Lawyers greet Chief Justice

Chief Justice of Bangladesh Mustafa Kamal was felicitated by Attorney General of Bangladesh Mahmudul Islam and on behalf of the lawyers Barrister Shafique Ahmed, President of the Supreme Court Bar Association, at a function in the court of the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court yesterday morning, reports BSS.

Speaking on the occasion Justice Kamal said the legal profession and the judiciary now stand at a cross-road of history. "So long the judiciary functioned almost beyond the glaze of public eyes but with the concept of accountability growing ... the legal profession and the judiciary can no longer function behind and beyond public scrutiny. We have a storehouse of problems to face and solve." The chief justice said in the felicitation ceremony.

He said we have to remember that living under a parliamentary form of government, political activities and alliances cannot be prevented but it is the duty of the judges to keep themselves away from political turmoils and allegiances both in and out of court to keep this august institution of ours as a genuinely last resort of all kinds of litigants.

The Chief Justice said that the independence of the judiciary which is embodied in Article 94(4) and 116A of the constitution will not be meaning full at all, however, unless the judiciary enjoys both financial and administrative independence and autonomy.

Attorney general Mahmudul Islam said our expectation from you as the chief Justice is high and surely we shall expect that you may find time to remove slackness in the administration of justice and to enhance the prestige of and the people's confidence in the judiciary.

Barrister Shafique Ahmed said you will take positive steps to remove problems of administration of justice particularly justice delivery system and the courts environment.

Judges of the Supreme Court and lawyers were present at the function.

Crimes on rise in Panchagarh

PANCHAGARH, June 1: Crimes are on rise in the district marking deterioration of law and order situation in the district, reports UNB.

Various crimes like dacoity, killing, burglary, smuggling, rape, abduction and repression on women have increased alarmingly in the district. Some 246 cases were filed with five thanas of the district during the first three months of the current year, police said.

Of the total, 84 crimes including seven burglaries, five smuggling, 2 abduction and 14 rape were committed in Tetulia thana alone which topped the crime list.

Some 75 crimes, including nine theft, two abduction, 11 rape and 14 repression on women were committed in Sadar thana during the period.

On the other hand, a total of 490 incidents of crimes took place in five thanas of the district in last year, said the official sources.

Gifts galore

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cultural, political organisations and individuals joined the celebrations yesterday of Bangladesh's victory against Pakistan, congratulating the team. Bangladeshis abroad were not behind.

Those who felicitated the team included country's President, ministers, speakers, sport personalities and intellectuals.

The organizations included, among others: National Sports Council, Muktijoddah Sangsad, Bangla Academy, Bangladesh Agricultural University, FBCCI, DCCI, Bangladesh Olympic Association, ADAB, Bangladesh Sewing Thread Federation, Gonotantrik Oikya Parishad, Mujibnagar Muktijoddah Officers-Karmachari Kendrio Kalyan Samity, Ekatturer Ghatak Dalal Nirmul Committee, Sammilita Sangskritik Jote, Jatiya Hindu Parishad, BCI, Jubo Command, Chhatra Command, Janata Insurance Company, Bangladesh Krishak League, Bangladesh Jubo Union, Dhaka Metropolitan Bar Association, Sylhet Division Development Council, Institute of Diploma Engineers, Polytechnic Teachers Council, Mahakal Natya Samprodaya, Bangladesh Export-Oriented Garments Washing Industries Owners Association, Sri Krishna Sheba Sangha, Jatiyatabadi Peshajibi Parishad, Bangladesh Tafsili Jati Federation, Bangladesh Primary Teachers Oikya Parishad and Ramna Taxi and Microbus Drivers-Workers Committee.

Reports from different townships gave account of celebrations.

In Barisal, jubilant youths broke the lull of midnight with blasting of crackers. Scenes were no different in other southern and northern districts. Similar reports came from the port city Chittagong, divisional headquarters of Sylhet.

Expatriate Bangladeshis in different countries also revelled in joy.

Reports from UK, US and different Middle-Eastern countries said Bangladeshis' joy knew no bounds.

"Bangladeshi cab drivers, a growing workforce in New York, honked carelessly, pretty girls blew kisses to perfect strangers and a restaurant in the residential district of Queens offered free sweets to all," a news agency reported.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh Cricket Board has expressed its gratitude to all those who supported the Bangladesh cricket team.

Protect democracy for economic uplift: PM

KHULNA, June 1: Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina today expressed firm determination that Bangladesh would no more remain an underdeveloped country as it emerged as a fighting nation following restoration of democracy, reports UNB.

"We'll keep its head aloft economically managing the challenges of 21st century," she said addressing journalists at Khulna Press Club on the occasion of the inauguration of a historic sculpture by Sheikh Sadi Bhuiyan.

Prime Minister Hasina arrived in Khulna Tuesday morning to join the Golden Jubilee celebrations of Awami League. Before joining the programme, she went to the press club to unveil the plaque of the sculpture.

The 3.5'X 127' terracotta sculpture styled 'Swadhinatar Raktashiri' is placed on all the surrounding walls of the hall room of the Press Club.

The historic carvings project the entire history of the nation's struggle towards independence. Historic events from Language Movement in 1952, Mass Upsurge in 1969, 7th March 1971, the Black Night of 25th March, War of Independence and the surrender of the Pakistani Army are engraved in the beautifully designed huge sculpture.

After unveiling the plaque, the Prime Minister went round to see the sculptor.

She praised the sculptor for selecting such a theme that is projecting Bengali's struggle for freedom.

Urging the journalists to play their due role in protecting democracy, the Prime Minister said economic emancipation would not be possible if democracy is threatened.

"If the civil society is not properly flourished, democracy would not get an institutional shape," she said.

Referring to an inglorious past, she said Bangladesh had been out of the economic race because democracy was marred through the politics of killing and coup. "They grabbed power and ruined the country."

"We have fought against the politics of killing and coup. We established people's right to vote. Now we are fighting for economic emancipation of the whole nation."

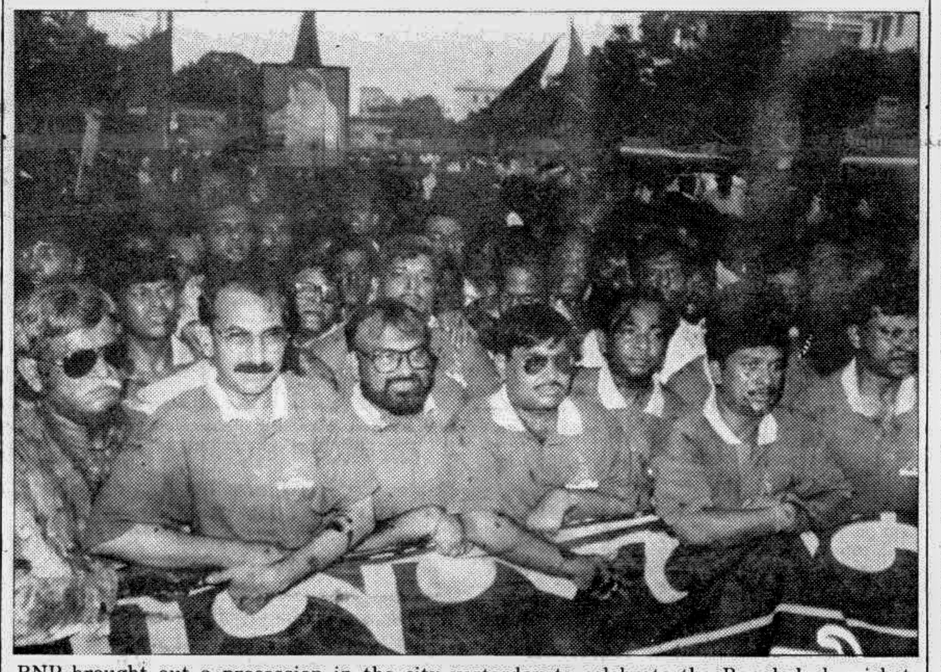
"So now is the time to institutionalise the hard-won democracy and march on the path of economic development," said Prime Minister.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina today demonstrated outburst of her joy and delight saying that the golden boys of our cricket have brought laurels for the nation when they outplayed mighty Pakistanis in the World Cup encounter yesterday.

"I was in deep tension till the last ball and finally could not contain myself but burst into tears of joy," she said while narrating her experiences during the progress of the game.

Presided over by Press Club President Humayun Kabir Balu, the function was also addressed by general secretary Manik Saha and former president Liaqat Ali.

Bangladesh Awami League brought out a victory procession in the city yesterday to mark the Bangladesh cricket team's victory over Pakistan in a World Cup match. — Star photo



BNP brought out a procession in the city yesterday to celebrate the Bangladesh cricket team's victory over Pakistan in a World Cup match. — Star photo

Arsenic contamination poses health hazard

COMILLA, June 1: Presence of arsenic at an alarming proportion has been detected in tubewell waters in eight thanas of the district, posing health hazards to the people, reports APB.

As a result, officials said, the Department of Public Health Engineering (DPHE) had been hesitating to sink new tubewells here.

Arsenic contamination has been detected in the waters of tubewells in eight out of 12 thanas in the district. These are Laksam, Langolkot, Muradnagar, Debidawar, Homna, Daudkandi, Chandina and Barura.

Tubewell water of the remaining four thanas could not be tested owing to lack of test kits, they said.

People of the affected areas are falling victims to arsenic poisoning. Unofficial sources put the number of death at two.

Arsenic contents in some of the areas have been detected at a level of more than 0.10 milligram per litre compared to the World Health Organisation (WHO) safety limit of 0.05 milligram per litre.

The Executive Engineer of LGED, Comilla, told APB that those tubewells having less than 150 feet depth tended to have more arsenic content. The *"Tara"* pumps were comparatively less affected by arsenic contamination, he observed.

Muktijoddha Samonnaya Parishad brought out a procession in the city yesterday to protest the attack on Bangabir Kader Siddiqui's rally at Sherpur. — Star photo

Freedom fighters protest attack on Kader Siddiqui's rally at Sherpur

By Staff Correspondent

Twenty-eight freedom fighters have strongly protested imposition of section 144 by the government and the police attack on freedom fighters' rally at Nakla in Sherpur district on Sunday.

In a joint statement, they termed the actions at Bangabir Kader Siddiqui MP's meeting as a sign of danger for democracy in the country.

They said that they had joined the Liberation War and liberated the country at the cost of millions of lives. But now the Prime Minister has taken away their freedom to even express themselves. She had also chosen to take up a path to repress the freedom fighters. The signatories warned that the consequences of such a step would bring no good.

The freedom fighters said firing of gunshots and tear shells by the police on Kader Siddiqui's rally reminded them of the horror-filled days of Ayub and Yahya.

"We strongly condemn and protest this cowardly attack and appeal to all freedom fighters and independence loving patriotic people irrespective of their party and opinion affiliations to raise their voices against this type of undemocratic behaviour," they said.

The signatories include Naval Commander Jalal Ahmed, BU, Abdul Sabur Khan, BB, Abul Kalam Azad BB, Matiur Rahman, BP, Anwar Hossain Pahari, BP, Rafiqul Islam, BP, Mohammad Abdullah, BP, Abidur Rahman, BB and Mizanur Rahman Khan, BP.Out of the 28 signatories, 14 of them have been awarded with gallantry awards for their heroic role in the Liberation War.

Tk 1600 cr project at Maowa Ghat

China to finance water treatment plant

Dhaka Water and Sewerage Authority (WASA) will set up a new water treatment plant at Maowa Ghat at a cost of Taka 1600 crore to produce 45 crore litre water per day to meet the growing demand of city dwellers.

Talking to BSS yesterday, officials of Dhaka WASA said that China would help Bangladesh in establishing the water treatment plant and an agreement in this regard would be signed between the two countries very soon.

The Chinese government on turn-key basis will finance 85 per cent cost of the plant with a four per cent interest per year while Bangladesh will bear the rest of the cost, the officials said.

China National Constructional and Agricultural Machinery Import and Export Corporation (CAMC) will implement the project on behalf of the Chinese government, the officials said adding that water from the plant would be distributed through underground pipeline.

They said that the site for the plant was earlier selected by the side of the river Buriganga but the feasibility study rejected the site following finding untreatable level of bacteria contamination in the water there.

The total demand of water for the Dhaka city is 140 crore litres per day against the production of 110 crore litres.

Discussion meet held on No Tobacco Day

A discussion meeting on World No Tobacco Day was held on Monday, 5 pm in the Dhaka Ahsania Mission auditorium at Dhanmondi, Dhaka under the auspices of the Dhaka Ahsania Mission, says a press release.

State Minister for Ministry of Foreign Affairs Abul Hasan Chowdhury was present at the meeting as the Chief Guest.

Various organisations greet cricket team

More socio cultural and political organisations, educationists and individuals yesterday felicitated Bangladesh cricket team for their unprecedented victory against former world champion Pakistan in the World Cup Group B match Monday at Northampton, England, reports BSS.

Bangla Academy in a press release warmly congratulated the team and shared the proud of the historic victory in the World Cup. It said "Bangla Academy considers the victory as an 'achievement' as the War of Liberation took place against Pakistan in 1971.

Vice Chancellor of Bangladesh Agricultural University Prof Mohammad Hussain and Vice Chancellor of the Islamic University Prof Mohammad Kayes Uddin have extended their warm greetings to the members of winning team and said the victory was "unparalleled."

Leaders and members of Jatiya Press Club (JPC) yesterday hailed Bangladesh cricket squad for "wonderful victory against mighty Pakistan."

"We share the great joy of the people of Bangladesh and the victory, Khankder Monirul Alam and Swapan Kumer Saha, president and general secretary of JPC said.

The victory has further enhanced the image and dignity of Bangladesh in the world arena, they said adding "continued practice and patriotism helped the Bengal Tigers to win such a big match against world-class Pakistan cricket team."

Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industries (FBCCI) president Abdul Awal Mintoo congratulated Bangladesh cricket team for its spectacular performance at Northampton against Pakistan.

Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry (DCCI) also congratulated the Bangladesh squad for its the glorious and heroic victory.

In a statement DCCI president MH Rahman expressed the hope that the spirit of the victory would be reflected as a symbol of 'national unity' in every sphere of life in future.

Bangladesh Olympic Association felicitated the cricket team and expressed the hope that this victory would open the door to gain 'Test status' in world cricket as well as play a pioneering role in developing sports in the country.

President of the Association of Development Agencies in Bangladesh (ADAB) Kazi Faruq Ahmed said the victory has ushered in a new era in history of Bangladesh cricket.

Bangladesh Sewing Thread Federation president Abul Quashem Haider greeted the cricketers of the country and sought blessings from the almighty Allah to continue this type of victory.

Gonotantrik Oikkya Parishad, a registered graduate forum of the Dhaka University, also congratulated Bangladesh cricket players, coach and manger of the team for bringing a rare honour to the nation.

Stare Minster for Jute AK Faezul Huq has warmly congratulated the Bangladesh cricket team for their remarkable victory against former world champion Pakistan.

In a message of felicitation Tuesday, the minister expressed the hope that our cricket team will continue to keep up the winning trend in the future competitions, says an official handout.

Besides vice president of Jatiya Krira Parishad and Secretary of Youth and Sports Ministry A S M Shajahan, BCI president Khandker Mosharraf Hossain, Muktijoddah Juba Command, Muktijoddah Chhatra Command, Mahakal Natya Samprodaya, Ramna Taxi and Micro-Bus Drivers-Workers' Committee, Jatiyatabadi Peshajibi Parishad, Bangladesh Tofsili Jati Federation and Bangladesh Primary Teachers' Oikkya Parishad also felicitated the team.

Rangamati police arrest seven

RANGAMATI, June 1: Rangamati police today arrested seven warrantees from different parts of the district, reports BSS.

A team of Langadu thana police arrested five wanted absconders from Kalapakujya and Rangipara areas of the thana. They were identified as: Gazibur Rahman, 28, Arfan Ali, 25, Shamsuddin, 25, Rafiq, 30, and Tara Miah, 25.

Kawkhali police, in another drive, arrested two warrantees from Chailychhora in connection with robbery. They were identified as Chand Miah, 45, and Kabir Hussain, 25.

Lawful measures were taken against the arrested persons.

Students of the AG Church School rendering song at a cultural programme organised at its New Eskaton school premises on Monday to mark the birth anniversary of Poet Nazrul Islam and Rabindranath Tagore.

Charles Stuart, the High Commissioner of Australia in Bangladesh presented Australia's annual contribution of Aus $325,000 for the year 1999 to ICDDR, B, the Centre for Health and Population Research, Mark Collins, First Secretary (Development) of AusAID was also present on the occasion.

Mbeki set to succeed

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ties include the New National party (NNP), which is the reconstituted old white party of FW de Klerk, the Democrtaic Party (DP) and the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP).

Observers say a new multiracial party, the United Democratic Movement (UDM) founded by former NP Cabinet Minister Roelf Meyer and ANC rebel Bantu Holomissa is set to become the official opposition party. Most blacks still support the ANC as a political platform believing it would keep South Africa integrated and move forward.

There are no major ideological divisions between the parties. Differences mainly relate to matters of class and race. There is generally a broad support for the outgoing government's 'market-inclined economic policies'. However, two issues -- checking crime and extending social delivery services -- have been focussed in the election campaign.

If elected, Thabo Mbeki is expected to infuse greater dynamism into this diverse nation. His style will be different from Mandela but in substance, it will be almost the same. Mbeki's central theme would be to create "an African Renaissance " which will continue to emphasise that all racial groups living in South Africa would qualify as Africans and live in racial harmony.

Moving around South Africa, this correspondent found racial harmony.

Dolly Mosima, a medical aide, and her husband Lordish Sethole, a school teacher, a black couple living in Johannesburg, feels that South Africa since its democratic transition has opened windows of employment opportunity for blacks.

Sue Joanna, 26, a coloured South African working at the magnificent Zimabli Lodge that has a splendid 18-hole golf course feels that the country has immense potential for progress. "There is something for everyone, if one wants to work, " they said.

Computer science student Tamara Valashni, 22, forefathers came from the Sub-Continent over a century ago said : We are-used to this atmosphere. We are still being called Asians. There is aparthied in some form or other but the attitude of the whites have changed radically. Tamara's family owns a spice shop in Durban.

Ron Richardson, 56, a fourth generation South African who traces his ancestry to England and formerly worked for the Corobrick, the largest brick manufacturing plant in SA, says he is proud to be a South African.

"All whites irrespective of ancestry feel that this is their own country. After the demise of aparthied we realised that we have to work in harmony with all racial groups to prosper."

He said, "Before and immediately after the first all-race elections in 1994, there was a lot of uncertainty among whites about their future. A lot of them migrated to Australia, New Zealand and Canada but there they felt rootless. A lot of the whites started returning. Our real roots are in South Africa."

The mixture of races and cultures makes South Africa ' a rainbow of races.' This is exactly why the second all-race elections is crucial and will go a long way in fulfilling the hopes and expectations of this nation which is very rich in mineral resources including gold and diamond.

There are at least 20 ethnic groups and clans. The Dutch settlers arrived in 1652. Indian labourers arrived to work in sugar plantations in 1860's. The white population grew substantially in 1800s with the arrival of large groups of British settlers and fortune seekers in the mines.

The whites are about 4.4 million or nearly eleven per cent of the country's population. The mixed who are known as 'colored' are 3.6 million or nearly nine per cent , the Asians are over one million or nearly 2.6 per cent and the ethnic Africans are 31.1 million or 76.7 per cent, of the population.

How would the African National Congress with Thabo Mbeki as its President perform?

Mbeki has a catalogue of unfinished tasks. It includes fulfilment of ANC's election pledge of 1994 to build one million dwelling houses, improving and expanding education, reducing urban crime and creating new jobs.

Unemployment is very high at 22.9 per cent. The ANC's performance in developing healthcare facilities and supplying water and electricity in rural areas has improved.

The previously disadvantaged groups in South Africa have substantially increased their role and influence in business. There has been more empowerment of disadvantaged groups and the number of blue chip black companies enlisted with the Johannesburg Stock Exchange has increased considerably.

That itself speaks of the winds of change in South Africa.

Outgoing President Nelson Mandela perhaps strikes a chord among many when he says,' South Africa has become a reference point on how problems facing nations can be resolved all over the world. We have been able to achieve what everybody believes is a miracle. In fact our achievement is a monument to the collective worth of the South African people."

The second all-race elections in South Africa today will only strengthen that miracle that comes from the fountain of democratic reconciliation.

Charges contradictory

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dozen industries have been given gas connection under the cost-sharing scheme.

Titas Gas insiders observed that the unscrupulous union activists could not make any "gain" from any of these schemes and therefore, they were persuading higher authorities to take action against the officials.

The Energy Ministry formed a three-member probe committee led by a Joint Secretary of Energy Ministry early this year. The committee submitted its report in April. The report basically focused on the cost-sharing issue.

The report observed that the government, Petrobangla or the Titas Board did not approve cost-sharing policy though it has been practised since 1993-94. A handful of industries were given facilities under this scheme.

But in another part of the self-contradictory report, it was stated that in June 1996, the company approved a policy on cost-sharing scheme and that became the basis of approval from 1996-97.

The report noted that Titas spent Tk 11.98 crore for this scheme. In two instances, Titas bore the whole construction budget of Tk 4.19 crore for one pipeline and Tk 0.49 crore for another.

However, minutes of meeting nos. 328, 332, 338, 341, 343, 344, 353, 365 and 366 of Titas Gas Board obtained by The Daily Star show that the cost-sharing schemes were approved by the Titas Board which comprise high officials from the Energy Ministry, Petrobangla, PDB and Titas. One of these meetings was chaired by the then Energy Secretary Dr SA Samad.

The report noted that the real revenue from these connections were not consistent with the projections made by Titas authorities. The report broadly pointed out that there were huge outstanding bills with the subscribers who were given connections under the cost- sharing scheme.

However, billing documents of Titas show that most of these bills were updated.

"Outstanding bills is a common problem in all sectors. This is a managerial problem of different nature," commented a source.

It further said that Titas authorities had given cost-sharing facilities to some industries on the plea that it would help Titas earn a bigger revenue. But considering the expenditure for setting up the pipelines and the revenue from these, Titas could have earned more by having more subscribers if it followed the regular system for pipeline expansion.

"In any expansion, Titas would have to spend whatever is needed. We should rather question whether Titas spent more money for these schemes than regular schemes. It did not. Therefore, this allegation does not stand," the source added.

The loosely knit probe report finally concluded that all decisions regarding cost- sharing were given at the level of the Titas Managing Director and his immediate subordinates.

Sources said that the State Minister for Energy then decided to suspend the officials and take departmental action. He was however advised by members of the Parliamentary Sub-committee on Energy and officials of the Energy Ministry not to take such a drastic action. The State Minister, however, remained firm on his own decision.

Former Titas MD Muktadir Ali has served legal notice on the State Minister and the Energy Secretary in this regard.

Sources further said that the decision for suspension in such a manner has not only crippled Titas but also undermined the morale of its officials. "The ultimate beneficiaries are the unscrupulous sections. This explains why state run organisations incur loss in the form of system loss", commented an official.

Meeting date changed

The 1098th regular weekly meeting of the Rotary Club of Dhaka North West scheduled for today has been changed to June 4 at Dhaka Sheraton Hotel at 2:30 pm, says a press release.

The District Award Giving Ceremony 1998-'99 hosted by this club will be held at the same venue, at the same time. All the Rotarians are cordially invited to attend this prestigious yearly event. Registration fee on this occasion will be Tk. 250 per person.

Death anniversary

The third anniversary of death of former MP and Sirajganj district Awami League leader advocate Dabir-ud-Din Ahmed will be observed today, reports UNB.

Milad mahfil and *Quran Khawni* will be held at 192-B Khilgaon Chowdhurypara this afternoon.

Obituary

Sabera Rahman Chhobi, wife of late BNP leader Moshiur Rahman Jadu Mia, died in the New York's Kalvery Hospital in the United States on Saturday. She was 68, reports UNB.

Her body will be brought home tomorrow and kept at the house of her elder son Shafiqul Gani Swapan.

The *namaj-e-janaza* of Sabera Rahman will be held at Azad Mosque in Gulshan after Zohr prayers on the day.