

Cabinet okays draft of ICT Act 2005

UNB, Dhaka

The cabinet yesterday approved the draft of "The Information & Communication Technology Act 2005" aimed at enhancing the use of ICT in all spheres of activity.

The objective of the new law is to "augment suitable use of information technology in overall social system, including administration, business and financial transactions, apart from science and research", according to an official announcement.

The approval was given at the weekly regular cabinet meeting held at the PM's Office with Prime Minister Khaleda Zia in the chair.

Another new law -- "The Rivers, Floodplains and Waterbodies Preservation, Development, Recovery and Filling Control Act 2005" -- was also discussed at the cabinet meeting.

The proposed law aims at further development of water resources, control of floods and environmental pollution apart from preservation, development, recovery and prevention of filling up of rivers and canals.

Cabinet members and state ministers concerned attended the meeting. Cabinet secretary, PM's principal secretary and other secretaries were also present.

Energy Regulatory Commission (amend) Bill passed

UNB, Dhaka

The Jatiya Sangsad yesterday passed the Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission (Amendment) Bill-2005 outlining the academic qualifications needed to become the chairman and members of the Commission.

The chairman of the commission will have to be a graduate engineer specialising in any of the subjects of mineral resources, electricity, natural gas and petroleum products, or a post-graduate from any recognised university in any of the subjects of geology, law, economics, accounting, business administration, management, finance and banking, marketing, statistics and public administration.

A commission member will require a post graduation degree from any recognised university in any of the subjects of geology, law, economics, accounting, business administration, management, finance and banking, marketing, statistics and public administration.

Besides, the law ensured recruitment of two members of the commission -- one from electricity and another from natural gas sector.

State Minister for Energy AKM Mosharrar Hossain, who piloted the bill, said the provisions would make the regulatory commission more dependable and efficient.



PHOTO: STAR

Suravi, a member of Kanon Children's Theatre, performs a dance number at a cultural function at the Central Shaheed Minar yesterday on the occasion of Ekushey February. Sammita Sangskritik Jote organised the event.

Govt uses hoodlums to foil hartal: Jalil

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League (AL) General Secretary Abdul Jalil has alleged that the government was using its armed hoodlums to foil the ongoing spontaneous hartal across the country.

At a press briefing at the party office in Dhanmondi, he said at least 200 AL leaders and workers were injured in attacks by these hoodlums and police during yesterday's hartal.

Jalil said more than seven thousand AL leaders and workers were arrested in the last three days.

The government has now chosen the path of repression as it has lost the people's support due to its failure to govern the country,

he added.

Jalil said, "We must go for a tougher agitation if the government continues to intensify its repression on AL leaders and workers."

He called upon the people to make the oust-government movement a success.

Speaking at the briefing, Presidium Member Tofail Ahmed said the AL has been compelled to give hartal call as it cannot hold even a peaceful programme.

He said the government will be given no more scope to cling to power for the greater interest of the country.

AL Joint Secretary Obaidul Quader, Rahmat Ali and Abdul Mannan were present at the press briefing.

20 RU students hurt in clash with traders

RU CORRESPONDENT

At least 20 Rajshahi University (RU) students were injured, one of them seriously, in a clash with the traders at Binodpur Bazaar on Sunday night.

The injured are Salim Biswas of Mathematics department, Mansurul Alam of History department, Mansur Islam of Islamic Studies department, Tapos Biswas and Faruk of Political Science department and Mahmud of Chemistry department.

Salim Biswas, Mansurul Alam and Mansur were rushed to Rajshahi Medical College Hospital.

Sources said the incident occurred when a vendor threw a

pen on the face of Nur Alam Biswas, a student of Motihar Hall, as he wanted to change it. He bought the pen on Friday.

As the news spread, a few hundred students of the hall rushed to the market and swooped on the vendor.

This resulted in a clash between the traders and the students who ransacked many shops.

A half-hour-long chase and counter-chase also followed the clash.

Police brought the situation under control at around 1.00am.

Additional police was deployed at the market to avert any further incident.

1,468 more held, 11 firearms seized

UNB, Dhaka

Police arrested 1,468 more people, including four listed criminals, on various charges during their countrywide drive in the last 24 hours till 6.00am yesterday.

The law enforcers also recovered 11 firearms, seven other weapons, 37 rounds of bullet and two explosives and filed 10 cases against 14 people under Arms Act, said a Police Headquarters press release.

Obituary

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Mohammad Safiullah, a sub-inspector of the Special Branch, died of brain stroke yesterday at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH). He was 50.

Eldest son of late Mozammel Haque of Chefali village, Bhola, Safiullah was first admitted to the National Heart Foundation and was then shifted to DMCH after he collapsed with the cerebral stroke on Monday.

Safiullah left behind his wife, daughter, two sons and a host of relatives and admirers to mourn his death.

He will be buried at his family graveyard in Bhola today.

Death anniversary



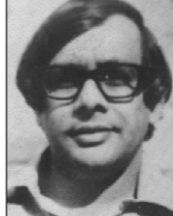
Today is the 36th death anniversary of Shaheed Sergeant Zahurul Haque, says a press release.

An accused in the Agartala Conspiracy

Case, he was killed by the Pakistan army at Dhaka Cantonment in 1969 when he was under trial.

The Liberation War Museum will hold a drawing competition for the children on its premises at 10.00am on February 25 to mark his death anniversary.

Anwarul Islam Bobby



The 11th death anniversary of renowned journalist Anwarul Islam Bobby will be observed today, says a press release.

He was the founder-editor of Chittagong-based The Daily Life, The Pulse, a medical journal, and now-defunct The Morning Sun.

Food will be distributed among the poor and destitute to mark the day.

Friends, relatives and well-wishers have been requested to pray for salvation of the departed soul.

Reports invited for TIB Journalism Award

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) has invited reports carried out in print and television media for its Investigative Journalism Award-2005.

Investigative reports published in any Bangla or English language daily and weekly or in television channel during the period from 1st January to 31st December, 2004 are eligible for the competition.

In case of print media, the original printed version has to be submitted while in case of television, the report has to be submitted in VHS cassette or CD format with full script.

The reports will have to be submitted to the TIB, Progress Tower, House-1, Road-23, Gulshan-1, Dhaka by February 28.

The reports will be evaluated in the light of their success in exposing administrative irregularities and mismanagement, and institutional and systematic corruption.

The TIB nominated judges will evaluate the reports and their decision will be considered final.

One report from each media will be awarded Tk 50 thousand in cash, crest and citation.

The TIB has been giving the award since 1999 to help achieve professional excellence in country's newspapers. Television channel has been included for the award from this year.

PKSF partner organisations' contributions for tsunami victims

UNB, Dhaka

The partner organisations of Palli Karma-Sahayak Foundation (PKSF) have mobilised over Tk 45 lakh for the tsunami-affected people.

Responding to the appeal from the PKSF, 107 small and medium-sized organisations have made the voluntary contributions from their surpluses generated mainly out of microfinance activities for poverty alleviation, said a press release.

"Although the contribution seems to be very small in comparison to the global resources for tsunami victims, but it carries the invaluable feelings of the victims and warmth of hearts of millions of poor people of the country," it said.

Experts call for protecting endangered wildlife

UNB, Dhaka

Experts, ecologists and conservationists made a call for protecting endangered wildlife to maintain biodiversity in Bangladesh.

Some 70 experts from home and abroad gathered at a five-day workshop on "Population and Habitat Viability Assessment of Hoolock Gibbon" that began in the city yesterday.

The Wildlife Trust of Bangladesh, Bangladesh Forest Department and Zoo Outreach Organisation, in collaboration with several institutions, have organised the workshop at the BIAM auditorium.

Law Minister Moudud Ahmed inaugurated the workshop chaired by Enayetullah Khan, chairman of the Wildlife Trust of Bangladesh. Prime Minister's Principal Secretary Dr Kamal Siddiqui and Allen Fleming, office chief, EGFE, USAID, also spoke.

Moudud Ahmed said the government is committed to taking necessary steps to protect and protect the biological diversity from probable damage.

"Our government takes the issue of biodiversity with a great interest

and already have taken massive efforts, including tree-planting programme across the country," he said.

Emphasising the importance of preserving biodiversity, the minister said people must be aware of the environment to ensure prevention of natural calamity. "We should work together to make the people conscious to resist the destruction of the wildlife."

Dr Kamal Siddiqui said that the Asiatic Society of Bangladesh is preparing to publish an Encyclopaedia of Flora and Fauna of Bangladesh that would be the first comprehensive reference book on the biodiversity of the country.

"It will help establish sovereign right of the nation on its biological resources and consequently may help fight biopiracy," said Dr Siddiqui.

Enayetullah Khan said accelerating loss of species and increasing destruction of natural habitats together constitute perhaps the direct threat ever to the environment and human welfare.

Expressing concern over the eventual manmade destruction of natural resources, he said the earth stands to lose not only the biological

diversity but also the basic services that keep the planet alive: atmospheric composition, climate control, soil, generation, nutrient cycling and decomposition of waste and organic matter.

He noted that hoolock gibbon has been rated as critically endangered in the country.

Gibbons are tail-less monkeys, or apes, like chimpanzees and gorillas. South Asia has only one ape, hoolock gibbon (*Bunopithecus Hoolock*).

Bangladesh had a wide distribution of the species, and even in the early 1990s, the population was close to 3,000. Over the last two decades, a continuous destruction has been going on, leaving hoolock population emaciated to about 200.

The workshop is supported by US Fish and Wildlife Service, Great Ape Conservation Fund, Margot Marsh Biodiversity Foundation Primate Action Fund, Conservation International, Twycross Zoo-East Midlands Zoological Society and Apenheul Primate Conservation Trust, the Netherlands.



PHOTO: STAR

Police force a pedestrian into a police van near Mukhtangan in the city during hartal hours yesterday while Awami League MP Asaduzzaman Noor tries to free him.