

## Repeal Official Secrets Act, ensure press freedom

### Journalists demand at SAFMA conference

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leading journalists at a media conference yesterday demanded repeal of the Official Secrets Act and enactment of a new law ensuring freedom of the press and access to information.

They also observed that the newsmen are often subject to torture and harassment due to lack of press freedom and access to information.

A free media is essential for strengthening democracy and journalists should be aware of any attempt to seize power by forces not representing the people, they pointed out.

The South Asian Free Media Association (SAFMA), Bangladesh chapter, organised the National Conference 2006 at Brac Centre Inn in the city.

Speaking as the chief guest, former chief justice and chairman

of Law Commission Justice Mostafa Kamal underscored the need for freedom of journalists, instead of freedom of newspaper owners.

He observed that the owners often do not allow journalists to write freely. Justice Kamal urged the newspaper owners not to be dependent on government advertisement. "If a newspaper depends on the government advertisement, it loses the moral right to criticise the government."

Responding to the demands of journalists, he said that the law for press freedom and access to information in Bangladesh should be different from India and Pakistan as the situations are not the same.

Justice Kamal said the law commission has recommended a comprehensive contempt of court law, but it would be ineffective if people become educated and conscious.

He spoke against giving any definition of contempt of court as it depends on case-to-case basis and situation to situation.

Eminent journalist Kuldip Nayar of India and Imtiaz Alam of Pakistan also spoke at the inaugural session of the conference chaired by Reazuddin Ahmed, president of SAFMA Bangladesh. Shawkat Mahmood, general secretary of the National Press Club, moderated the session.

"We demand repeal of the Official Secrets Act and enactment of a law ensuring freedom of the press and access to information," said Reazuddin Ahmed.

The act, which was promulgated by the British colonial government for its own interest, should no longer continue in an independent country, he added.

Reazuddin also demanded repeal of clauses in existing laws, which create obstacles to freedom of the

press and access to information. He vowed to compel the government to repeal all black laws and enact new laws ensuring access to information.

Kuldip Nayar called on the journalists to uphold their dignity as newsmen, saying that they do something beyond their designated work, which no other professionals do in a society.

Press freedom is very essential for strengthening democracy in a society, he said.

Kuldip urged the journalists to be alert to any attempt of anybody not representing the people to capture power.

He also called on them to be courageous and stand up for the rights of the people braving all odds.

Imtiaz Alam said journalists played a historic role in establishing democracy in many countries.

Access to information is a fundamental right of the citizens, he said adding that some countries in South Asia, including India, have already amended the law regarding access to information.

Alam also pointed out that journalists were attacked in different countries in South Asia.

Journalist union leaders Mozammel Haq, Manjural Hossain Bulbul, Abdul Jalil Bhuiyan and Ruhul Amin Gazi took part in the discussion in two working sessions of the conference.

Iqbal Sobhan Chowdhury, editor of The Bangladesh Observer, read out the recommendations of the conference while Zahiduzzaman Faruque, general secretary SAFMA Bangladesh, gave a vote of thanks.

Representatives of journalists from across the country attended the conference and shared their experiences regarding collection of information and publication of news.



PHOTO: STAR  
Eminent Indian journalist Kuldip Nayar speaks at the national conference of South Asian Free Media Association, Bangladesh chapter, in the city yesterday. Sitting from right are Shawkat Mahmood, Zahiduzzaman Faruque, Reazuddin Ahmed, Justice Mostafa Kamal, Imtiaz Alam and Iqbal Sobhan Chowdhury.



PHOTO: STAR  
Participants at a roundtable on 'Rethinking private health care in Bangladesh' held at the conference room of The Daily Star in the city yesterday. Health 21 and The Daily Star jointly organised the roundtable. (Story on Page 16)

## Call to control parasitic diseases on urgent basis

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Parasitic diseases are spreading gradually in the country and there is an urgent need to control them, said the speakers at a workshop yesterday.

They said co-ordination among the government and non-government organisations is important to control the mosquito-borne diseases.

The speakers said Filariasis is endemic in 32 districts, Kala-azar in 34 and Malaria in 13 districts.

The diseases are spreading to the other areas of the country through vectors, they added.

The workshop titled 'National policy on control of parasitic diseases and strategy for elimination of Filariasis and Soil Transmitted Helminthiasis' was jointly organised by Japan International Co-operation Agency (Jica), World

Health Organisation (WHO) and Ministry of Health and Family Welfare at Biam auditorium in the city.

Speaking at the inaugural session as chief guest Health and Family Welfare Minister Dr Khandaker Mosharruf Hossain said intestinal parasites like Amoebiasis and Soil-transmitted Helminthiasis are also prevalent among the children with high magnitudes throughout the country.

The health problems that could be easily controlled are increasing due to contaminated food intake, unhygienic sanitation and lack of health knowledge, he added.

The draft policy is formulated with a view to achieve optimal health status for all people and develop a comprehensive health system at all levels of care on parasitic and vector-borne diseases.

Meanwhile, the strategic plan highlighted elimination of lymphatic filariasis from the country by 2015 and administration of anthelmintic drugs to one hundred percent of all school-age children at risk of morbidity by 2010.

Director General of Health Services Dr Shahadat Hossain, Ambassador of Japan to Bangladesh Masayuki Inoue, WHO representative to Bangladesh Dr Duangvadee Sunghobol, Resident Representative of Jica Aki Arai and Additional Secretary to health ministry Aminul Islam Bhuiyan also spoke at the inaugural session.

Later two sessions were held where experts from Japan, Thailand, WHO and government authorities put their recommendations to include into the draft policy for its better implementation.

## WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT Dhaka elected to UN body

UNB, Dhaka

Bangladesh candidate Ferdous Ara Begum was Saturday elected to the UN Committee for Elimination of Discrimination Against Women.

She polled the highest votes of 140. Eleven other candidates elected to the committee are from Japan, Mauritius, the Netherlands, Croatia, Algeria, Egypt, Thailand, Ghana, Israel and South Africa, according to a message received in Dhaka yesterday.

Dr Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury, the Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to the United Nations, later told the media that it was a great victory for Bangladesh.

He said election of Ferdous to the UN Committee would give Bangladesh a sense of pride and responsibility - pride because of the global endorsement of Bangladesh's role in women's empowerment and responsibility to live up to those expectations.

## NU exams shifted

The first year honours (final) examinations under the National University scheduled to commence on June 28 have been postponed, says a press release.

These examinations will now begin on July 12.

## Truck drivers assault traffic sergeant in Ctg

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Chittagong

Agitating truckers assaulted a traffic sergeant and set fire to his motorbike yesterday at Chittagong port area for beating a truck driver.

Truck drivers and workers also blocked the main road of Chittagong Port area for an hour causing a serious traffic jam.

Sources said that the incident ensued at around 4:15pm when Abu Daud Anwar Mohammad Faisal, the traffic sergeant, got into a row with a truck driver, as the latter did not maintain the serial while entering the Port Jetty Gate-2.

They alleged the sergeant hit on the driver's forehead with a stick leaving him injured.

His fellow drivers and workers rushed to the scene and beat the police officer and burnt his motorbike.

On information, Deputy Commissioner (Traffic) Monir Hossain rushed to the spot and urged the leaders of the truck drivers and workers association to withdraw the barricade.

The truckers withdrew the barricade when DC Monir assured them of proper investigation.

## Obituary



PHOTO: STAR  
Kazi Fakhriul Islam, chief accountant of Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA), passed away due to cardiac arrest at the Birdev Hospital in the city yesterday at the age of 47, says a press release.

Fakhri left behind his wife, a daughter and a son to mourn his death.

BGMEA expressed sympathy to the members of the bereaved family and prayed for salvation of the departed soul.

## Solaiman Mia

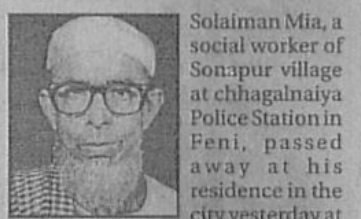


PHOTO: STAR  
Solaiman Mia, a social worker of Sonapur village at Chhagalnaya Police Station in Feni, passed away at his residence in the city yesterday at the age of 105, says a press release.

Solaiman left behind his two sons and three daughters to mourn his death.

He was buried at his family graveyard in his village after namaz-e-janaza in Dhaka and Sonapur.

## Elderly woman beaten to death

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

An elderly woman was beaten to death by a group of women centring a dispute to fetch water in the city's Kafrul area on Friday night.

The victim was identified as Amena Begum, 45, of Damalkode of Kafur.

Witnesses said dispute began among the local women on Friday night while fetching water from the nearby pipeline. At one stage, some women hit Amena Begum severely on the neck leaving her badly injured.

Locals rushed her to a local clinic where the doctors declared her dead.

The victim's son Shahjalal filed a murder case with Kafur Police Station in this connection.

Police arrested three women Josna, Taslima and Sharjahan for their alleged involvement in the murder.

## Varsity, college students need improvement in English

Says survey

Jamil-Sarwar Trust (JST) organised a workshop on career development for university and college students at the IST Centre at Katabon in the city on Friday, says a press release.

The workshop began with a brief presentation of a survey conducted by JST during October-November 2005 regarding the importance of learning English. The results showed that 99.8 percent of 477 university and college students surveyed felt it necessary to improve their English language skills.

JST also presented data on language requirements for the job market that indicated English competency to be a general requirement.

Imran Rahman, associate professor, Institute of Business Administration, Dhaka University, was the guest speaker at the workshop.

Students of Dhaka University, Jahangirnagar University, Dhaka College, Borhanuddin College, Jagannath College and Eden College and professionals and academics took part in the workshop.

## Death anniversary

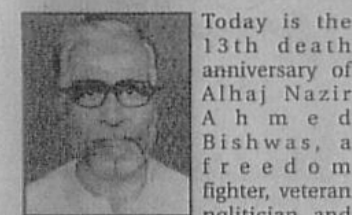


PHOTO: STAR  
Today is the 13th death anniversary of Alhaj Nazir Ahmed Bishwas, a freedom fighter, veteran politician and founding vice president of Bangladesh Red Crescent Society, says a press release.

His family members requested all to pray for salvation of his departed soul.

## 'Implement MoU for peace in RMG sector'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leaders of Sramik Karmochari Oikya Parishad (Skop) yesterday demanded immediate implementation of the memorandum of understanding (MoU) reached following tripartite meetings between the government and the representatives of owners and garment workers on May 24, June 1 and 4 for maintaining peace in garment sector.

The unanimous MoU included issuing of appointment letters to all garment workers, an increase in their minimum wages, weekly holidays and allowing trade union in garment factories.

At a press conference in the city Skop leaders urged the government to take effective measures ensuring 30 percent interim dearness allowance for the workers as their existing wage is not enough to maintain their families in view of price hike of essentials.

"According to the tripartite decision the MoU will be implemented within three months but we call upon the government to implement it before the deadline," said Roy Ramesh Chandra, leader of Skop and general secretary of Jatiya Sramik League.

Skop Co-ordinator and Trade Union Kendra General Secretary Dr Wazedul Islam Khan said lower wage structure and imposition of inhuman conditions by the garment owners sparked off the recent violence in the apparel sector of the country.

Jatiyatabadi Sramik Dal General

Secretary Jafrul Hasan, Jatiya Sramik Federation President Shafigur Johaman Majumder, Sramik Jote President Abdul Kader Hawlader, Trade Union Kendra Acting President Shahidullah Chowdhury, Jatiya Sramik Federation General Secretary Shafiguddin Ahmed, Sangjukta Sramik Federation President Mokhlesur Rahman, Sramik Front President Abdullah Sarkar, Sramik Jote President Mesbahuddin Ahmed, Bangladesh Sramik Federation General Secretary Mojibur Rahman Bhuiyan and Trade Union Sangha President Khalilur Rahman were present at the conference.

The tripartite meetings were held following violent demonstrations by garment workers in Savar, Gazipur and Mirpur in last week of May and first week of June that left a worker dead and thousands injured.

The MoU was signed on June 12 with State Minister for Labour and Employment Aman Ullah Aman in the chair.

LGED and Co-operatives Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, Commerce and Water Resources Minister Hafiz Uddin, Fisheries and Livestock Minister Abdullah al-Noman, and representatives of Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) and Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers & Exporters Association (BKMEA) were present on the occasion.

## Prof Iqbal gets SEED Award

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rotary Club of Metropolitan Dhaka yesterday announced the name of Prof Iqbal Quadir, director of Programme in Developmental Entrepreneurship, Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) as the recipient of Science, Education and Economic Development (SEED) Award 2006.

Rotary SEED Award is conferred each year on a Bangladeshi citizen for original and outstanding contribution to science, education and economic development.

Announcing the name of this year's winner at a press conference at the National Press Club in the city, President of Rotary Club of Metropolitan Dhaka Abu Ashraf Haider said this is the highest award given in Bangladesh.

The award, which carries Tk 1.5 lakh, a gold medal worth Tk 50,000 and a citation, will be handed over to the winner on August 5.

Iqbal Quadir, the 12th recipient of the award, was honoured for pioneering universal telephony to Bangladesh people and creating self-employment opportunities for more than 2,25,000 poor rural women through his groundbreaking idea of introducing GreenPhone in the country.

Iqbal is the founder director of the programme in development entrepreneurship at MIT. During 2001-2005, Iqbal has been a fellow and lecturer at the John F Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University, teaching graduate classes on how technologies can affect change in developing countries.

During 1993-1999, Iqbal conceived, designed and organised GreenPhone.

Former president of Rotary Club of Metropolitan Dhaka Dr Anwar Hossain, President-elect Mahubul Talukder, Senior Member Vice-President ATM Shamsuddin and Member Vice-President Journalist Farid Hossain, were present at the press conference.

Previous recipients of the award include Prof Muhammad Yunus for Grameen Bank concept, late Professor M Shafiqullah for pioneering management education in Bangladesh, Fazle Hasan Abed for Brac's pioneering work, Prof Jamilur Reza Chowdhury for popularising information technology in Bangladesh, Dr Kamaluddin for his work in combating vitamin A deficiency and Dr Altaf for introducing new and revolutionary technology in shrimp farming.

## Qulkhwani

PHOTO: STAR  
Qulkhwani of Shaahniza (Nusha) Ahsan, daughter of Advocate Mahmudul Ahsan, will be held after Asr prayers today at House No. 512/C, Road No. 7, Dhanmondi in the city, says a press release.

She died on June 22.

## Janaza of Salam Talukder today

BSS, Dhaka

The namaz-e-Janaza of Advocate MA Salam Talukder will be held on the Supreme Court premises at 4:15pm today.

Another Janaza will be held on Bangladesh Tax Lawyers' Association premises at 5:00pm.

Salam Talukder, president of the Tax Lawyers' Association, passed away due to a cardiac arrest on Friday.

He will be buried on Eskander Welfare Foundation premises in Pirojpur tomorrow.

## Three students feared drowned in Dharala

UNB, Lalmonirhat

Three students studying in an Indian school feared drowned in the river Dharala on their way home yesterday.

The victims were identified as Hossain Ali of Mirpur, Faisal Sohan and Faisal Chowdhury of Sutrapur, Dhaka. Aged between 15 and 16, they were students of class X of a school at Shiliguri in West Bengal.

Informed sources said a group

of about 10 students were returning home. After immigration formality at Burimari check post, they went to take bath in the nearby Dharala river at about 5:30pm. But three of them went missing as strong current took them to the midstream.

Strong current of the river hampered rescue of the missing boys. Patgram Officer-in-Charge (OC) Ashraf Uddin confirmed about the missing of three students.

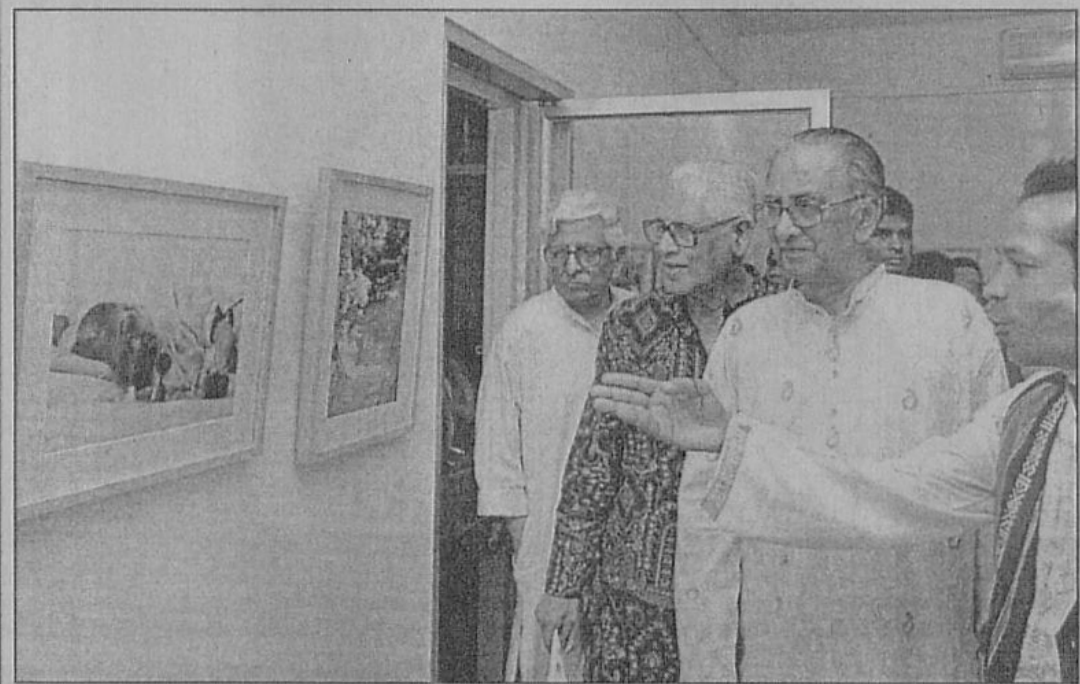


PHOTO: STAR  
Justice Muhammad Habibur Rahman, former chief adviser of the caretaker government, inaugurated a photography exhibition marking the 95th birth anniversary of poet Sofia Kamal at Gallery Chittrak at Dhanmondi in the city yesterday. Gallery Chittrak and Sanjher Maya, a social organisation, jointly organised the exhibition.

## RIFAT MURDER Arguments begin today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Arguments in the Nurul Islam Rifat murder case will begin at the third Additional Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court in Dhaka today.

The argument will start after recording statements of witnesses in the case for five years.

Rifat, younger brother of Bangladesh Chamber of Industries (BCI) President AK Azad, was called out of his Mohakhali residence by his friend Shamsu Habib alias Bidut on January 27, 1997 and his body was found the next day.

Police submitted a charge sheet accusing Bidut, Sarfaraz Uddin Karzon, Manik Ahmed Khan, Tajuddin Ahmed Titu, Mohamamd Selim Khan, Abu Raihan Rana, Omar Faruk Rasel and Rasel Kabir Roman of the killing. Of the accused, Mohamamd Selim Khan is absconding.

<p><b>Workshop</b> National Association of UNESCO Clubs in Bangladesh will hold a workshop on 'Essential skill of UNESCO Club organizer and activist'. Venue: Banabies Bhaban. Time: 10:00am.</p>	<p><b>Seminar</b> Narcotic Control Department will hold a daylong seminar to mark the International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking. Venue: National Press Club.</p>
<p><b>Seminar</b> Dhaka Ahsania Mission organises a seminar on 'Drugs and Children' to mark the International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking. Venue: Mission Bhaban. Time: 10:00am.</p>	<p><b>Discussion</b> Anti Drugs Society will hold a discussion to mark the International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking. Venue: Hotel Sundarban. Time: 3:30pm.</p>
<p><b>Memorial meeting</b> Liberation War Museum will hold a meeting in memory of Poet Sofia Kamal and Shaheed Janani Jahanara Imam. Venue: Museum auditorium. Time: 6:00pm.</p>	<p><b>Roundtable</b> Bangladesh Enterprise Institute (BEI) organises a roundtable on 'Corporate social responsibility practices and challenges in Bangladesh'. Venue: BEI conference room. Time: 3:30pm.</p>
<p><b>Meeting</b> The monthly meeting of Foreign</p>	<p><b>Investors' Chamber &amp; Industry (FICCI)</b> will be held. Venue: Dhaka Sheraton Hotel. Time: 12:30pm.</p>