

Moudud blames journos for abusing freedom of press

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Law Minister Moudud Ahmed yesterday came down on journalists for sometimes abusing what he said was 'the absolute freedom of press' in Bangladesh and asked them to be more objective and unbiased to information and people.

"Media in Bangladesh is absolutely free, but journalists are sometimes abusing it," he said at a roundtable in the city organised by Mass-line Media Centre (MMC) and American Institute of Bangladesh

Studies (Aibs).

Addressing the roundtable as its chief guest, Moudud alleged the practice of yellow journalism was also frequent in the country. "But, if the government speaks about it, all media will shout in protest. This is the [sorry] condition of our freedom of expression."

The law minister said the constitution of Bangladesh endorsed complete freedom of expression. But, that freedom is always subject to some restrictions and journalists have to abide by that, he maintained, saying, "In fact, here lies the success of the press."

On killing of journalists, the law minister said the incidents occurred mostly in the southwest region of the country, as the victims were brave enough to expose the terrorists and the extremists. "It has nothing to do with the freedom of press," he claimed.

Alluding to the draft Act of Right to Information presently being scrutinised by the law ministry, Moudud said the Official Secrecy Act that stood in way of right to information would be loosened by this law.

Academicians, columnists, journalists and journalism students participated in the roundtable, arranged as a part of an exposure study programme undertaken by nine visiting students of the Pennsylvania State University, USA. Thomas Susen, one of the nine, presented the keynote paper on 'Freedom of Information Act: Why Democracies Need Them' to the session.

Dr Mizanur Rahman Shelly, overseas director of the Aibs, chaired the roundtable.

Anti-tobacco campaign begins

UNB, Dhaka

A signature campaign against tobacco, intended to create public awareness about the dangers of smoking, was launched here yesterday.

Speaker Jamiruddin Sircar inaugurated the campaign at his office.

While putting in his signature to kick off the campaign, the Speaker said that he gave up smoking in 1978 and since then had not smoked a single cigarette stick.

He reminded the smokers that it only takes will power to ditch the deadly habit of smoking.



Prime Minister Khaleda Zia presides over the National Economic Council meeting at the NEC conference room yesterday.

SLICED WOMAN BODY

Probe takes dramatic turn

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police will launch a fresh investigation to identify the woman whose body in nine pieces was found at Shyamoli in the city on May 13 as she was wrongly identified as Shamima Sultana Ria.

The investigation took a dramatic turn after Ria, 17, an SSC examinee of South Majipara in Kalkini, Madaripur, was arrested at Hularhat in Pirojpur on Tuesday. She had been missing for the last 15 days.

Police recovered the body in nine pieces, stashed in two plastic bags, at Road No. 2 in Shyamoli in the early morning on May 13.

Anjuman Mufidul Islam buried the girl after the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) authorities handed over the body parts to them yesterday noon.

Police arrested four people - Enamul Haq, Suman Khalashi, Akbar Hossain and Faruq Ahmed - from Mohammadpur on Sunday night after one Selina Yasmin Popy and her sister Zakia of Mohammadpur identified the slain girl as their sister Ria at the DMCH.

The arrestees have been taken on a five-day police remand.

Ria told the police she left her sister's house in Mohammadpur on April 23 after her brother-in-law beat up

her. She stayed with Popy's friend Parul in her home at West Razabazar in the capital.

On Monday, Ria left Parul's home and went to her uncle Ansar Uddin's home at Daskhali in Bagerhat by a bus.

She went to Hularhat on Tuesday afternoon but Pirojpur police arrested her after Hasan and Nur Mohammad of Hularhat, nephews of arrested Enam, spotted Ria there and informed the police.

Mohammadpur police went to Hularhat yesterday to bring Ria to the capital.

Killing has become order of the day

Hasina tells journalists after visiting Prof Humayun Azad

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leader of the Opposition in Parliament and Awami League President Sheikh Hasina yesterday visited the residence of Prof Humayun Azad on Dhaka University campus and enquired about his health.

Hasina spent more than an hour

with Prof Azad and his family members including wife Latifa Kohinor, daughters Mouli Azad and Smita Azad and son Ananya Azad. Prof Azad, a prominent writer and linguistics expert, came under deadly attack by unidentified miscreants on the campus on his return from the Ekushey Book Fair on the night of February 27.

After the visit, Hasina told newsmen that the entire country has turned into a haven of criminals and killing has become an order of the day.

"Though Prof Azad escaped death, but Ahsanullah Master MP couldn't," she said, adding that the government is protecting the killers shifting the blame on others.

Prof Azad told the journalists that he becomes sick whenever he thinks about the country's present situation.

"We saw such a bad time rarely in the past. It's just impossible to tolerate," he added.

Prof Azad said he will go to Bangkok again on November 4 for further treatment.

President of Dhaka University Teachers' Association Prof AAMS Arefin Siddique, former vice-chancellor Prof AK Azad Chowdhury, artist Prof Hashem Khan and Prof Sultan Monsur were present on the occasion.

BANGABHABAN HISTORY

Progress of work discussed

UNB, Dhaka

A meeting of the book writing committee on history of Bangabhaban was held yesterday at Bangabhaban with its chief advisor President Iajuddin Ahmed in the chair.

Drafts of various chapters of the book were presented at the meeting. It discussed progress of work of the committee.

Expressing satisfaction over its works, the president said Bangabhaban is an integral part of our national history and people would be able to know about Bangabhaban in details if this book was published in Bengali and English.

Dhaka University Vice-Chancellor Prof. Dr SMA Faiz, Dr Ashraf Siddique, former National University Vice-Chancellor Prof Abdul Momin Chowdhury, Secretary to the President Mesbahuddin Ahmed, UGC Member Prof KM Mohsin, Dr Habiba Khatun, Prof Wakil Ahmed, Prof Sultan Hossain and Prof Kazi Zaker Hossain were present at the meeting, says a handout.

Body recovered

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police recovered body of an unidentified young woman from a mess at Dhakkhin Badda in the city yesterday.

The identity of the woman aged about 22 clad in yellow salwar and kamij, could not be known immediately.

The assailants might have strangled the woman last night and dumped there, hospital sources said.

Police quoting the inquest report said a scarf was found tied around her neck and there was bloodstain in her left hand.

Acting on tip-off, police raid the mess owned by one Hafizuddin at Dhakkhin Badda and recovered the body. Police sent the body to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) morgue for autopsy.

AMIR AZAM MURDER

Police press charges against six

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Police have pressed charges against six people in connection with the killing of a UP chairman at Tootpara under Sadar thana on January 29 this year.

The accused are Abdus Sattar alias Disco Sattar, Shawkat Hossain alias Sakha, Abdur Rashid Sheikh alias Babu Sheikh, Sheikh Bellal, Sumon and Bulbul Hossain alias Bulu.

Sumon and Bulu are in jail custody while four others are at large.

Amir Azam Khan, a local BNP leader and chairman of Amirpur union parishad under Batiaghata upazila of the district, was killed in a bomb attack at noon.

Two separate cases under explosive substances act and under section 302 were recorded by Sub-Inspector (SI) Anwar Hossain as complainant.

SI Dewan Koushik Ahmed of Khulna thana is the investigation officer of the cases.