

Democracy at stake

Speakers tell roundtable

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Country's democracy is now at stake as important institutions including Parliament, Election Commission, Supreme Court and Caretaker Government have been made controversial, said the speakers at a roundtable yesterday.

Political leaders, civil society members, retired army officers and university teachers took part in the roundtable.

Justice Muhammad Golam Robbani said anarchy grabs the nation due to conflict among the political parties especially the big two alliances.

"The whole country has been polarised into two blocks and people are very much concerned about the future of the nation," he said.

Former president of Dhaka University Teachers' Association AAMS Arefin Siddique said the credibility of every institution including the Election Commission and the Supreme Court has been eroded during the tenure of BNP-Jamaat alliance pushing the democracy into a stake.

Former vice-chancellor of Dhaka University AK Azad Chowdhury said

the President had violated the constitution at every step since he assumed the post of chief adviser to the caretaker government.

Former legislator Major (Retd) Akhtaruzzaman suggested sacking of all election commissioners, secretaries and other top officials of the Election Commission for holding a free and fair election.

"Constitution has been framed for people and it can be changed for safeguarding the democracy," he said, adding that political parties should avoid arguments in the name of the constitution.

Poet Abu Bakar Siddique presented a keynote paper at the roundtable.

Dr Jafarullah Chowdhury, Barrister Sadia Arman and singer Namita Ghosh also took part in the discussion.

JCD leader, 5 others facing non-bailable charge get bail

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday granted bail to a Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) leader and five of his accomplices accused of possessing contraband medicines, although they face non-bailable charge.

The accused are JCD leader of Mirpur thana unit Mostafa Zaglul Pasha alias Pavel and his accomplices Anisuzzaman Bitu, Shahinul Alam, Rezaul Hassan, Mofizul Islam and Azizur Rahman.

Metropolitan Magistrate Mohammad Shafique Anwar granted them bail upon a bond of Tk 5,000 with two guarantors.

According to the prosecution, a team of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) raided a house at 48/3/B in Second Colony, Mirpur, at about 5:45pm on December 10, arrested the six from the area and seized seven contraband Yaba tablets, 30 mobile SIMs of different companies and Tk 43,330 from their possession.

Later, Delwar Hossain of Rab-2 filed a case under the Special Powers Act against them with Mirpur Police Station.

As per a provision of the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC), a lower court cannot grant bail to any accused arrested on a charge triable in sessions courts. This case is triable in sessions courts and such offence is punishable by death or life imprisonment.

Mohammad Shahidullah Miah, a senior lawyer, told The Daily Star that a magistrate should not grant bail to such offenders who are engaged in destroying the morals of youths. Moreover, the magistrate has no jurisdiction to grant bail to any accused arrested for possessing contraband drugs that is punishable by death or life imprisonment, he added.

Afghan returnee among 2 held in Comilla

UNB, Dhaka

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) personnel arrested two people, including one who reportedly returned from Afghanistan, along with three sophisticated firearms from South Mangalpur village in Choudha-gram upazila yesterday.

Acting on a tip-off, a team of RAB-2 conducted a drive at the village around 3:00pm and arrested Zakir, 35, and Russell Mahmud Mojumdar Titu, 26, along with a revolver, one shooter gun and a cut-rifle, official sources said.

The arrested will be brought to Dhaka for questioning, the sources said.

JMB Eshar member arrested in Gazipur

A CORRESPONDENT, Gazipur

Police arrested an Eshar (full timer) member of outlawed Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) from Gazipur yesterday.

He was identified as Talimul Hossain, 30.

Police said he has disclosed significant information about militants' efforts to reorganise the outfit. Talimul was produced before the first class magistrate's court in Gazipur with a prayer for seven-day remand, but the court granted five days.

Police said Talimul is the younger brother of Toybur Rahman Hasam, who was the cashier of JMB supreme Abdur Rahman.

He hails from Khalifapara in Jamalpur from where Rahman also hails.

Talimul was arrested when he went to Gazipur jail with two associates Tashnim and Shoeb to send some foods to his brother Hasan and two other prisoners Saidur Munshi Imon and Hosne Ara Swapna.

Tashnim and Shoeb, however, managed to escape the arrest.

Talimul said they are also JMB members and staying in Gazipur.

'Withdraw false cases against eminent lawyers'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Sammita Ainjibi Samannyo Parishad, a platform of pro-Awami League lawyers, at a meeting yesterday demanded withdrawal of what they called false and baseless cases against eminent lawyers of the country.

The Parishad leaders said people are being denied of justice as the Supreme Court is still under the influence of BNP-led four party alliance.

They said total electoral process has become a farce as the poll schedule was declared before updating and publishing of final voter list.

Supreme Court Bar Association President Barrister Amir-Ul Islam chaired the meeting which was addressed by Abdul Baset Majumder, Mahubul-e-Alam, Abdul Matin Khasru, Enayetur Rahim and Subrata Chowdhury.



A Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) activist, circled, with a chapati (chopping knife) tucked under his shirt during a clash with Islami Chhatra Shibir over allocation of seats in the dormitories of Chittagong Medical College yesterday.

2 juveniles freed from Kishore Kendra for good behaviour

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

For the first time, the government released two convicted juveniles from a Kishore Unnayan Kendra (KUK) before their full term and handed them over to their parents on December 16.

One of the children was sentenced to 30 years' imprisonment for an attempt to murder, while the other boy was sentenced to six years' under the Women and Children Repression Prevention Act 2003. Both of them hail from Rajshahi division and they were under 18 during their arrest.

The process to release the children, detained in Jessore KUK by the Department of Social Services (DSS), had started in 2003. The DSS released the children considering their good behaviour.

Deputy Commissioner of Jessore, Deputy Director of Jessore DSS, Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate Rokunuddoula and UM Habibun Nessa of Save the Children, UK, were present when the boys were handed over to their parents.

Save the Children, UK, has appealed the government to continue the practice to uphold the rights of children according to the Children Act, 1974.

Four killed in road accidents

STAR REPORT

At least four people were killed in separate road accidents in Chittagong and Brahmanbaria yesterday and on Monday night.

OUR CORRESPONDENT from Chittagong reports: Three people were killed and another was injured in two separate road accidents in Sitakunda and Raozan in the district yesterday.

Sources said an accident occurred when a Chittagong-bound bus collided head-on with a truck from opposite direction on the Dhaka-Chittagong highway at Ghoramara area in Sitakunda in front of Islamic University of Bangladesh (IUB) at around 11:00am, leaving three people injured critically.

The injured identified as Md Rassel Mia, 40, Md Hafizur Rahman, 41, and Shariful Islam, 23, were rushed to the Chittagong Medical College Hospital (CMCH) where the on-duty doctors declared Rassel and Hafizur dead.

Meanwhile, a Richshaw-van puller identified as Muhib Mia, 13, son of Md Siraj of Banskhal was killed in a road mishap in Raozan upazila. The accident occurred when a Chittagong-bound bus knocked the rickshaw-van at Rajdighirpur area in Raozan at around 8:00am, leaving Muhib injured seriously.

Muhib succumbed to his head injuries on the way to the CMCH. Our Correspondent from

Brahmanbaria adds: One motorbike rider was killed in a road accident on Dhaka-Sylhet highway at Kuttapara under Sarail upazila on Monday night.

The dead was identified as Ripon Mia, 24, of Nizsarail village under Sarail upazila of the district.

Witnesses and police said the accident occurred when a speeding private car knocked the motorbike from the behind, leaving Ripon dead on the spot.

ASK programme on Dec 25

UNB, Dhaka

Ain O Salish Kendra (ASK) will hold a commemorative programme at the National Museum Auditorium here at 4:30pm on December 25 marking its 20th founding anniversary.

On the occasion, Nobel laureate Professor Amartya Sen will deliver the Salma Sobhan Memorial Lecture while Nobel Peace Prize winner Prof Muhammad Yunus launch ASK's Special Commemorative Report and deliver felicitations to mark the occasion.

ASK began its journey 20 years ago as a frontline legal aid and human rights organisation of Bangladesh.

Perishable goods traders withdraw strike

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka Metropolitan Fish and Perishable Products' Small Business Association withdrew its strike on Monday night following a meeting with the wholesalers.

The association began its strike on December 17 to press its five-point demand. The strike was scheduled to end yesterday.

At the meeting held at Tejaگون Police Station in the city on Monday night, the wholesalers assured the retailers of implementing the demands, said association President Anwar Hossain Sikder.

The demands include an end to price and weight manipulation, stopping forcing retailers to buy goods, using BSTI-approved weights and stopping selling fish and other produce contaminated with toxic chemicals.

At the meeting, the wholesalers also demanded that Dhaka City Corporation evict retailers from Karwan Bazar and its adjacent roads and footpaths as such business activities causes traffic congestion in the area, Anwar said.

President of Karwan Bazar Khudra Arat Babosyae Bahumukhi Samity Ltd Md Nabi Solaiman, General Secretary of Karwan Bazar Arat Malik Samity Md Faruk Hossain, Association Vice-President Nur Uddin Matubbar, Organising Secretary Abdus Selim and other leaders were present at the meeting chaired by acting officer-in-charge of Tejaگون Police Station.

Obituary

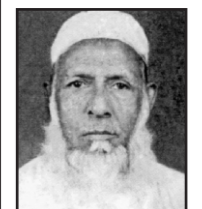
Abdul Wadud Master, executive committee member of Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), passed away at Peerless Hospital in Kolkata yesterday at the age of 85, says a press release.

Wadud, also vice-president of city BNP, left behind his mother, wife, four sons, two daughters and a host of relatives and admirers to mourn his death.

BNP Chairperson Khaleida Zia, Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, City unit President and Mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka and city General Secretary Abdus Salam expressed deep shock at the death of Wadud.

They also prayed for salvation of the departed soul and conveyed sympathy to the members of bereaved family.

Shah Md Motaher Hossain



Shah Md Motaher Hossain, a retired government official, passed away due to stroke at the Sadar Hospital in Bagerhat yesterday at the age of 75, says a press release.

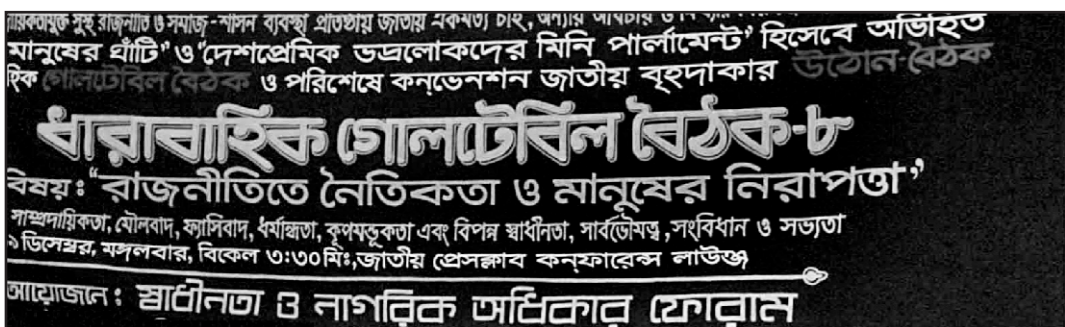
He left his behind his wife, five sons and one daughter.

Hajera Bibi

BSS, Faridpur

Hajera Bibi, a folk singer, passed away at one of her disciple's residence at Salepur village under Char Bhadrashan upazila in the district on Monday night, at the age of 85.

Hajera was a regular folk singer of Bangladesh Television and Bangladesh Betar. She earned popularity by signing poet Jasimuddin's song.



Participants at a roundtable on 'Ethics in Politics and People's Security' organised by Swadhinata O Nagarik Adhikar Forum at the National Press Club in the city yesterday. Sitting from right are Prof AAMS Arefin Siddique, Major (Retd) Akhtaruzzaman and Poet Prof Abu Bakar Siddique.



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Disadvantaged children still deprived of education

Speakers say at workshop

DU CORRESPONDENT

Though Bangladesh is said to have made great progress in education sector, there is still much to be done for disadvantaged children who are deprived of educational facilities, said the speakers at a workshop yesterday.

They said the children who are physically or mentally challenged and those who belong to some marginalised groups have little scope to have access to mainstream education.

The daylong workshop on 'Child Friendly Learning and Inclusive Education (IE)' was organised by UNESCO Dhaka and the Institute of Education and Research (IER) of Dhaka University (DU) at the Planning and Development Academy in the city.

Yesterday's workshop, which focused on the curricular of IE with experts and field level teachers talking about possible models of an ideal and uniform curricular, was the third and final of a series of workshops going on for the last six months.

Hassan A Keynan, officer-in-charge of UNESCO and chief guest at the workshop, highlighted the relevance of IE to Education for All.

"If you want to educate all, you basically want to include all in the classroom," he said, adding that Bangladesh is also a signatory to achieve Millennium Development Goal in education sector.

Iqbal Aziz Multaqa, director of IER, presided over the workshop.

Prof Nazmul Haq of IER presented a paper while the audience comprising members of NGO, donor communities and teachers took part in the workshop.

3500 bottles of phensidyl seized Two arrested

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) members yesterday seized 3500 bottles of Indian smuggled phensidyl and arrested two people from Charghat and Puthia upazilas.

The arrestees are Sabbir Ahmed, 30 and Bulbul Ahmed, 30. Rab members challenged a truck and found phensidyl bottles being carried to Dhaka.

ARREST OF GARMENTS TRADER Wife seeks justice

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The wife of an arrested garments trader yesterday demanded immediate release of her husband, saying that he was falsely charged with possessing illegal firearms.

DB police arrested Rafiqul Islam Majumder, also a 56 Ward BNP leader, from Maghbar area in the city on December 12 on charge of possessing seven firearms and 45 bullets.

At a press conference yesterday, his wife Rubina Majumder also demanded fair investigation into the incident of recovery of firearms, which she said is stage-managed.

She said her husband, who is the owner of several shops at Bangabazar Hawkers Market, has a feud with his business rivals who cooked up the incident to harass him.

She also said that her husband had also filed general diary against them as they issued threats to him on several occasions.

Refuting the allegation that Rafiqul is an arms trader, Rubina said her husband is an honest businessman and there is no case against him.

"Some of his business rivals who had been threatening my husband for the last couple of months carried out the plan for their financial gain," she said.

However, she did not disclose the names of his business rivals, saying that they are very powerful and can do harm to her family.

President greets new king of Bhutan

UNB, Bhutan

President/Chief Advisor Iajuddin Ahmed felicitated the new king of Bhutan.

In a message to the King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuk, Iajuddin said, "Your father his Majesty Jigme Singye Wangchuk had undertaken great efforts to consolidate the bilateral relations between our two countries."

"His Majesty also made significant strides to promote regional cooperation among the countries of the South Asian region under the aegis of Saarc," he added.

He also expressed hope that the excellent bilateral relation that so happily exists between our two countries will also continue to grow under his leadership and able guidance.

Iajuddin wished good health, happiness and long life of the King and also for continued peace, progress and prosperity of the friendly people of Bhutan.



Light to moderate fog likely

UNB, Dhaka

Weather is likely to remain mainly dry with partly cloudy sky over the country in the next 12 hours until 6:pm today.

Light to moderate fog may also occur over the river basins of the country during early morning. Met Office said in a forecast. It also predicts a nearly unchanged night temperature over the country.

Highest temperature 30.5 degree Celsius was recorded yesterday at Feni and lowest 13.0 degree Celsius at Jessore and Srimongal.

The sun sets in the capital at 5:16pm today and rises at 6:37am tomorrow.

Highest and lowest temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

Table with columns: City/Town, Temperature, Humidity in percentage, Morning, Evening. Rows include Dhaka, Chittagong, Rajshahi, Khulna, Barisal, Sylhet, Cox's Bazar.

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Death anniversary



Today is the 49th death anniversary of Mokbul Hossain Chowdhury, an eminent journalist, litterateur, politician and social worker, says a press release.

One of the founders of Sylhet Kendriyo Muslim Sahitya Sangsad, Mokbul Chowdhury was elected a Member of Legislative Assembly (MLA) of Assam in 1937.

The first editor of Sylhet-based newspaper Jugvry, he also edited Jugabani and Sylhet Patrika, published from Sylhet, and the daily Softan, published from Kolkata.

On the occasion, Qurankhani and doa mahfil will be held at Dhaka, Sylhet and Sunamganj.

Hossain Toufique Chowdhury, a lawyer and columnist, and Hasan Shahriar, executive editor of the daily Ittefaq, are two of his sons.



Seminar

Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers & Exporters Association (BKMEA) organises a seminar on 'Productivity improvement programme'. Venue: Dhaka Sheraton Hotel. Time: 10:00am.

Convention

The inaugural ceremony of 'National Convention-2006' of The Hunger Project will be held. Venue: Gonoshashtho Kendra. Time: 10:00am.

Seminar

Gonoprojatontri Pokkho organises a seminar on 'Democracy, state security and national election'. Venue: National Press Club. Time: 10:00am.

Discussion

Conscious Citizens' Forum will hold a discussion on 'Contemporary politics of Bangladesh: Way to overcome the crisis'. Venue: National Press Club. Time: 10:30am.

Conference

Embassy of Italy and the Institute of Hazrat Muhammad (SAW) will hold a conference on 'International religious cooperation in peace making'. Venue: Lake Shore Hotel. Time: 9:30am.

Convention

Bangladesh Women Lawyers' Association will hold a children convention on 'Developing protection and preventive mechanism for the trafficked children'. Venue: Biam auditorium. Time: 10:00am.