

Hawa Bhaban

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Terrorism, Communalism, Criminalisation, and Corruption' organised by the 11-party yesterday afternoon.

Supplying motorbikes to election workers, setting up clubs and such bodies, and exhibition of wealth have already begun, Dilip said. "The practice of trading nomination has also become a tradition. The aspirant election candidates have already started campaign rehearsals, which has already polluted the electoral environment," he added.

According to the 11-party paper, "Alongside the game of money, criminals are also vying for candidatures.... Many of them have been sentenced to five to 10 years' imprisonment. They are becoming qualified for election candidatures by filing appeals with the Supreme Court."

Malnutrition

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2004, prevalence of underweight children in Bangladesh declined from 66 per cent to 48 per cent, the report said this achievement is a progress towards materialising the Millennium Development Goal (MDG).

"If the progress persists the rate of undernourished children would be 33 per cent in 2015. But to speed up the programme, Bangladesh has to initiate up-to-date strategies," the Unicef programme chief observed.

The report says that about 36 per cent Bangladeshi children are born underweight, which is almost highest in the world. Undernourished and vulnerable pregnant women give birth to low-birth-weight children.

Over a half of the children under five and over one third of women are anaemic, the report said, adding that night blindness is another problem for Bangladeshi children. If the rate, which is at present 7 per cent, decreases to only one per cent, it might be categorised as general illness.

The report, however, appreciated Bangladesh's performance in eradicating the diseases emerged from lack of iodised foods in the diet.

The rate of iodine deficiency disorder among the children in Bangladesh has dropped off to 34 per cent, which was 71 per cent in the last decade. The success has come due to the fact that 70 per cent of all edible salt in the country is now iodised, which has helped to reduce the toll of iodine deficiency disorders.

The rate of breast-feeding in the country has improved, which at present stands at 42 per cent though more efforts have to be taken to accelerate the rate, the report said.

Addressing the occasion Louis-Georges Arsenault, the resident representative of Unicef in Bangladesh, said South Asia and Africa are malnutrition prone regions, as the countries within these territories cannot avail themselves of quality food, proper care, sanitation and pure drinking water.

In Bangladesh, children of slum areas mostly suffer from these diseases caused by malnutrition, he said.

Improving nutrition not only helps children to grow, but it has a great impact on their survival, achievement at school, reducing maternal mortality and combating major diseases, Louis said, adding that improved nutritional status can have far-reaching implications on human development, economic growth and poverty reduction.

27 murdered

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people, 21 died in 'crossfire'.

Based on reports published in 12 leading national dailies of the country, the Odhikar report said 33 people were killed, 2139 injured, 205 arrested and 16 abducted in political confrontation across the country in April.

Besides, police arrested some 1400 people, mostly the supporters of 14-party and general people, to foil the opposition's sit-in programme in front of the Prime Minister's Office on April 19.

Three people were killed, 75 injured and four abducted in Chittagong Hill Tracts area.

Forty-three women including eight children were raped in April across the country, the report said, adding that one of them was raped by the law enforcers.

Eleven women were killed after rape and one committed suicide after being violated.

During the same time, nine people including five women fell victims to acid violence while 21 people were killed and four others tortured due to dowry related violence.

The report said 50 children faced violence across the country in last month.

Among them, 19 were killed, eight received injuries, eight were raped, four were abducted, one was arrested and 10 went missing.

Twenty-eight journalists were injured while performing their professional duties in last month. Among them, 20 were injured in police atrocities at Chittagong stadium while covering the Bangladesh-Australia second

The latest example of such candidature is that of Nurul Islam Sarker, sentenced to death for killing AL lawmaker Ahsanullah Master, in Tongi Municipal Election and securing second highest number of votes, it pointed out.

The culprits who introduced the use of money power, communalism and corruption in politics should be identified and boycotted by the polity and the society, remarked 14-party coordinator and AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil at the roundtable.

He said, "Parliament has now turned into an investment centre for businessmen. They invest money to come to power, and once in power start recovering that money with profit."

AL Presidium member Tofail Ahmed said the masses are going through insecurity and misery due to the price spiral of essentials, while the ruling party men are busy pocketing black money.

He accused the ruling BNP of turning the Election Commission (EC) into its accomplice, adding the BNP in collusion of its communal allies is also linked with the killings of judges and journalists.

Gono Forum Presidium Member Pankaj Bhattacharya demanded asset declaration by all political leaders, and said the 14-party leaders should unilaterally declare their assets before the election.

Gono Azadi League President Abdus Samad observed said money power has driven away the honest and patriots from politics, and black-money owners have taken over cashing in on poverty and illiteracy of the people.

Badrul Alam Majumder, country director of the Hunger Project, said reforms in the EC and the caretaker government system would not be effective unless reforms are made within the political parties on a priority basis. The parties should never consider money power in nominating election candidates and must exercise democratic norms within themselves, he noted.

Workers Party President Rashed Khan Menon and central leader Bimal Biswas, National Awami Party Joint General Secretary Shaifur Rahman former general secretary Mujibul Haque, and eminent journalist Ataus Samad also spoke at the discussion moderated by Gonoontroi Party President Nurul Islam.

36 citizens

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leaders of militant outfits and take actions against their patrons, inside and outside the government. Otherwise, law and order might deteriorate with the next elections nearing, they feared.

The citizens who signed the letter are Prof Jamal Nazrul Islam, Prof Salahuddin Ahmed, Prof Zillur Rahman Siddiqui, Prof Mozaffer Ahmad, Prof Khan Sarwar Murshid, Justice Kazi Ebadul Haque, M Hafiz Uddin Khan, ASM Shahjahan, Prof Hasan Azizul Haque, Ataus Samad, Dr Quazi Kholiquzzaman Ahmad, Hamida Hossain, Prof Ajoy Roy, Kofil Uddin Mahmud, M Mujibul Huq, Moslehuddin Ahmed, MA Bari, Principal Mahfuza Khanam, Mushtari Shafi, Abul Mansur, Syed Abul Maksud, Prof Shawkat Ara Hossain, Sharmin Murshid, Prof Badrul Alam Majumdar, Prof MUSHARRAF Hossain, Lutfar Rahman Sarker, Nurul Haque, Prof Syed Anwar Hossain, Selina Hossain, Prof Moinul Islam, Sultana Kamal, Prof Jaheda Ahmed, Dr Shaheed Malik, Prof Shahidul Islam, Abul Momen and Mizanur Rahman.

Test match. Even veteran photojournalist Zahurul Huq, 65, could not escape police torture.

Last month one journalist was arrested, seven were harassed, five received death threat while cases were lodged against 30 journalists, and a newspaper office and a seminar were attacked.

Odhikar prepared the report with the assistance of Academy for Educational Development.

2 foreigners

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Sub Inspector (SI) Gias Uddin, investigation officer (IO) of the case, produced the arrestees before the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court, Dhaka, seeking a seven-day remand for interrogation. The court however granted a five-day remand.

According to the prosecution, Tanvir had developed intimacy with the two foreigners through e-mail and they offered him a highly 'profitable business' with them. He then requested them to come to Bangladesh.

They came to Bangladesh recently and met Tanvir in Chittagong for discussion about their business. He became suspicious of their motive and asked them to go to Dhaka. They did so and were residing at the hotel. Tanvir later came to Dhaka and the two showed him how to make fake dollars.

World Press Freedom Day today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

With the slogan 'We will know, we will live,' for this year, the country will observe the 'World Press Freedom Day' as elsewhere in the world today.

To mark the day, a two-day seminar starting from today will be held at the LGED auditorium in the capital as well as in 21 districts in other five divisions of the country.

Mass-line Media Centre (MMC), Media Watch, Voice, Bangladesh NGOs Network for Radio and Communication (BNNRC), South Asian Free Media Association (SAFMA) and Young Power in Social Action (YPSA) have organised the programmes including the seminar supported by Unesco and Manusher Jonno.

Communications Minister Nazmul Huda, Deputy Minister for Information Ministry Abdus Salam Pintu and Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Moudud Ahmed will address the seminar as chief guests.

The theme of this year "Poverty Alleviation is possible by ensuring security of the freedom of expression, freedom of newspapers and other rights" seeks to incorporate the mass media in the fields of development and poverty alleviation, said the organisers at a press briefing at the Jatiya Press Club yesterday.

Presenting a written statement, MMC Executive Director Kamrul Hasan Monju said, "Freedom of democracy and expression holds the central position in ensuring democracy, people's participation and rule of law."

He also referred to the Unesco Director General Cochiri Matsura's view towards the Press Freedom Day and said the theme of this year is very significant in the present context of the country.

The speakers also expressed concern over the obstacles the media activists have to face to perform their jobs.

They also urged the government to finalise the draft 'Right to Information Act' and pass it immediately as well as initiate a social movement to make people aware of the right to know.

Monjurul Ahsan Bulbul of Media Watch, Ahmed Swapan Mahmud of Voice and AHM Bazlur Rahman spoke at the briefing among others.

Cops seize

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ers of hoarding fuel with a motive to smuggle the fuel out of the country.

Manoj Kumar, manager of the oil depot, denied the allegations of smuggling. But he admitted that owner had no valid licence to run the depot.

Employers' body

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effective and (becomes) unable to compete in the market," Elahi observed.

He noted that their representatives in the wages and productivity commission 2005 had submitted notes of dissent saying that wage increase ignoring the capacity of the state-owned enterprises to pay and also the productivity of the labour force in SOEs would aggravate the financial plight of the enterprises and their higher cost would force most of them to borrow more heavily from the banking sector.

He pointed out that accumulated losses of SOEs have become an issue of national concern as it amounts to imposing higher indirect taxation on the poor people of the country. Inefficient operation of SOEs has led to a massive wastage of public resources, conservatively estimated at 4.9 per cent of GDP annually since 1991.

B Chy's house

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It will submit its reports by May 7.

Police have yet to arrest anyone in connection with Sunday's fire that gutted furniture, cash, clothes, books and other documents on the ground and first floor of the house.

Mahi B Chowdhury, son of the former president and a lawmaker from Munshiganj-2 constituency, filed a case with Gulshan Police Station Sunday night.

"He accused unknown people of deliberately setting fire to their house with chemical substances to kill the family members," the duty officer of Gulshan Police Station told The Daily Star last night.

Meantime, the three-member probe team of the fire brigade headed by Deputy Director (Operations) Selim Newaz Bhuiyan will submit its report tomorrow to their director general.

According to sources at the department, firefighters are convinced that the fire did not originate from short-circuit, gas or mosquito coil.

"On examining evidence collected from the house, talking with the police guards and other people, and checking electricity and gas lines, they are sure the fire did not begin from any of those three common sources," said a source in the fire brigade.

Govt killing time

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in the coming election judiciously.

If voted to power, her party would control prices of essentials, create jobs, ensure minimum wages of workers, arrange housing for garment workers and put an end to 'looting' in industries, she assured people.

Farmers and workers across the country are now in miseries. More than 5,000 mills and factories have been closed and over five lakh workers retrenched during the tenure of the coalition, Hasina said.

"Whenever BNP goes to power, people face distress and disaster due to deterioration in law and order, and crises of electricity, water and other things," she said. "No electricity, no food, no peace and no security... These are the results of alliance government's misrule."

Referring to the prime minister's claim of improvement in law and order, the opposition leader said the killing of a labour leader during his prayers in broad daylight proved the claim was baseless.

RMG sector fears

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me about Tk 4 crore in just a month," Munshi revealed.

Abdus Salam Murshedy, second vice-president of BGMEA, corroborating Munshi's statement said in his case the amount spent in airfreight was double his president's.

Since many garment factory owners are being forced to ship their product by air there are long queues in the airport too and airfreight charges have also gone up two times even three time the normal rate in some cases, said Shahidul Haq Sikder, vice-president of BGMEA.

Annisul Haq, former president of BGMEA, said most of the garment factories are in Dhaka and Chittagong. "I don't think it is possible to smuggle diesel in containers out of the country from Dhaka and Chittagong. Why is then this bar on carrying diesel in containers?" Haq asked.

Haq gave examples of load shedding in some garment factories in Rupganj and Joydevpur from April 24 to April 30. This week saw power outage about seven times a day and electricity remained unavailable for about three to eight hours a day. So, while a garment factory in Rupganj would have run for 60 to 72 hours normally in six days, it missed a stag-

Hasina alleged that the coalition rulers are looting people's wealth, hiked prices of essentials through syndicates backed by them and siphoning off crores of taka abroad. A top leader's family members have now become the richest persons in the country through looting.

"We will make them furnish accounts of the money they looted from the people and make that public, if we are voted to power."

The AL chief also asked her party men to prepare lists of people involved in corruption, terrorism and repression so that they cannot change their colours with the change of government.

Chaired by Sramik League President Abdul Matin Master, the rally was addressed by, among others, AL Leaders Abdur Razzak, Suranjit Sengupta, Motia Chowdhury, Sheikh Fazlur Karim Selim, Obaidul Quader, Abidur Rahman and Mofazzal Hossain Chowdhury Maya.

gering 34 hours in the same period, Haq said. The situation is similar in Joydevpur.

Tipu Munshi said he received news that Swan Sweater factory at Konabari was shut down due to power and diesel crises.

The BGMEA leaders have already met state minister for power and also sought appointment with the energy adviser, but have yet to get a date, Munshi said.

The country's RMG industry has been struggling hard to keep afloat in a quota free world and more or less has managed to maintain its position. But the ongoing power and diesel crises have spanned great uncertainty over the fate of the industry and if the situation goes on like this Bangladesh might very well lose its business to India and China -- Bangladesh's competitors, Tipu Munshi observed.

When asked if export earning in RMG sector would drop this year and how much they are fearing to lose due to the power and diesel situation, the BGMEA leaders said it is not possible to say yet if export earnings would drop. They said they are trying their best to maintain schedules spending extra money, but added that they cannot afford to carry on this way indefinitely.

4 killed in city

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him, the rickshaw puller further said. Rob used to arbitrate in the locality.

At one stage of stabbing, the criminals also sprayed several bullets on him.

After they had left the spot, locals rushed Rob to a local clinic where doctors declared him dead.

The goons took away Tk 1.58 lakh from Rob, family members claimed.

Around five and a half years back, some gunmen shot and wounded Rob's elder brother Haji Abdus Sattar, who was also a local arbitrator.

Rob's wife filed a case the same day mentioning that four to five unidentified criminals killed her husband, Shyampur police said.

Mentionable, Mohammad Abu Hanif, 45, a business leader and also president of ward 39 unit of Sramik League, was gunned down at city's Karwan Bazar just a day before the latest murder.

Police could not find any clue as of 5 pm yesterday, nor could they arrest anyone.

Following Rob's killing, businessmen of Shyampur Bazar, Nama Shyampur and Bou Bazar areas pulled their shutters down demanding arrest and punishment of the killers.

In Badda, a teenage hawkker strangled a four-year-old boy failing to marry his aunt.

Police recovered the body of Soheli, son of Manik Hawladar, from a field at

Amini asked

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treatment while Amini's lawyers did not submit any petition as to why their client failed to appear before the court.

Earlier, the court had recorded statements of seven witnesses since the charges were framed against Amini on January 11, 2001.

Amini at a meeting in Brahmanbaria on April 19, 2000 said Faruqa and other employees of the SC since the establishment of East Bengal High Court in 1947.

He said they are being used in the court's official pad, in chairs of the judges, and in calendar and other publications. "They are also used in the flag of a judge's car," he added.

He also submitted that scales are considered as the barometer of justice. So, the EC cannot assign them as an election symbol of a political party.

Since the establishment of the High Court, the people of the country take scales as a symbol of justice, he said.

So, he noted, the use of scales as a symbol by others could lead to confusion among the people, and undermine the status of the apex court.

Khaleda may visit Kuwait May 7-8

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia is likely to pay a two-day state visit to Kuwait from May 7 at the invitation of Kuwaiti Emir Sheikh Jabir Al-Ahmad Al Jabir Al Sabah.

A foreign ministry source said Prime Minister of Kuwait Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah conveyed the invitation to her on behalf of the Kuwaiti emir.

To confirm the date of the visit, Kuwait Ambassador to Bangladesh Abdullatif Ali Ibrahim Ai-Mawwash met Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan yesterday and discussed the upcoming visit of Prime Minister Khaleda Zia.

Official sources said the ambassador sought a confirmed date for the visit. As per the tentative schedule, Khaleda Zia's visit will start on May 7.

Foreign ministry sources said the prime minister is unlikely to attend the D-8 Summit to be held in Bali, Indonesia, on May 13. Foreign Affairs Adviser Reaz Rahman is expected to lead Bangladesh delegation at the summit.

Earlier, Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono Soemadi had sent a special envoy to formally invite the Bangladesh prime minister to attend the summit. Khaleda Zia had accepted the invitation.

But the reasons for not attending the summit could not be known immediately.

Bangladesh, Egypt, Indonesia, Iran, Malaysia, Nigeria, Pakistan and Turkey are members of the D-8 group.

2 bombs found at Dinajpur madrasa

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

Dinajpur police recovered two bombs at a madrasa in Shasra in Dinajpur Sadar upazila yesterday morning.

Police sources quoting Md Abdur Rahim, principal of Daroel Madrasa, said students of the madrasa noticed a bag hanging on the wall of an abandoned classroom and informed him of the matter. He later informed Dinajpur police about the bag around 10:00am.

A police team of Dinajpur Police Station led by Officer-in-charge (OC) Md Hamidur Rashid went to the spot and recovered the bombs which were wrapped with tape.

None was arrested in this connection. The incident left students, parents and madrasa authorities in panic.

Lightning kills 4 in C'nawabganj

UNB, C'nawabganj

Lightning killed four people and injured 15 others during a storm that lashed parts of Shiganj upazila yesterday evening.

Three of the dead were identified as Khairul, 30, of Ekbarpur village, Emy, 21, of Rashunchak village, and Rekha Begum, 32, of Selinabad village. Identity of another could not be known.

Shiganj upazila nirbahi officer (UNO) confirmed the death of two people.

The storm has caused extensive damage to mango groves, standing Irriboro crops and vegetables.

35 Hindus

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Schools, banks and offices in Doda and Udhampur districts were closed, following the strike call and traffic was largely limited to security vehicles and government cars.

Union Home Minister Shivraj Patil, who visited those wounded in the Doda attack, said the attackers were trying to trigger sectarian strife.

"It has been noticed that not only in Jammu and Kashmir but in other places ... some people are trying to make brothers fight with each other," he told a news conference, referring to militant attacks at religious sites elsewhere in the country.

Some Indian officials say the massacre could be a response to high voter turnout in by-elections last week in Doda, and could be aimed at souring the mood ahead of Wednesday's talks.

Residents of Kashmir, a region that triggered two of three India-Pakistan wars, said they were weary of violence.

"We have seen so much bloodshed that some of have us have become insensitive. These killings should end," Thakur Dass, who was visiting a relative wounded in the Doda attack, said.

Pakistan condemned the killings. "We condemn all acts of terrorism. We are against terrorism because we ourselves have been victim of terrorism," Pakistani Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Tasnim Aslam said.

1m immigrants

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and bandanas. In most cities, those who rallied were white to signify peace and solidarity.

In Los Angeles, the city streets were a carpet of undulating white that stretched for several miles, with palm trees and grass-covered medians poking through a sea of humanity. Marchers holding US flags aloft sang the national anthem in English as traditional Mexican dancers wove through the crowd.

While most demonstrations were peaceful, a Santa Ana rally of 5,000 in Orange County was marred by people hurling rocks and plastic bottles at officers. Police made several arrests, but it was unclear if they were protesters. And a march in Seattle was disrupted when a car struck a group of marchers, though injuries were minor.

In Chicago, illegal immigrants from Ireland and Poland marched alongside Hispanics as office workers on lunch breaks clapped. In Phoenix, protesters formed a human chain in front of Wal-Mart and Home Depot stores. Protesters in Tijuana, Mexico, blocked vehicle traffic heading to San Diego at the world's busiest border crossing.

Many carried signs in Spanish that translated to "We are America" and "Today we march, tomorrow we vote." Others waved Mexican flags or wore hats and scarves from their native countries. Some chanted "USA" while others shouted slogans, such as "Si se puede!" Spanish for "Yes, it can be done!" Others were more irreverent, wearing T-shirts that read "I'm illegal. So what?"

The White House reacted coolly. "The president is not a fan of boycotts," said press secretary Scott McClellan. "People have the right to peacefully express their views, but it was the president wants to see comprehensive reform pass the Congress so that he can sign it into law."

The boycott was organised by immigrant activists angered by federal legislation that would criminalize the nation's estimated 11 million illegal immigrants and fortify the U.S.-Mexico border. Its goal was to raise awareness about immigrants' economic power.

Industries that rely on immigrant workers were clearly affected, though the impact was not uniform.

Tyson Foods Inc., the world's largest meat producer, shuttered about a dozen of its more than 100 plants and saw "higher-than-usual absenteeism" at others. Most of the closures were in states such as Iowa and Nebraska. Eight of 14 Perdue Farms chicken plants also closed for the day.

Goya Foods, which bills itself as the nation's largest Hispanic-owned food chain, suspended delivery everywhere except Florida, saying it wanted to express solidarity with immigrants who are its primary customers.

None of the 175 seasonal labourers who normally work Mike Collins' 500 acres of Vidalia onion fields in southeast Georgia showed up.

"We need to be going wide open this time of year to get these onions out of the field," he said. "We've got orders to fill. Losing a day in this part of the season causes a tremendous amount of problems."

It was the same story in Indiana, where the owner of a landscaping business said

"Unfortunately," he said, "human nature is that you don't really know what you have until you don't have it."

PM blasts AL

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The prime minister assured that the next elections would be free and impartial under the caretaker government and urged the people to foil any conspiracy against election, democracy and development.

Presided over by Deputy Minister for Information Abdus Salam Pintu, the meeting was also addressed, among others, by Jute and Textiles Minister Shajahan Siraj, Telecommunications Minister Aminul Huq, Prime Minister's Political Secretary Harris Chowdhury, State Minister for NGO Bureau Affairs Lutfar Rahman Azad and Tangle BNP President Major Gen. (Rtd) Mahmudul Hassan MP.

AL walks out