

Ensure franchise of people with disability

Speakers urge govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a discussion yesterday said the people with disabilities are deprived of their fundamental rights including right to voting due to lack of initiatives by the government as well political parties.

"The visually impaired people should be given the opportunity to go to the booth with their guide to cast their votes under strict privacy. On the other hand, the physically challenged people who use wheel chairs should be provided with ramp at the polling centres so that they can cast their vote without any difficulties," they added.

The discussion titled 'Electoral rights and political commitment for citizens with disabilities' was organ-

ised jointly by the National Forum of Organisations Working with the Disabled (NFOWD) and Dhaka Reporters Unity (DRU) at DRU auditorium.

While delivering the welcome speech, Siddiqur Rahman of DRU said, "No plan is implemented for the welfare of the people with disability although they constitute around 10 percent of the total population."

"We want amendment of Bangladesh Disabled Welfare Act 2001 and ratification of the international convention regarding rights of the physically and mentally challenged people," said NFOWD Secretary General AHM Noman Khan while reading out the keynote paper.

"We have talked to the political parties and urged them to include the rights of the people with disability in their electoral pledge and lobbied to the social welfare ministry to sent proposals to the Election Commission (EC) to ensure their voting rights," said Khandakar Zahurul Alam, president of NFOWD.

The speakers urged the EC for incorporation and implementation of the proposals.

They also demanded implementation of the rights of the children with disabilities to education and sought approval of the national action plan at the ministry level in this regard.

DRU Vice-president Zafar Wajed moderated the discussion.

Anti-corruption concert today

DU CORRESPONDENT

The first ever anti-corruption concert, organised by Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB), will be held in the city today.

The concert, aiming to inculcate anti-corruption values in youths, will begin at 2:00pm at Gulshan Youth Club and continue till 10:00pm.

Nobel laureate Prof Mohammad Yunus, TIB Chairman Prof Muzaffer Ahmad, Advocate Sultana Kamal, Prof Zafar Iqbal and other eminent personalities will attend the programme to express solidarity against corruption.

Renowned singers and musical bands, including Azam Khan, Hyder Hossain, Shahed, Fahmida Nabi, Fuad Naser Babu, Mehrin, Naqib Khan, Gambhira, Aklima, Shahjahan Munshi, LRB, Miles, Souls, Feedback, Renaissance, Warfaze, Dalchut, Black, Artcel, Pentagon, Shironamhin, Meghdal, Arhahin and Face to Face, will perform in the concert.

The TIB has organised the event in association with Channel 1, Radio Foorti, Radio Today, Prothom Alo, The Daily Star, Bangla Vision and SAS.



Prof Muzaffer Ahmad speaks at a press conference at Dhaka Reporters' Unity auditorium in the city yesterday. On his right is Abul Maksud and on his left are Justice Quazi Ebadul Haque, M Hafizuddin Khan and Badiul Alam Majumder.

5 killed in road accidents

STAR REPORT

Five people were killed in separate road accidents across the country yesterday.

UNB from Kushtia reports: Three teenagers were killed in a road accident near Kanchikata Bridge on Panti-Kushtia road in Madhupur upazila when the motorbike they were riding on crashed on a roadside tree at about 11:00am.

Police said Deedar, 18, his younger brother Sabbir, 14, and their cousin Akash, 18, died on the spot.

Deedar and Sabbir, students of

AL deal with bigots condemned

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Different development and women organisations yesterday condemned the deal signed between Awami League (AL) and Bangladesh Khelafat Majlish (BKM).

They demanded immediate cancellation of the five-point deal as it is against the spirit of the liberation war, a secular constitution and the 23-point charter of AL.

Expressing concern over the deal, Association of Development Agencies in Bangladesh (ADAB) in a statement said the deal would encourage the country's fundamentalists and communal forces.

The deal is an intense conspiracy of the reactionary and anti-liberation forces that are against secularism and progressiveness, the ADAB leaders observed.

Narigantha Prabantona at a meeting on December 27 said the pact between the AL and BKM, specially issuing fatwa (Islamic edicts), a key point of the five-point accord, would make the helpless women worst victims of fatwa.

They urged women from all walks of life to launch a movement to save womenfolk from the fatwa imposters.

CARE-NILG deal to strengthen local govt bodies

BSS, Dhaka

CARE Bangladesh and National Institute of Local Government (NILG) yesterday signed an agreement for strengthening capacities of local elected bodies, service providers and pourasabha and city corporation representatives.

Hasan M Mazumdar, deputy country director of CARE and Mohammad Arfan Ali, director general of NILG, signed the accord on behalf of respective sides at a simple ceremony at NILG auditorium at Argagaon in the city, said a press release.

CARE and Ministry of LGRD and Cooperatives under the leadership of NILG have initiated a year-long training programme funded by USAID to enhance the capacity of 11,550 representatives of 492 union parishads, 16 pourasabhas and a city corporation within the Shouhardo programme operation area.

New chairman of Red Crescent meets staffs

Prof Abdur Rob, the new Chairman of the Bangladesh Red Crescent Society (BDRCS), had a courtesy meeting with the members of the managing board, officers and staff members on Wednesday at the BDRCS national headquarters, says a press release.

He had a discussion with the members of the managing board on the overall situation of the society. He has recently been appointed for a term of three years.

Panti High School, were sons of Ainal Haq Joarder of Kanchikata while Akash hailed from Madhupur village.

Our Correspondent from Chandpur adds: A bicyclist was killed in a road accident on Chandpur-Cornilla Highway at Enayetpur area under Hajiganj upazila yesterday noon.

The deceased was identified as Ruhul Amin, 27, of Hajiganj Sadar. He was a staff of a local jute mill. Police and witnesses said the accident occurred when a Chandpur-bound bus of Bogdad transport suddenly hit him from behind, killing him on the spot.

Angry mob put a barricade on Chandpur-Cornilla for over two hours.

Later, police brought the situa-

tion under control.

BSS from Chittagong adds: A man was killed and two others were injured in a road accident in the district yesterday.

The deceased was identified as Nazrul Islam, 28, of Banglabazar at Sitakunda while the injured were Kamal Hossain, 22, and Jakir Hossain, 26, of the same area.

Nazrul sustained serious injuries when a speedy truck knocked him down near Kalushahar Mazar on Dhaka-Chittagong highway under Sitakunda upazila yesterday morning. He was rushed to Chittagong Medical College Hospital (CMCH) where attending doctors declared him dead.

Kamal and Jakir, also knocked by the truck, are undergoing treatment at CMCH.

Appeal for help



Sati Rani Sarker, a mother of three, has appealed for financial assistance for her treatment as she has been suffering from severe kidney diseases, says a press release.

Both of her kidneys are almost damaged. She is now undergoing treatment at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University Hospital.

Doctors advised her to go abroad for better treatment as early as possible. But such treatment abroad involves about Tk six lakh, which her family could not afford.

Her children have also appealed to generous people to extend a helping hand to save their mother's life.

Contributions can be sent to Savings Account No. 34120644, Al Arafah Islami Bank, MB Branch, Motijheel, Dhaka-1000.



Sub-Editors Council Mutasim, Masum president, secy

BSS, Dhaka

Shah Muhammad Mutasim Billah of the daily Janakantha and Masum Billah of Dainik Naya Diganta were elected president and general secretary respectively of Dhaka Sub-Editors Council (DSEC) on Monday.

The election was followed by DSEC's annual general meeting held at the National Press Club auditorium with out-going president Humayun Sadeque Chowdhury in the chair, a DSEC press release said.

Other office bearers are: Sharif Talukder, joint secretary, Abul Kalam Azad, organising secretary, Refayet Hossain, office secretary, Idris Madrasai, publicity and publication secretary, and Manzurul Alam, training and research secretary.

Earlier, Shah Matin Tipu, Mohammad Al-Mamun and Mohammad Ashique Mahmood were elected unopposed as vice-president, treasurer and sports and cultural secretary of the executive committee.

Besides, Suman Islam, Hussain Mahmood Riyadh, Farida Akhtar Khan, Zakirul Islam, Paritosh Kumar Roy, Zahidul Haque, Soheb Ahmed, Mohammad Shahidul Islam, Mohammad Tuhidul Islam Shiplu, Ashraful Islam and Alam Hossain were elected members, the press release said.

Abbas, Yusufi elected CPC president, secy

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Chittagong

Ali Abbas and Ezaz Yusufi were elected president and general secretary of Chittagong Press Club (CPC) on Wednesday.

The election was held at CPC auditorium where a total of 142, out of 152 voters, cast their votes.

Other office-bearers are Senior Vice President: Abu Jafar Md Haider, Joint Secretary: Md Khorshed Alam, Treasurer: Nowsar Ali Khan, Cultural and Publication Secretary: Manjur Kader Manju, Library Secretary: Didarul Alam and Sports Secretary: Mohammad Faruk.

Members of the executive committee are Faruk Iqbal, Shahid Ul Alam and Md Sekandar Hossain. Earlier, Asif Siraj and Roksarul Islam were elected vice-president and social welfare secretary unopposed.

'Implement electoral laws strictly to curb corruption'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Shushashoner Janney Nagorik (Shujan) yesterday called for proper implementation of the election-related laws in order to curb corruption and ensure transparency in the forthcoming general election.

Shujan leaders also expressed strong resentment at a Supreme Court order staying a High Court verdict that compels the Election Commission to collect and make public some vital information about election candidates.

They also criticised the political parties, saying that none of them abide by the electoral rules properly.

Although the general election is drawing nearer, no electoral reform proposals have been implemented, they said at a press conference at Dhaka Reporters' Unity auditorium.

Shujan leaders observed that the election-related corruption can be reduced by at least 50 percent if the electoral laws are implemented strictly.

Many candidates have already

started massive election campaign through graffiti, publishing colourful posters and erecting arches in their areas, although such activities are prohibited under the existing electoral laws, Shujan President Prof Muzaffer Ahmad said.

The civil society had appealed to the Election Commission and the caretaker government to take action against those violating laws, but to no avail, he said.

It seems that the candidates, who will formulate laws after their election, have engaged in breaking laws in a festive mood, columnist Abul Maksud said.

There is no guarantee that they would not break laws after being elected, he said, calling on the people to come forward to put pressure on the authorities to curb corruption in the election process.

Prof Muzaffer Ahmad said the Election Commission is yet to take any initiatives to register the political parties. Some reforms have been brought about only to change individuals, but there is no change in policies, he added.

To reduce corruption and fraudulent practices in the election, reliable persons should be appointed as election officials and polling agents should be trained up, he said.

Shujan has presented a set of election laws with a view to raising awareness among the people. It has also been preparing a list of areas vulnerable to election-related corruption. The list will be published later, Shujan leaders said at the press conference.

M Hafizuddin Khan, former adviser to a caretaker government, said some candidates have started campaign three months ahead of the election in violation of laws.

According to the rule, the candidates must submit reports on election expenditure to the returning officer within two weeks after the announcement of the results, but nobody follows it, he said.

Shujan Secretary Badiul Alam Majumder, Justice Quazi Ebadul Haque and Prof Tofail Ahmed also spoke at the press conference.

SOUTH ASIAN UNIVERSITY Final decision in March next year

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, New Delhi

A final decision on the proposal of South Asian University (SAU), put forward by Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh at the last Saarc summit in Dhaka, is likely to be taken in March next year ahead of the next summit of South Asian leaders here in April.

The Ministry of External Affairs is understood to be pitching for locating the university in Delhi but a decision will be based on consensus among the Saarc countries, official sources said.

The university is being seen as a way of bolstering cooperation among the South Asian countries and Gowher Rizvi, director of Ash Institution of Democratic Governance and Innovations at Harvard University, was given the task of preparing a concept note on the proposed institution.

After discussions among the stakeholders across the Saarc countries, it has been suggested that the SAU should be set up as a non-profit public private partnership venture in view of funds constraints of governments in the region and profit-making private universities.

It has also been proposed that all governments of Saarc countries would have to contribute to initial funding of the residential university.

However, the governments would not be providing annual subsidies to the university whose authorities then have to ensure financial viability of the institution, said the sources.

The Saarc countries will also discuss the admission policy and procedure, fee structure as well as legal framework of the university.

The model for the SAU, particularly relating to the legal framework, has been suggested in the light of Budapest-based Central European University and the University of Central Asia in Kyrgyzstan.

The governments of Saarc countries are in a very advanced stage of discussions on the details pertaining to the establishment of the university.

Benajir chairman of NSU Foundation



Benajir Ahmed has been elected chairman of the North South University Foundation at the meeting of its Board of Governors on December 24, says a press release.

Benajir, a renowned industrialist and a social worker, is also a founder life member of the foundation.

Death anniversary

Today is the 13th death anniversary of Abdul Jabbar Khan, a valiant freedom fighter and pioneer of the film-makers in Bangladesh.

He directed the film 'Mukh O Mukhosh' during Liberation War and was the director of film division and adviser of the Shadhin Bangla Betar Kendra.

He was also the founder of Leoisin in Bangladesh, life member of Victoria Club and a former local government.

On the occasion, a Doa Mahfil will be held.

Moazzem Hossain

BSS, Dhaka

Today is the 8th death anniversary of photojournalist Moazzem Hossain.

He was a senior photojournalist of The Bangladesh Observer and founder general secretary of Bangladesh Photojournalist Association.

On the occasion, Qurankhwani will be held at his Shantinagar residence and food will be distributed among the destitute.



A policeman piles licensed firearms deposited with Gulshan Police Station in the city yesterday. Owners of the firearms brought those to the police station as the home ministry issued an order to deposit firearms ahead of the national election. The last date for depositing firearms has been extended until January 5.

WEATHER TODAY

Dry weather likely

UNB, Dhaka

Dry weather is likely to prevail over the country in the next 12 hours until 6:00pm today.

Moderate to thick fog may also occur over the river basins and light to moderate fog elsewhere over the country during morning, Met Office said in a forecast.

It said that night temperature may fall slightly over western part and remain nearly unchanged elsewhere over the country.

Highest temperature 28.0 degree Celsius was recorded yesterday at Chittagong and Cox's Bazar and lowest 10.5 degrees at Srimongal.

The sun sets in the capital at 5:21pm today and rises at 6:40am tomorrow.

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

City/Town	Temperature in percentage		Humidity in percentage	
	Max	Min	Morning	Evening
Dhaka	25.7	12.5	79	58
Chittagong	28.0	15.0	85	83
Rajshahi	25.4	12.3	89	74
Khulna	26.0	14.5	92	72
Barisal	26.8	13.6	95	78
Sylhet	22.8	13.9	83	79
Cox's Bazar	28.0	15.8	72	74

60 launches stranded in mid-river for six hours

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

About 60 passenger-launches were stranded in the mid-rivers for almost six hours due to dense fog near Chandpur and Mehendiganj on Wednesday night causing sufferings to thousands of passengers.

Sources said on Wednesday evening 30 launches sailed from Dhaka for six southern districts while 30 launches started for Dhaka at the same time.

But at midnight heavy fog engulfed the area and the launches were forced to anchor in Meghna, Ilsha and Gozarria rivers.

The launches started for their destination once the fog was cleared.

BABU LAL MURDER CASE

All 19 accused acquitted

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

All the 19 accused in Babu Lal Shil murder case including some cadres of outlawed party were acquitted yesterday.

Judge Abdul Matin of the Speedy Trial Tribunal, Barisal gave the acquittal order, as the charges proved against them were not proved.

Those who were acquitted are Mozahar Sardar, Azizul Haq Mollah, Biplob Mollah, Nuru Sikdar, Azizul Haq Sikdar, Razzak Sikdar, Soheli Sikdar, Jajil Jamaddar, Selim Sharif, Gias Faraji, Shipon Mollah, Babu Sharif, Hemayet Sardar, Mizan, Mizanur Rahman alias Sentu, Humayun Khalifha, Aminul Haq and Majid Khan.

Of them, five were present in the court during the delivery of the

verdict while the rest are absconding.

Earlier, the prosecution and the defence completed their arguments and the court recorded statements of 20 prosecution witnesses.

According to the prosecution, a group of 10 to 12 unknown miscreants killed Babu Lal Shil, former general secretary of Uzirpur Upazila Workers' party, when he along with his wife was talking to some workers in front of their house at about 8:00pm on July 16, 2004.

Later, the victim's brother filed a murder case with Uzirpur Police Station accusing the miscreants.

The investigation officer pressed charges against 19 including some outlawed party cadres on September 24 last year.



National Press Club President Reazuddin Ahmed speaks at the biennial general meeting of the club at its auditorium in the city yesterday.

DHAKA TODAY

Concert

Transparency International Bangladesh organises a concert against corruption. Venue: Gulshan Youth Club. Time: 2:00pm.

Award giving ceremony

Award distribution ceremony of Charon Sangbadik Monajatuddin Smrity Puraskar 2005 will be held. Venue: Dhaka Reporters' Unity auditorium. Time: 10:00am.

Valuables worth Tk 6.61 lakh looted in Barisal

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

Robbers looted valuables worth Tk 6.61 lakh in two separate incidents in the district yesterday.

A gang of robbers yesterday looted at least Tk 6 lakh from a house at Rajchar village in the Sadar upazila in the early hours of yesterday.

Police and family members said the gang entered the house of Swapan Kumar Sheel, a village doctor, at the dead of night.

The robbers beat up and

injured at least eight people, including Swapan Kumar along with his son and brother, as they tried to resist them. The robbers then looted the valuables holding the family members at gunpoint.

Meanwhile, burglars looted valuables worth Tk 61000 from a house in Kownia main road area on the same day.

One Bidhan Chandra Das said the burglars broke into the house breaking window grills and took away gold ornaments and furniture.