

Launch crusade against terrorism, anarchy

Tarique tells BNP men

UNB, Chittagong

BNP Senior Joint Secretary General Tarique Rahman yesterday urged the party men to launch a crusade against terrorism, anarchy and conspiracy to build a self-reliant and prosperous country.

"People have already identified those who are hindering the progress and development of the country and now the time has come to stand against them," he said at a grassroots level meeting of the party at Patiya.

Tarique said that when the government is engaged in all-out efforts for the development of the country, certain quarters are hatching a conspiracy to create an artificial crisis to destabilise the country.

Around 1,000 union and ward-level leaders from seven unions, including Lohagora, Satkania, Bashkhali, Chandanish, Patiya, Anwara and Boalkhal of Chittagong south zone, attended the conference held at Patiya

High School ground.

The participants also expressed their views focussing on the expectations of the people and successes, failures and limitations of the present BNP regime.

Taking part in the discussion, Foreign Minister Morshed Khan said Bangladesh is now an emerging country and the Saarc summit will be held soon.

Dr Col. (ret) Oli Ahmed said such grassroots meetings would help reorganise the party and its activities.

About 50 participants took part in the discussion and most of them lauded the government's anti-crime campaign.

Salahudin Kader Chowdhury MP, Salahuddin Ahmed MP, Jafrul Islam MP, Whip Ashraf Haque, Joyal Abedin Farook MP, Ahmed Khalil Khan, Rashiduzzaman Millat MP and Sohrabuddin MP attended the conference.



Members of Wrishiz render songs at a cultural function organised by Sammilita Sangskritik Jote at the Central Shaheed Minar in the city yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Hartals cost country Tk 18,528 cr in 3 yrs

Moudud tells JS

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Moudud Ahmed yesterday told the Jatiya Sangsad that 48 days of hartals enforced by the main opposition Awami League in last three years have cost the country Tk 18,528 crore.

Referring to an estimate by former finance minister and Awami League leader Shah AMS Kibria in 1998, Moudud said, "According to SAMS Kibria, the country suffers losses of Tk 386 crore for a day's hartal."

Moudud said that an end to hartal culture should be achieved through consensus among the political parties instead of enacting a law in this regard.

Responding to Jamaat lawmaker Delwar Hossain Saydee's call attention notice that demanded

a government ban on hartal through constitutional amendment, Moudud said that the government will consider it only if the political parties and parliament reach a consensus.

He said the constitution guarantees rights to protest peacefully, it does not approve of causing anarchy and damage to public properties.

"Hartal harms national interest and the country's economy," he said. "People have the right to call hartal and at the same time, they have the right to defy it," Moudud said adding that nobody has the right to bar the movement of people on hartal days.

He asked the home ministry to strictly apply the existing laws against the troublemakers during hartal hours

US awards for projects promoting democracy, HR in S Asia

UNB, Washington

The United States has announced special awards for projects promoting human rights and democracy among Muslims in South Asia, particularly in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh.

The awards, announced by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labour of the State Department, will be an open competition to award up to \$ 15 million through such grants, an official statement said on February 10.

The department also plans to give away 10 to 20 awards, with the award money ranging between \$ 250,000 and \$ 1 million under the "Human Rights and Democratization Initiative in Countries with Significant Muslim Populations," it said.

The projects should promote democratic elections by strengthening institutional capacity and in-country election monitoring capabilities of local groups in Bangladesh and expand training for political parties and candidates in Pakistan, the statement added.

Announcing the awards, the State Department said it views the large Muslim population in India as "marginalised" and wants projects to come up which supports the civil society.

Onus of grisly killings rests on major political parties

Speakers tell roundtable

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The onus of recurrent grisly killings in bomb and grenade attacks rests on the two major political parties that assumed state power by turn, said speakers at a roundtable yesterday.

The roundtable was organised by Bangladesh Sangskritik Karmi Sangha, a forum of cultural activists, at the National Press Club in the backdrop of recent grenade attacks and postponement of 13th South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (Saarc) summit.

Neither the main opposition nor the party in power can deny its failure

to bring the perpetrators of series of bomb and grenade attacks to book, said Dr Rahman Chowdhury, a researcher.

He said although the common people have no role in today's politics, they become victims of the political game.

The security situation in Bangladesh had nothing to do with the postponement of the Saarc summit, it is the political, trade and imperialist interests that forced the summit to postpone, said poet Samudra Gupta.

"Global evil forces and their local agents have been carrying out such misdeeds," Gupta said.

Editor of the New Age Enayetullah Khan, who moderated the dialogue, said India withdrew from the summit in disregard to all diplomatic norms.

The people's ignorance about how and why the deadly bomb attacks are taking place one after another is a major obstacle to taking a tough stand against the perpetrators, said Ataur Rahman, a theatre personality.

"Lack of commitment to life and

society, degeneration in ideals, all pervading corruption and rot in the state mechanism have resulted in the kind of society we live in today," he said.

The perpetrators are invariably targeting Awami League leaders and activists and secular cultural activists so that the blame can easily be put on the BNP, said Sajjad Hossain, executive director of the Centre for National and Regional Studies.

"It is designed to create such a situation that will never let the two parties reach a national consensus," he said.

AMM Hasanuzzaman, presidium member of sangha, said the main suspect in Sylhet shrine bomb attack on the British high commissioner was sent to Singapore for treatment, but later he moved to England.

"Is it a limitation on the part of the government that it cannot bring the suspect back?" he questioned.

Razia Khanam Jhunu, president of the sangha, presided over the roundtable.

RUPSHA CAPSIZE

Boat located, no sign of 22 missing yet

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The mechanised boat that capsized in the river Rupsha could be located yesterday, but there is no sign of 22 people missing after the accident.

The boat was located 100 yards away from the accident spot by the divers, but the bodies of passengers may have been washed downstream, said a rescue member.

The search by divers from the BNS Titumir and amateurs continued till filing of this report by our staff correspondent from Khulna at 6:00pm. Members of the Red Crescent Society were also assisting the team of seven divers headed by a navy officer.

The boat collided with a ferry Saturday and capsized in the river near Khulna. Eleven people managed to swim ashore.

Two out of 22 people missing were identified as freedom fighter Shahidullah Khan (52) of Bagmara village, Rupsha upazila and Mahfuza Begum (60), wife of Jinal Abedin from the same upazila.

DCC plans to set up waste management department

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) is planning to set up a fully-fledged solid waste management department comprising four of its departments in a bid to manage solid waste properly.

The proposed department will be comprised of transport, mechanical, conservancy and store departments, said DCC Chief Conservancy Officer Sohel Faruque during a presentation at an inter-ministerial/municipal steering committee meeting at the Nagar Bhaban in the city yesterday.

The Japan International Cooperation Agency (Jica) presented a draft of the Master Plan on Solid Waste Management, outlining Jica/DCC's objective to improve solid waste management "based on social acceptability and technical capacity in order to achieve a 'Clean

Dhaka' by the year 2015."

The DCC and Jica also revealed that the cost of solid waste management plan for operation and maintenance has been estimated at Tk 893.6 crore while the current revenue earning capability stands at Tk 18 crore.

To cover the cost, Sohel Faruque proposed two possible solutions -- an increase in conservancy tax from two percent to seven percent and the other suggestion, currently underway, is collaboration with foreign investors and stakeholders.

Chaired by DCC's Acting Chief Executive Officer Alamgir Hossain Khan, the meeting was attended by Jica study team leader Dr Katsuhide Nagayama, Jica advisory committee Chairman Mitsu Yosida and representatives from LGRD ministry, External Relations Division (ERD) and the Rajuk.

DHAKA TODAY

Valentine's Day
The inaugural ceremony of Valentine's Day programme, organised by Bishwa Bhalobasa Dibos Udjapon Parishad, will be held. Venue: TSC Road Island of Dhaka University. Time: 3.00pm.

Recitation
Pathshala Bachanik Shilpa Charcha Protishthan organises a session of recitation of love poems titled 'Hridoy Gopan Shakhe' to mark the Valentine's Day. Venue: Natmondol of Dhaka University. Time: 6.30pm.

Debate
In celebration of Valentine's Day and

International Mother Language Day, National Debate Federation organises two friendly debate competitions to be participated by the debaters of different universities. Venue: Raju Sculpture of TSC. Time: 4.00pm.

DHAKA TOMORROW

Drama
Alliance Francaise will stage a drama titled 'L'Ecole des Femmes' of Moliere. The comedy has been translated and directed by Ashish Khondker. Venue: Alliance Francaise, Dhanmondi. Time: 7.00pm.

'Resist repression of women, corruption'

HASAN JAHD TUSHER, Gazni, Sherpur

Most officials in the administration are engaged in corruption, causing untold sufferings to the general people, said Prof Abdullah Abu Sayeed, a noted educationist and cultural personality, at a convention on Saturday.

He said frustration has gripped the whole society, including the youths, due to widespread corruption in every sphere of society.

He also urged the youths to resist corruption and repression of women.

The daylong event titled 'Committees of Concerned Citizens (CCC) Volunteers Convention-2005' was organised by Transparency International, Bangladesh (TIB) at Gazni in Sherpur district.

Speakers at the convention called on the civil society members to work together brushing aside all political

differences to help build a prosperous country.

They also urged them to be united to combat corruption, political criminalisation and misuse of power by the evil forces of the society.

Emphasising the need for women's empowerment, the TIB representatives called on the government to take necessary steps to stop harassment of women.

Expressing deep concern over the growing repression on women, they also called for their protection from the zealots.

In the second session, the CCC volunteers placed the annual report of 2004. A cultural function was also held.

Chaired by TIB Executive Director Dr Iftekharuzzaman, the function was also addressed by MA Hakam Heera, Manjur Ahmed and Meer Al Hadi Mujahiduzzaman, Nazmun Nahar, Shamima Nasrin and Golam Rabbani.

Citibank staffs donate one day's salary for tsunami victims

Employees of the Citibank Bangladesh have donated their one-day salary to support the tsunami-affected people in Sri Lanka, says a press release.

The bank made the donation to Brac, a leading NGO, which has decided to work in Sri Lanka for the rehabilitation of the victims.

Ziaur Rahman, head of human resources and administration of the bank, handed over a cheque for US \$ 3000 to Abdul Mueed Chowdhury, executive director of Brac, for their Tsunami Fund on Saturday.

Since the tragedy struck, Citigroup employees within the region and beyond have rallied together to raise funds. As of January 26, more than 20,700 Citigroup employees have raised more than US \$3.46 million.



Ziaur Rahman, head of human resources and administration of Citibank Bangladesh, hands over a cheque for US \$ 3000 to Abdul Mueed Chowdhury, executive director of Brac, for its Tsunami Fund on Saturday while Mamun Rashid, chief executive officer of the bank, looks on.



President of Bangladesh Gastroenterology Society Prof Mahmud Hasan speaks at the inaugural session of the 12th Annual Convention and Scientific Seminar of the society at a city hotel on Saturday.

Obituary



Reverend Punur-dan Haldar, a renowned educationist and highly respected leader of the Christian community, died yesterday at the age of 84, says a press release.

He was the headmaster of the Barisal Baptist Mission High School.

He is survived by his wife, one son, one daughter and grandchildren.

A prayer mass in his memory will be held at the Baptist Church Sangha central office at 33 Senpara Parbata, Mirpur-10, at 3.00pm on February 15. Students, relatives and admirers are requested to attend the programme.

Death anniversary



Today is the 22nd death anniversary of Md Asaf-ud-Dowla, a renowned journalist, says a press release.

A former news and executive editor of the Daily Ittefaq, he also gained reputation as a radio and television broadcaster.

A milad mahfil will be held at his residence at House # 27, Road # 5, Dhanmondi after Maghrib prayers and a doa mahfil at House # 14, Road # 7, Block # B, Bansri, Rampura after Asr prayers today.

A discussion will also be held at Motijheel Colony Night School in the evening.

WEATHER TODAY

No change in temperature

UNB, Dhaka

Weather is likely to remain mainly dry with partly cloudy sky over the country during the next 24 hours till 6.00pm today.

Night temperature may remain nearly unchanged during the period, Met Office said.

Yesterday's highest temperature of 33.4 degree Celsius was recorded at Satkhira and the lowest of 15.4 degree at Syedpur.

The sun sets in the capital at 5:53pm today and rises at 6:32 am tomorrow.

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

City/Town	Temperature in Celsius		Humidity in percentage	
	Max	Min	Morning	Evening
Dhaka	32.0	20.4	64	41
Chittagong	28.8	15.6	62	80
Rajshahi	32.3	16.4	59	43
Khulna	33.0	19.2	99	60
Barisal	32.8	19.4	98	60
Sylhet	30.2	17.5	76	51
Cox's Bazar	30.0	17.8	60	83