveted invitations to "Prairie Chapel Ranch" for a social evening, a tour, talks and a Saturday news conference. Prime Ministers Tony Blair of Britain and Jose Maria Aznar of Spain already have visited.

Brace computer tech

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rather business-centric than it should be people-centric," he added.

Raihan termed the vision of the ICT policy 'highly ambitious' as it wanted to establish a knowledge-based society by 2006.

Putting the policy vision in question, he asked: "How would they be able to establish such a society by 2006 when the literacy rate took 32 years down the road of independence to hit 50 per cent?"

He said the ICT sector was not given due attention in the ICT policy as well as in the government's Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper.

Abu Syeed Khan, a taskforce member, said Bangladesh's teledensity in terms of fixed line stood at 0.6 per cent, a long way off many South Asian countries.

He, however, said four mobile phone operators in the private sector took the number of their subscribers to over 10 lakh.

Focusing on interconnection, he said, "It is still a big hurdle to mobile communication."

Khan said 90 per cent of mobile phone users had no access to mainstream fixed line Bangladesh Telegraph and Telephone Board (BTB) connectivity because of the absence of interconnection.

"Bangladeshi mobile phone operators have formed a mobile-to-mobile intercom rather than cellular phone networks due to absence of interconnection," he said.

Khan said the problem would be

Sutrapur double murder case Defence lawyers begin arguments

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The defence lawyers yesterday started arguments in the sensational Sutrapur double murder case.

After hearing argument on behalf of Sajit Hasan Sujan, brother of the prime accused Rahid Hasan Suman, for about two and a half-hours, Judge Shaheed Noor Uddin of the speedy Trial Tribunal-1, Dhaka, adjourned the hearing till 10:30 am today.

The lawyers made submissions on important statements of seven prosecution witnesses in support of acquittal of charges of the accused.

Earlier, the prosecution lawyers completed their arguments on behalf of the state and sought punishment to the accused.

In the case filed with Sutrapur police station, it has been alleged

Another defeat

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The visitors won the first Test last week in Chittagong by an innings and 60 runs.

Resuming on 4-0 the home team narrowly avoided its lowest score before crashing to 102 all out in 35.5 overs.

Replying to South Africa's 330, Mahmud's men left everybody guessing what would happen like predicting the day's weather.

The rain never fell as promised, but Bangladesh maintained their amazing inconsistency with the bat. There was steady procession of wickets once the resistance of the overnight pair of Mehrab Hossain and Javed Omar was broken in the ninth over.

Skipper Khaled Mahmud was the top scorer with an unbeaten 20 in an innings marked by a school-boy display of batting coupled with some questionable umpiring.

Habibul Bashar, fresh after his back-to-back half centuries at Chittagong, fell victim to the 'crooked' finger of New Zealand umpire Billy Bowden. Bashar was adjudged leg before to Shaun Pollock after scoring a characteristically fluent 14 though TV replays showed the ball had struck the batsman outside the line.

Then West Indian Steve Bucknor adjudged Akram Khan caught behind off a rising Makhaya Ntini delivery. But again a reply showed there no contact between bat and ball.

In the second innings Javed Omar became yet another victim of poor judgement when Bucknor directed him to the dressing room after Pollock pulled off a controversial catch in the slips.

that Mohsin and Saem of Sharat Kumar Das Lane under Sutrapur police station were picked up from their houses by a gang allegedly led by Rahid Hasan Suman on September 15, 2000.

The gang took the two to Gandaria Rifle Club and tortured them for Tk 50,000 ransom.

Later, the gang killed the youths, slashed their bodies into 12 pieces and dumped those into a manhole.

Police recovered the pieces from the manhole the following day.

Mohammad Amin Miah, father of Mohsin, one of the two victims, filed a murder case accusing 14 people including Rahid Hasan Suman.

The Detective Branch (DB) of police submitted a chargesheet against Suman and 33 others on May 19, last year.

Javed stood his ground anticipating Bucknor might refer it to the third umpire to confirm whether the ball had been taken cleanly, but the veteran West Indian used his years of experience to end the plucky resistance of the right-hander.

But apart from those three incidents, Bangladesh had themselves to be blamed for their downfall.

Bashar scored highest 33 in the second innings before he was out slashing at a delivery from left-arm spinner Robin Peterson.

The debutant tweaker followed up his first innings 2-22 with 3-46 in the second innings. He also scored a vital 61 on the second day.

Akram Khan once again lost his battle against South Africa pacesman Ntini, but before striking three consecutive fours including two well-executed pulls.

Mohammad Rafique, who claimed career-best 6-77, hit the only six of the match. The south-paw wacked 'chinaman' Paul Adams over long-on, but perished in the same over mistiming another attempted pull.

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College girl

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men abducted the girl when she was on her going to college on April 22 morning and confined her in Khulna city and Chitalmari.

The criminals raped her several times, burnt her body with burning cigarettes and thrashed her against wall. Police took into custody two persons on suspicion.

Iraq stabilisation force

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London with Hoon and Prime Minister Tony Blair about the UN role in Iraq.

The official said there was a consensus in Washington that the UN role should be restricted to "what it does best" -- humanitarian affairs, dealing with refugees and internally displaced people, and reconstruction.

A draft UN resolution has been devised to frame the UN role in Iraq, he said.

"There is complete agreement in the government on how to proceed," he said.

At a press conference before leaving London, Rumsfeld said it was not yet known how many troops will be required in Iraq and for how long.

But he said other planning

meetings will be held. Britain will hold a follow up meeting to generate forces from other countries for its division May 7. Poland will hold another meeting May 22.

"And of course the larger number of countries that participate, the fewer number of forces from the United States will be necessary," Rumsfeld said.

The senior official said the stabilisation force would supplement the US and British ground forces now in Iraq, which would be maintained at current levels as long as necessary.

About 132,000 US and 23,000 British troops are in Iraq.

All coalition forces in Iraq, including the stabilisation force, would fall under the command of US General Tommy Franks, the official said.

HC partially stays execution of govt circular on KCC female commissioners

UNB, Dhaka

The High Court yesterday partially stayed operation of a government circular regarding responsibilities of female women ward commissioners of Khulna City Corporation (KCC).

The Court also issued rule upon the government to show cause why some points of the circular issued on September 23 last year by the joint secretary (Dev) of LGRD should not be declared to have been made without lawful authority.

The order came upon a writ petition filed by 10 women commissioners elected from the reserved seats challenging the circular as discriminatory.

The petitioners pointed specially to guidelines number 5 and 6 under the circular that denied female ward commissioners the authority to issue nationality, character, birth and succession certificates and also to help in population census.

The petitioners are Shamima Sultana, Memory Sofia Rahman, Kanika Shaaha, Seheli Sayed, Hasina Akram, Nahid Sultana, Ruma Khatun, Ameena Halim, Khuku Moni and Delwara Khandokar.

Abdul Matin Kharsu appeared for the petitioners.

JRC meet

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riverbank from erosion during the dry season.

A team of Indian officials headed by the Additional Chief Engineer, Flood Control & Irrigation, Silchar-Assam region will hold talks with the Bangladesh side at the WDB Rest House at Zakiganj. Hassan Zobayer, Chief Engineer of the Water Development Board (WDB), Northeastern Region (Comilla-Sylhet zone), will lead the Bangladesh side.

The meeting will review progress of the joint survey done in the Indian river Borak and the Surma and Kushiayara rivers in Bangladesh over the last three years.

After the survey began, the JRC held a meeting in Dhaka in August of 2000, followed by a field trip by its standing committee to the Sylhet-Assam border areas. Based on some earlier work and reports, the meeting agreed to dredge the Surma to increase its navigability and take immediate flood protection measures in the Borak valley to check the severe erosion of the Kushiayara riverbanks during the dry season. Accordingly, hydrographic and topographic surveys of the Indian and Bangladesh rivers were completed.

Raise voice

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In his paper titled "Threat and Intimidation on Independent Press in Bangladesh", Saleem highlighted a grim picture of press freedom and torture on the journalists.

He said newspapers, journalists and columnists ascertained that traditional secularism has been the target since the coalition government came to power. "The worst experiences were for those newspapers that exposed the identity of the war criminals and covered the civil society's demand for their trial."

Saleem said the government's acute paranoia contributed to the intensity of violence against journalists. "Political partisans and gangs having links with the ruling BNP were responsible for most of the attacks on journalists during 2002 and early part of this year," he added.

At the end of 2002, Saleem said, a number of journalists, two of them foreign, were arrested linking them to 'international conspiracy'. "The government exploited patriotic sentiment of the people to convince them that the foreign journalists were trying to destabilise the state by exposing the rise of the Islamic fanaticism."

He also referred to the arrest of and harassment on columnist Shahriar Kabir, Prof. Muntasir Mamun and reporter of Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha Enamul Haque Chowdhury who were charged with sedition.

Saleem said the pro-secular and independent press is facing the wrath of the pro-right and pro-Islamist coalition government led by the BNP. "The repressive measures were spontaneous when the journalists exposed the bad governance."

Afsan Chowdhury's paper on "Press Freedom in a Post-broadcasting World" was mainly based on Iraq war, its national and global coverage, the credibility of the coverage and its impact on global media and politics.

He criticised both the national and international media for insistently becoming partisan over the coverage of the Iraq war. "This may make us feel emotionally better due to the involved role of media but at the end, I feel that media will be the worse casualty."

"If CNN angers us and BBC disappoints and enrages, we must also accept that our own media became a party to a particular

position," Afsan said. He added that the international media was as much partisan as any nationalist media -- the language, positioning, story-making all pointed to taking one side.

He said the media in Bangladesh was not fair and not into neutral reporting. Both print and electronic media highlighted the public position rather than factual and neutral reporting since Bangladeshi people was pro-Iraqi.

"This position did keep the media popular and well selling, but the treatment, language and commentaries, not to speak of providing space to the US-UK alliance, wasn't there," he commented.

Most of the discussants criticised the two mainstream political parties for their role over press. They sing one song in two ways. The party in opposition suggests journalists to write boldly and truthfully. The same party however changes voice and asks for restriction in writing when in power.

Justice Rabbani said freedom of press is needed only for the sake of honest reporting.

All the speakers criticised the BBC and CNN, the two largest international electronic TV channels, for partial and misleading reporting on the war on Iraq, and thus losing credibility.

Prof. Moniruzzaman Mia, journalist Ataus Samad, Harun Habib, Abdul Quyyum, Shawkat Mahmud, Amir Khoshru, Forest and Environment Minister Shahjahan Siraj, Shipping Minister Akbar Hossain, politicians ASM Abdur Rab, Anwar Hossain Monju, MP, Suranjit Sen Gupta, MP, Abdul Kader Siddiqui, MP, Sardar Amjad Hossain, Hasanul Haq Inu, Mahmudur Rahman Manna, Haider Akbar Khan Rano, Fazlur Rahman, Editor of Bangladesh Observer Iqbal Sobhan Chowdhury, Editor of Holiday Enayetullah Khan and Prof. Shawkat Ara Hossain addressed the seminar.

Child visitors

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goes to the staff.

Nazia Islam Tinni went missing from the DMCH on April 20 as she accompanied her parents who went there to see a relative.

Meanwhile, fear of baby lifting is haunting the crowded maternity section of the hospital for long. An organised gang allegedly operates there and lifts newborns whenever possible. The maternity section has patients four times its capacity.

Cabinet decisions

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and divisions to get back to it with explanation if implementation of any decision slows down.

The April cabinet report meanwhile reveals its various committees rarely meet and invariably drag heels on implementing decisions.

The cabinet has so far formed 30 sub-committees, of which 10 permanent, to expedite implementation of various important decisions, resolve issues and identify areas for development, but performance of most of the committees are far from expectation.

The cabinet formed five committees in the first three months of this year, but none of the bodies could hold a single meeting to date. Most of the committees do not meet regularly and some have held only one or two meetings since formation.

A vital cabinet committee on law and order so far held 28 meetings, but since September 22, 2002 it had been staying away from meeting. The cabinet committee on fixation of pay scale so far held

only one meeting since its formation on October 17, 2001. Another committee formed to encourage export and enhance trade both in domestic and international market held only two meetings in the last 16 months.

The cabinet committee to review the existing policies on leasing out of water bodies held only three meetings since its formation over 15 months back. The committee on poverty alleviation, employment and coordination of micro-credit between public and private sectors held only one meeting in 13 months.

In contrast, a cabinet committee to examine four laws including the Bank Company Law finished its task in only three weeks. Similarly, the taskforce formed to save Buriganga river particularly from encroachment has already completed its primary task and placed its report.

The Cabinet Division has been asked to place report on overall performance of the cabinet committees and progress of cabinet decisions in every six months.

Last in my life

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Pakistan counterpart.

India's peace initiative towards Pakistan was acclaimed worldwide, with US, Britain, Russia and France leading the comity of nations in terming the move as "positive" and "prom