

Tariqul tells editors Journalists can play active role in forging national unity

BSS, Dhaka

Information Minister Tariqul Islam yesterday said journalists could play an active role in forging national unity for development of the country. "The efforts of the journalists will be helpful to unite the nation for development of the country," the minister said.

Tariqul Islam was addressing the editors and senior journalists of national dailies, news agencies and electronic media at a city hotel here.

The minister underlined the importance of tolerance and objective journalism for bringing good to the state and the nation.

He thanked the editors for their valuable suggestions for the press and good governance.

He said there is no scope to ignore public opinion in a democratic society like ours.

The function was addressed, among others, by Mainul Hossain, Chairman, editorial board of New Nation and Ittefaq, Amanullah Kabir, Managing Director and Chief Editor of BSS, Iqbal Sobhan Chowdhury, Editor, Bangladesh Observer, Abul Asad, Editor of the Daily Sangram, Golam Sarwar, Editor, The Daily Jugantor, Moazzem Hossain, Editor, The

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Girder collapse Govt warns of punitive action

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government would take punitive action against individuals, firms and organisations found responsible for the collapse of girders from under- construction footbridges in the city, killing three persons in last six months, the communications ministry has warned.

Minister for Communications Nazmul Huda said the city dwellers are concerned about safety of the footbridges being constructed under the supervision of Dhaka City Corporation (DCC).

He was speaking at a meeting of the National Road Safety Council (NRSC) yesterday, says a press release of the communications ministry.

To prevent recurrence of foot-bridge collapse, the NRSC decided to publish a white paper on alleged negligence, irresponsibility, technical faults and irregularities in tender awarding and contract signing by the DCC. The white paper would also focus on allocation of funds for construction of the bridges and negligence in construction work.

A three-member committee formed earlier submitted its report at the meeting, revealing "alarming irregularities" in contract signing and extreme negligence in construction work.

The meeting decided that in future, all those who want to construct footbridges in the city must seek permission from the Dhaka Transport Coordination Board.

50 shanties gutted at Agargaon

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least 50 shanties were gutted in a fire at Taltala slum in the city's Agargaon area yesterday.

Fire brigade sources said the fire originated from a shanty at about 3:10 pm and soon engulfed the entire slum.

Seven fire fighting units rushed to the spot and extinguished the blaze after an hour.

Fire service sources estimated the extent of damage caused by fire at Tk 3.5 lakh.

	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
Mar 24		6-11 pm
Mar 25	5-58 am	

Prayer Timings		
Mar 24		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-00	5-35
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	5-00	5-15
Maghrib	6-20	6-25
Esha	7-45	8-15
Source: Islamic Foundation		

List of FFs being finalised: PM



PHOTO: STAR

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia puts on a cap before opening weeklong programmes marking the Independence and National Day at Paltan Maidan in the city yesterday.

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday said her government has taken in hand the urgent task of finalising the list of freedom fighters of the 1971 Liberation War.

She also spelled out a work plan taken up by the newly set up Liberation War Affairs Ministry to improve the condition of freedom fighters, rehabilitate them and their family members, and preserve the memory of the martyred freedom fighters.

The Prime Minister was addressing a gathering of freedom fighters at Paltan Maidan in the city marking the opening of a week-long programme organised by the Liberation War Affairs Ministry to observe the Independence and National Day.

"You'll be happy to know that we've made a sincere beginning to do the urgent job that nobody could do so long ... And you would be surprised to know that the list of freedom fighters has not yet been finalised through gazette notification," she told the freedom fighters.

The Prime Minister noted that many non-freedom fighters have 'become' freedom fighters taking that advantage while many real

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Families of all US diplomats pack up to leave Pakistan

AFP, Islamabad

The families of all US diplomats and non-essential diplomatic staff were preparing to leave Pakistan yesterday after Washington ordered them out in the wake of a church attack that killed a US diplomat's wife and step-daughter.

"The order has been conveyed and the families and non-essential staff are preparing to evacuate," an embassy official told AFP.

Their departure would most likely be staggered over several days, he said.

"Maybe today, maybe tomorrow, they will start leaving."

Embassy officials refused to say how many staff and family members would be affected by the rare order, which was announced in Washington overnight.

The US State Department "decided to move to an ordered departure of all dependents and non-emergency personnel at our embassy in Islamabad and our consulates," spokesman Phil Reeker told a press briefing in Washington.

The decision followed "a careful review of our security posture in Pakistan" in light of the March 17 church attack, Reeker said.

Islamabad made no official comment on Washington's decision, but a senior interior ministry official defended Pakistan's stepped-up security arrangements for expatriates following the attack.

"It is their decision, but as far as we are concerned we have taken all possible steps to ensure the security of all diplomats in Pakistan," the

official told AFP on condition of anonymity.

"We have increased the number of security personnel in Islamabad and intensified police patrols. We are taking no risk."

The evacuation order is a step up from the State Department's decision Monday to "authorise" the departure of dependents and non-essential staff, one day after a man detonated a grenade in a church used by the US and other diplomatic communities.

The State Department issued the lower-level authorisation order just after the September 11 attacks on Washington and New York but lifted this on January 28.

The decision also follows the abduction and murder of US jour

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Rajshahi BNP splits further over mayoral election

ANWAR ALI, Rajshahi

A three-pronged rivalry within the city BNP over the Rajshahi City Corporation (RCC) polls has become the talk of the town after three important persons of the party including the incumbent mayor Mizanur Rahman Minu sought candidature for the mayoral post on Wednesday.

The other candidates who filed nominations from within BNP are District BNP general secretary Quamrul Monir and City BNP president advocate Ekhlaiq Hossain.

The intra-party rivalry had surfaced before the last parliamentary election when mayor Mizanur Rahman Minu was given the party ticket from Rajshahi-2 seat in the Jatiya Sangsad replacing former minister Kabir Hossain.

Neither Minu nor Kabir, both veteran politicians, could however bag any ministerial job owing to their

rivalry, many of the party insiders observe.

Now, prior to the city corporation polls, the already divided Rajshahi BNP has disintegrated further, splitting into three groups as the city BNP president advocate Ekhlaiq Hossain, one of Minu's close associates, has turned against the incumbent mayor as a challenger for the coveted post of RCC mayor.

Another rival in the mayoral election considered to be loyal to the Kabir group is district BNP general secretary Quamrul Monir.

Although Ekhlaiq Hossain filed nomination papers, many believe he would abide by his party's decision even if it went against him.

Ekhlaiq was even present at the press conference organised by Minu in the city on March 19 after the party high command named Minu as the four-party endorsed candidate for mayor.

He praised many of Minu's

achievements in his speech at the press conference.

Moreover, he was present in the procession brought out in support of Minu while Minu was submitting his nomination paper to the returning officer at around 12:15pm on Wednesday.

Afterwards, Workers' Party politburo member Fazle Hossain Badsha and the district BNP general secretary Quamrul Monir successively submitted their nomination papers by 1:30pm.

Ekhlaiq was learnt to have filed his nomination as an independent candidate sometime in the afternoon.

On the same day in the evening, he informed journalists that he had been laboring for the party for 19 years and Minu in the last few months had promised to back him up for the mayoral contest and lobby with party high command to that

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AL processions in Chittagong intercepted

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Awami League processions in different areas of the port city yesterday protesting repeal of the law for display of Bangabandhu's portrait were intercepted by police.

The main procession led by City AL president and former minister for labour and manpower MA Mannan was brought out from the city AL office at Darul Fazal Market. It was intercepted at nearby Amtola.

Participants in the procession then held a rally there.

Police also prevented smaller processions in different areas from joining the main procession.

Abductor held, 3 stolen vehicles recovered in Chittagong

BSS, Ctg

Chittagong Metropolitan Police (CMP) have arrested one abductor and recovered three different types of vehicles along with 93 bottles of phensidyl from different places of the city, according to CMP sources.

Acting on a tip-off, Chandgaon thana police arrested Mohammad Safayedul Haque from Bahaddarhat area under the thana Friday night. Safayedul, 25, was allegedly involved in Shahjahan (Manager of Pepsi Company) abduction case, a CMP press release said.

Police said Safayedul with some of his accomplices abducted Shahjahan and collected Tk two lakh as ransom from him in November last year.

In a separate drive, CMP recovered one abandoned truck from FIDC road in the Chandgaon thana and another stolen motorcycle from Kalabagan area of same thana in the city yesterday. DB Police recovered a micro-bus from the possession of one Nazimuddin from Forest Research Institute area.

In another raid, Halishahar thana police arrested one person and seized 93 bottles of phensidyl from connecting road area in the city.

Loadshedding hits many city areas

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Loadshedding of power in the command areas of Dhaka Electric Supply Authority (DESA) during peak hours yesterday was around 50 MW, causing sufferings to people due to frequent disruption of power on the sultry day.

In the city, the areas badly affected by power supply disruption throughout the day included Paribagh, Tejgaon, Kamalapur, Khilgaon, Lalbagh and Mirpur. The disruption in three areas--Paribagh, Tejgaon and Kamplapur was due to 'overloading' of Ulon-Dhanmondi 132 KV transmission line, DESA sources said.

Meanwhile, the Power Development Board (PDB) failed to generate its target quantum of 3217 MW yesterday as Ghorashal 210 MW unit could not resume operation. Production at the unit remained suspended for maintenance work which was due to be completed yesterday.

Besides, 120 MW steam unit of AES Haripur plant tripped yesterday.

The demand for power across the country yesterday was around 3000 MW, PDB sources said.

Complainant in Shazneen case cross-examined

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Additional SP of CID Mojibur Rahman, who is the first prosecution witness and complainant in the Shazneen Rape Case, was cross-examined in the Second Special Court for Prevention of Women and Children Repression, Dhaka, yesterday.

After cross-examination by the lawyers for the accused, Shahidul Islam alias Shahid, Shaniram and Badal, Judge Kazi Rahamat Ullah adjourned the hearing till 10.30 am today.

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PHOTO: STAR

Police intercept an AL procession, led by former minister M A Mannan, protesting repeal of portrait act at Amtala intersection in Chittagong city yesterday.

Take revenge on those who demean Bangabandhu

Hasina tells rally at Jessore

UNB, Jessore

Awami League president Sheikh Hasina yesterday said people would take revenge on those involved in disgracing the father of the nation and eliminate the evil forces from this soil.

"Those undermining the father of the nation do not believe in sovereignty and independence of the country. They have no place in this country," she said calling upon the people to build up resistance and prepare for taking revenge.

The opposition leader was addressing a public meeting at Eidgah Maidan here.

Referring to the passage of the bill providing for removal of portrait of Bangabandhu from government institutions, the Awami League chief accused the BNP-Jamaat regime of planning to frustrate the hard-earned independence. Bangabandhu liberated the country

through a long movement and war, and undermining him is to undermine the independence, she added.

Matia Chowdhury, A S H K Sadeque MP, Latif Siddiqui and Shah M Hadiuzzaman were among others who addressed the meeting.

Hasina, on the concluding day of her seven-day tour of the southwestern region yesterday, addressed two public meetings and a number of wayside rallies at Goalunda ghat, Daulatdia, Paturia and other places in Jessore, Magura and Rajbari districts.

After staying overnight in Khulna, she drove to and addressed a public meeting in Jessore. On her way, she addressed rallies at places and public meetings at Noapara and Magura PTI ground.

Sheikh Hasina asked her party leaders and workers to make lists of those who have undermined the father of the nation and also of police and officials doing injustice

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Mahima rape case Warrant for arrest of 3 absconding accused

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

The special court for prevention of women and children repression in the district yesterday issued arrest warrants for three absconding accused in the Mahima Rape case.

They are Md. Farid, Quamrul Hassan Faruk and Md. Selim Hossain. Ilias Hossain Ujjal, a fourth accused in the rape case, was arrested on the night of February 19.

The district and special judge Md. Abu Hanif fixed April 11 as the date for returning the execution

report of the arrest warrant to the court.

Meanwhile, the bail prayer for Ujjal, the only arrested accused in the case, could not be moved as lawyers didn't go to court yesterday following the death of a member of Rajshahi Bar.

Mahima, a teenage girl of Kanthalbaria in Puthia upazila and whose father and brother had worked for Awami League in the October 1 general election, was kidnapped and gang-raped at a

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Another mild tremor jolts Chittagong

UNB, Ctg

A mild tremor shook the greater Chittagong district yesterday afternoon.

The quake, measuring 3.25 on the Richter Scale, lasted about 18 seconds from 4.22.18 pm, said officials at the Seismological Centre at Ambagan.

They said the epicentre of the quake was 158 kms off the seaport. However, there was no report of casualty and damage.

Another mild quake shook the district Friday.

On this day in '71 Ctg people laid siege to Pak weapons ship

SHAHIDUL ISLAM, from Chittagong

Today (March 24) is the historic day when the Pakistani ship MV SWAT carrying weapons for the Pakistani army was laid siege to in 1971. MV SWAT was a Pakistani flag carrier of 470-feet in length weighing 9223-tonnages.

The ship, loaded with 5630-tons of arms and ammunition, meant to be used to crackdown on the people of the then East Pakistan and now Bangladesh arrived at the outer anchorage of the Bay of Bengal from Karachi port at around 2:30pm on February 28 in 1971. It moved towards Chittagong port at around 4:30pm on that day. The ship, whose draft was 21-feet, had berthed at Jetty No. 17 sometime the same night.

According to the berthing and fact sheet of the ship,

a copy of which this correspondent has collected, the master of SWAT was captain S Alam Chowdhury, whose nationality could not be known, and the pilot during berthing was Mokaddam, a non-Bangali.

Soon after the ship had its unhindered berthing, the occupation forces stationed there started unloading its deadly cargo of arms and ammunition under the cover of darkness and stiff security.

The Pakistani officials based in Chittagong probably had expected that the news of the arrival of SWAT carrying huge quantity of sophisticated arms and its unloading would remain a secret.

But some student and labour leaders and activists of the Chittagong port area came to know of this move

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