

MINISTERIAL MEET BEGINS IN MALAYSIA TODAY

UN reform, Iran's N-plan to figure Nam meet

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan left for Malaysia yesterday morning to attend the Non-Aligned Movement Coordinating Bureau (NamCoB) Ministerial Meeting in Kuala Lumpur.

The three-day Nam ministerial meeting beginning today at Putrajaya International Convention Centre is expected to cover a wide range of issues, including UN reform, next UN secretary general, Iran's nuclear programme and the Palestine conflict, diplomatic sources said.

Among the 114 member countries, foreign ministers of 52 nations will attend the meeting, while the deputy ministers and senior officials will represent the other states.

The Nam has reached a broad agreement on the need for comprehensive reform in the UN and the Security Council, as well as the expansion of the latter. However, there are disagreements on whether the expansion would be in the permanent or non-permanent section.

Malaysia became the chair of Nam when it took over from South

Africa and hosted the 13th Nam Summit in Kuala Lumpur in February 2003. Cuba will succeed Malaysia in September.

The senior officials preparing for the ministerial meeting continued with their deliberations yesterday after a marathon session, which ended late Saturday night. Besides the senior officials' meeting (SOM), the ministers of the Nam 'troika' countries and the group of former Nam chair countries also met yesterday.

Meanwhile, a press release of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs yesterday said that the foreign minister spent a busy day upon arrival, meeting his counterparts in Kuala Lumpur.

He also attended the Ministerial Meeting of the Nam Committee on Palestine, ahead of the Nam Ministerial, accompanied by the Bangladesh High Commissioner in Malaysia Shafuddin Ahmed.

Foreign Minister of Malaysia Hamid Albar chaired the meeting.

In his statement on Palestine, Morshed Khan emphasised that the Palestinian leadership must remain united and speak in one voice to attain their legitimate right

of an independent state.

He also expressed concerns about the looming financial crisis due to the sanctions imposed by Israel on the Palestinian authority and added that the fast deteriorating situation in Palestine will not only exacerbate the sufferings of the Palestinian people but will also undermine the Middle East peace process.

Earlier, Foreign Minister of the Palestinian authority Farouk Kaddoumi briefed the meeting about the latest developments in Palestine.

The foreign ministers of Indonesia, Cuba, Qatar, India, Senegal, South Africa, Algeria, Tanzania, Ghana and Zimbabwe also made statements and expressed their solidarity with the Palestinian struggle for an independent state.

The meeting adopted a declaration calling the Quartet -- the United States, European Union, Russian Federation and the United Nations -- to exert all efforts to revive the peace process and to salvage the 'Road Map.'

Sex workers demand right to funeral

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Despite being citizens of the country, sex workers have yet to gain social recognition for their right to funeral after their death.

People do not allow sex workers' or their children's bodies to be buried according to religious rituals though every citizen has equal rights in the country, said leaders of Sex-workers Network of Bangladesh, a combined platform of different sex workers' organisation, at a press conference at Dhaka Reporters Unity (DRU) in the city yesterday demanding burial right.

Termining the right to funeral as a constitutional right for every citizen, they urged the government to ensure the right in the society.

They said people do not allow their bodies to be buried at the graveyards abhorring them as prostitutes.

"Sex workers face a lot of troubles when they go to bury any sex worker's body at any graveyard but the government remains indifferent," said Momtaz, president of the Network, while reading out a written statement.

Citing an example, she said, "Sonia, a sex worker, died at Faridpur brothel on May 9. Local Sex-workers Network unit took initiative to bury Sonia's body. But locals and the chairman did not allow them to bury her body at the local graveyard."

Parul, organising secretary of the Network, said they want to live in the society as women and human beings but they face tremendous discrimination at every stage of their life.

She urged all progressive people and the civil society to take initiative to create mass awareness so that people treat them as human beings, not prostitutes.

Office Secretary Ivan Ahmed Maya and other sex-workers were present at the conference.

'Hundi trade behind double murder'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police investigating the Saturday's double murder at Paltan suspect that hundi trade, gold smuggling and manpower business might lead to the killings.

"We are suspecting that disputes over hundi trade, dollar and gold smuggling and manpower business might be the reason behind the double murder," said Abdur Razzak, Officer-in-Charge of Paltan Police Station yesterday.

Unknown assailants shot dead Harunur Rashid, a cosmetic trader and Mosharraf Hossain, driver of Harun's elder brother's car at Paltan on Saturday night.

The OC said customs intelligence at Zia International Airport nabbed Mosharraf, the slain driver, with 20,000 Saudi Riyal on May 25, but no case was filed against Mosharraf nor was he arrested.

"We are now also investigating why he was not arrested and no case was filed against him," the OC said.

Investigators said Mosharraf used to frequently travel abroad despite being a driver.

Police said they are yet to find any concrete clue, as relatives of Harunur and Mosharraf are mum.

Police said relatives of any of the victims did not file any case in this connection even after 24 hours of the incident.

Police could not arrest anyone as of 8:00pm yesterday.

A police team was sent to Harun's village home at Daudkandi in Comilla yesterday to arrest a few local extortionists who demanded a handsome amount from Harun as toll at a brick-field, owned by Harun and his three brothers.

AL advisory body meets today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A meeting of the advisory council of Awami League (AL) will be held at its Dhanmondi office in the city at 5:00pm today with party President Sheikh Hasina in the chair.

Hasina, also leader of the opposition in parliament, will listen opinions and views from the advisors on the overall political situation of the country, sources said.

The AL chief will also want to hear from them about the party's next move in anti-government agitation to press home its demand for electoral reforms, they added.

AL General Secretary Abdul Jaill has requested all to be present at the meeting on time, says a press release.



Participants at the National Child Parliament Session 2006 held at Biam auditorium in the city yesterday.

Give more emphasis on child health Child parliamentarians urge govt and NGOs

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

It was an extraordinary parliament indeed.

Child representatives from all the 64 districts, being elected by their fellow colleagues, gathered at a parliamentary session in the city yesterday to highlight the problems of the children in their respective areas.

The two-day programme under the banner of 'National Child Parliament Session 2006' began at Biam auditorium.

At yesterday's session, 64 representatives focused on hundreds of problems of the children that they faced in their healthcare.

Irregular presence of doctors, stealing of medicine from the public hospitals, sale of adulterated food items, use of chemicals on food items, discrimination in treating the poor children, lack of pure drinking water and sanitation were discussed as major problems in the session conducted in accordance with the system of national parliament where the Speaker and Deputy Speakers moderated the session.

At the parliament session organised with the financial and technical support of Save the Children Australia, the child parliamentarians aged between 14 to 16 said today's children are tomorrow's leaders, but the way they are growing up is not enough.

The government and non-government organisations must come up and put more importance on the health and education of the

children, they added.

State Minister for Health Mizanur Rahman Sinha was present as chief guest at a session where he listened to the discussions and recommendations of the children on health issues.

A representative from Khulna said in most of the hospitals in the district doctors mistreat the child patients and send them to the private hospitals run by those particular doctors.

John Oye Oye Proy from Bandarban expressed serious discontent over the situation of public hospitals in the district saying those are maintained just like the cowsheds which is why people do not go there, rather take shelters of the quacks leading to deaths in case of serious illness.

"Doctors at union and thana health complexes also spend most of the time in gossiping with the representatives of the medicine companies," he added.

Nilufar Yasmin from Rajshahi said doctors and staffs at union health and family welfare centre at Puthia sell medicines outside illegally instead of providing those to the patients.

A representative from Barguna Abu Nayeem said poor children are always deprived of healthcare in public health centres.

"They wait for hours, but the doctors do not care for them. The doctors rather take care of the children of comparatively affluent families. Doctors and nurses even misbehave with the poor children," he

said. In case of raped or sexually harassed teenage girls, doctors do not want to treat them thinking that those will create troubles, as police stations or courts will direct them to issue certificates, said Jasmine Sultana Lima of Tangail.

"This is an acute problem for the girls," she noted.

There is also shortage of doctors in health complexes, the child parliamentarians said, adding that there should be nine doctors in each thana health complexes, but there are not even four doctors in those complexes. They recommended that more mobile courts and secret inspection teams should be formed to check these irregularities in the hospitals.

Besides, telecommunication system with the hospitals should be strengthened for easy and rapid communication, they suggested.

The speakers came heavily on the businessmen who sell adulterated foods and use chemical in fruits and fruit juices and allure people through advertisements in the television channels and newspapers.

"Taking these food stuffs the over all child health of the country has deteriorated significantly," said Mir Tanvir Siddique of Brahmanbaria.

All the products should be checked by the BSTI (Bangladesh Standard Testing Institute) through empowering it with more skilled manpower and modern technologies, he said, adding that more mobile teams should be spread out

throughout the country to check the trend of adulteration and stern actions should be taken against the culprits.

Advertisements of adulterated foods should also be banned in TV channels and newspapers, they added.

They also highlighted problems of arsenic in tube wells and scarcity of pure water and sanitation facilities, especially at village schools where children face these problems.

There are toilets in some schools, but those are not separated for girls creating tremendous problems for them, said Laila Yasmin of Kishoreganj.

Arjun from Thakurgaon said the condition of toilets in some schools of his district is so bad that these cause harm to the toilet users.

He also demanded that the tubewells that pump out arsenic water should be identified.

The state minister appreciated the system of child parliament saying it will help make good politician in future.

He assured them of addressing the problems including mismanagements in the public hospitals, providing Hepatitis-B vaccine and treatment for the handicapped children free of cost.

The appointment of 4000 doctors in the hospitals will soon solve the problem of doctors, he added.

Shafiqul Islam Talukder Mamun was the Speaker, while Nargis Akter Rony and Saikur Rahman Tamal were the Deputy Speakers at the session.

Charges against JMB military commander Sunny not framed

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court could not frame charges against Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) military commander Aatur Rahman Sunny and four others in two cases as two of them, including Sunny, were not produced before it yesterday.

Judge Mohammad Monzurul Bachhid of the Fourth Additional Metropolitan Sessions Judge's court directed the jail authorities to produce all the accused before it on June 14.

Meantime, the prosecution submitted a petition saying Sunny is now at a Sub-Jail in Jhalakathi district in connection with the two judges' killing case and its verdict will be delivered today. So, Sunny was not produced before it yesterday.

The two cases were filed with Sabujbagh Police Station, one under Arms Act and the other under Explosive Substances Act, against Sunny and six others on December 14 last year.

On March 14, Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) pressed charges against Sunny and four others.

The other accused are Sunny's friend Fariduzzaman Swapan, JMB Gazipur regional commander Enayet Ullah alias Jewel, Kamrul alias Sumon, (also known as Zahidul) and Alamgir alias Bijoy.

Sumon and Alamgir have been absconding while others are now in custody.

Rab dropped the names of Monir and Abul Khair, landlords of Sunny, from the charge sheet, as evidence leading to their involvement with JMB was inconclusive.

Sunny, younger brother of Abdur Rahman and also a member of JMB's top tier Majlish-e-Shura, masterminded the countrywide August 17 blasts. He was arrested at Tejgaon Polytechnic Institute on December 13 last year.

Following his information, Rab had seized 56 items of arms, ammunition, explosives, bomb-making materials, and books on jihad from the house of Abul Khair at South Manda Sabujbagh area in the city.

Trial in two cases not held

The same court could not begin the trial of two cases against Sunny and six others, as Sunny was not produced before it yesterday.

Meantime, eight prosecution witnesses appeared before the court for giving their statements.

The six other accused are AHM Shamim, 23, Zakaria alias Jewel, 21, Nur Azam Siddique alias Yeasir, 27, Belal Hossain alias Tamim, 21, Aleya Ferdous, 27, and Akramul Islam, 23.

14-party rally today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Awami League (AL)-led 14-party opposition combine will hold a rally at Mohamadpur in the city today demanding adequate water and uninterrupted power supply and protesting price hike of essentials.

Earlier the opposition combine held rallies at Uttara, Mirpur, Lalbag, Shanir Akhra, Muktagoan and Karwan Bazar in the city to press their demands.

Senior leaders of the 14-party combine including AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil MP will address the rally.

The rally will be held in front of Mohamadpur Town Hall at 3:00pm.

City AL General Secretary Mofazzel Hossain Chowdhury Maya urged the party workers to attend the rally.

'13000 die a year due to delivery complications'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rahela Khatun, a 30-year-old housewife of Bhaluka in Mymensingh district, had to suffer long three days to give birth to a baby that she had craved for long 13 years.

But her family did not let her go to any healthcare centre thinking that normal delivery is possible at home resulting in the death of the baby.

"I will not forgive my father-in-law as he did not permit me to go to any medical centre during these three most painful days of my life or even to my mother's house," Rahela told her gynaecologist Dr Shila Sen of Community-Based Medical College of Mymensingh.

Like Rahela many women in the country are void of safe motherhood and it is the responsibility of every family to ensure safe motherhood, said Dr Shila while speaking at a discussion titled 'Safe Motherhood: Women's Empowerment' in the city yesterday.

Bangladesh Mahila Parishad (BMP) organised the discussion at Cirdap auditorium to mark the Safe Motherhood Day.

BMP General Secretary Ayesha Khanam said motherhood is not the issue of women only. Family, society and the state should take the responsibility.

If the women's reproductive right is not ensured, it is impossible to ensure their empowerment, she added.

"The rate of maternal mortality is considered in the development index across the world where Bangladesh is lagging far behind,"

she said urging the government to take pro-active action to develop women's overall health condition as well as to increase social awareness in this regard.

Ayesha Khanam also criticised the women and children affairs ministry for not observing the day nationally.

While presenting the keynote paper, Dr Makhduma Nargis Ratna said according to the Bangladesh Demographic Health and Survey 2004 the maternal mortality rate in the country is 3.2 to 4 percent, and every year a total of 13,000 women die due to delivery complications.

Dr Shila said every day a total of 72 women die due to this preventable cause which must be taken care of.

According to the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) the maternal mortality rate should be reduced to 75 percent and it would require implementation of all the programmes taken by the government, the speakers said.

They also demanded inclusion of adolescent and reproductive health in the educational curriculum.

The BMP also demanded increased facilities in every hospital for safe delivery and eradication of gender discrimination in healthcare system.

Presided over by BMP President Hena Das, the discussion was also addressed among others by Dr Laila Anjumana Banu and BMP representatives from different districts.

5 killed, 22 injured in road accidents

STAR REPORT

At least five people were killed and 22 injured in separate road accidents in Gazipur, Chittagong and Jhenidah yesterday.

BDNEWS from Gazipur says: At least two people were killed and seven others injured yesterday in a road accident on Dhaka-Mymensingh road in front of Salna Forest Office in Gazipur.

The deceased were identified as Abdur Rahim, 35, and Ajuma Begum, 32, hailed from Joydevpur.

Police and witnesses said the accident occurred at 10.00 in the morning when a Rajendrapur-bound taxicab from Joydevpur crushed two passers-by and fell into a roadside ditch.

The injured were rushed to the different clinics of Joydevpur. Police recovered the bodies and sent to Joydevpur Sadar Hospital morgue for autopsy.

The driver of the taxicab, however, managed to escape.

Staff Correspondent from Chittagong adds: One garments worker was killed in a road accident at the city's Olonker intersection area yesterday.

The dead was identified as Jahangir Alam, 18, son of late Dudu Mia of Bhasail in Tangail.

Police and witnesses said a bus

hit Jahangir at the Olonker intersection area under Pahartali Police Station at around 8:00am when he was going to his work at a near by garments.

He was rushed to Chittagong Medical College Hospital where the on-duty physicians declared him dead.

The victim's fellow workers went on the rampage and damaged two vehicles following the accident, sources said.

Jahangir's mother Monowara Begum filed a case with the Pahartali Police Station in this connection.

Our Jhenidah correspondent reports: Two people were killed and 15 others injured when a truck turned turtle on Jhenidah-Jessore highway near Bishoy Khali Bazar on Sunday morning.

The dead were identified as Hanif, 35, of Pabna and Rezaul Islam, 32, of Narail.

The injured are Helal, Aslam and Mannan. They have been admitted to Jhenidah Sadar Hospital.

Police say the Khulna-bound truck from Pabna fell into a roadside ditch when the driver lost control over the steering.

Enamul Kabir new envoy to Vietnam

UNB, Dhaka

The government has decided to appoint M Enamul Kabir, currently serving as Bangladesh Ambassador to Bhutan, as the next Ambassador to Vietnam.

A career diplomat Kabir joined the BCS (Foreign Affairs) cadre in 1981. He had his Honours and Masters degree in Economics from Dhaka University.

Before serving as the Ambassador to Bhutan, he served in Bangladesh Missions in Manila, Paris, Birmingham and Karachi in different capacities.

Atiqur Rahman

Another report adds: The government has decided to appoint AKM Atiqur Rahman, currently serving as Director General in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as the next Ambassador to Bhutan.

A career diplomat Atiqur Rahman joined the BCS (Foreign Affairs) cadre in 1986. He had his Honours and Masters degree in Statistics from Dhaka University.

In his diplomatic career, Rahman served in Bangladesh Missions in Rome, Dakar and Hong Kong in various capacities.

He was a freedom fighter during the War of Liberation in 1971.

Death anniversary



Today is the second death anniversary of the theatre artist Sohail Chowdhury, eldest son of Nurul Huq Chowdhury, says a press release.

On the occasion, a Qurankhwani and feeding to the destitute will be arranged at his Turak Khola village in Sylhet and at his last workplace in Manchester in Britain.

Rail-road blockade called off

UNB, Dhaka

Sramik Karmachari Sangram Parishad of jute, spinning and textiles mills postponed its today's countrywide rail-road blockade following fruitful discussion with Jute and Textile Minister Sajahan Siraj yesterday evening.

Sramik Karmachari Sangram Parishad convener Sarder Motaharuddin leading a delegation met with the Minister at Khulna

Circuit House.

Sources close to the meeting said that the Minister assured them of payment of half of the arrears and medical allowance by June 7. The rest will be paid by August.

Shahjahan Siraj further assured the delegation of reinstating the workers who have lost job. More funds will be available in the next budget for salvaging the sick jute mills, he told them.

WEATHER TODAY Rain likely UNB, Dhaka Rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty or squally wind is likely at many places over Rajshahi, Dhaka, Sylhet, Khulna, Barisal and Chittagong divisions in the next 12 hours until 6:00pm today. Moderately heavy to heavy falls are also likely at places, said Met Office in a forecast. It said that day temperature may remain nearly unchanged over the country. Highest temperature 34.2 degree Celsius was recorded yesterday at Rajshahi and lowest 22.0 degree Celsius at Sylhet. The sun sets in the capital at 6:41pm today and rises at 5:11am tomorrow. Highest and lowest temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were: City/Town Temperature in Celsius Humidity in percentage Morning Evening Dhaka Max 30.4 Min 26.4 76 95 Chittagong 28.0 24.8 90 92 Rajshahi 34.2 25.0 87 99 Khulna 30.0 26.0 92 91 Barisal 31.0 26.5 92 90 Sylhet 25.0 22.0 98 98 Cox's Bazar 29.0 25.4 96 95

Resignation of CEC demanded

RU CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) of Rajshahi University unit and city unit staged a demonstration at Shaheeb Bazar Zero Point yesterday demanding resignation of the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) and two other election commissioners to pave the way for a free and fair election.

At a rally, they blasted CEC saying CEC has lost moral rights to remain in his post as the verdict of the Supreme Court went against him.

They also threatened the alliance government that they would resist any conspiracy over the post of the president.

BCL leaders also demanded immediate reform in the Election Commission and ensure a free and fair election in Bangladesh.

'Hold Ducsu election'

DU CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Chhatra League (JSD) staged a sit-in programme in front of the office of the vice-chancellor (VC) of Dhaka University (DU) yesterday demanding election to Ducsu hall units and departmental units.

They also demanded seat allocation of residential halls among the students on the basis of merits.

Dhaka University Central Students' Union (Ducsu) has been remaining idle for more than 12 years, as no elections were held.

During the programme, leaders of the organisation said Ducsu election is a democratic right to the students, but the authorities of the university did not organise the election.

Yusuf Ali Sumon, president of BCL, said the incumbent DU VC pledged several times to arrange Ducsu elections but yet to take any step.