



**RIVER DISASTERS
Akbar refuses
to step down**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
Shipping Minister Akbar Hossain has again refused to step down over his failure to ensure passengers' safety in river routes.
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JS failed to ensure govt accountability

Observes TIB report

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) says parliament has failed to ensure accountability of the government.

Parliamentary standing committees on different ministries also could not play an effective role in investigating corruption and irregularities in different organisations under the ministries concerned,

said a TIB report.

The report titled Parliament Watch is based on proceedings of the 11th, 12th, 13th and 14th sessions of the 8th parliament held last year. It was presented at a press conference at the Jatiya Press Club.

About the opposition, the report said, "An excessive level of walk-outs and boycotting of parliament by the main opposition is greatly obstructing the development of our

parliamentary culture."

It added, "Awami League lawmakers were absent from parliament for 48 out of 83 days last year."

Establishing an effective parliament is not possible if lack of willingness of the ruling parties, absence of lawmakers from the sessions, abstention or boycott persists, Prof Muzaffer Ahmad, a trustee of the TIB, said at the press conference.
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Moudud rebuts US HR report

UNB, Dhaka

Law and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Moudud Ahmed yesterday dismissed the US Human Rights report on Bangladesh saying it was one sided and 'not objective'.

The human rights report-2004 was released by the US State Department in Washington on February 28 with observations about human rights situations in 196 countries of the world.

"I think the report is too much one sided that speaks of only the negative things. It is not objective," Moudud told the news agency in his initial reaction.

The law minister claimed that the government achieved a lot of progress in strengthening human rights in Bangladesh, which should
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A scavenger girl yesterday ties up a bunch of broken planks left behind by the stall-owners at the February book fair that ended Monday at Bangla Academy.

PHOTO: STAR

Experts critical of drug policy

NAIMUL HAQ

The National Drug Policy 2005 approved by the Cabinet is 'not pro-people' and it lacks proper focus on vital aspects.

Expressing this view, a number of experts said the drug policy was supposed to be an integral part of
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PRSP draft finalised

Focus on women empowerment, edn, governance

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

The government has finalised the draft of the donor-driven Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) outlining around 1,000 action plans in 18 sectors for the next three years to alleviate poverty.

The draft heavily hammers on women empowerment, improving the overall education standard, increasing private-sector involve-

ment, governance, decentralisation of power etc.

Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman will present the draft paper to the donors' Local Consultative Group (LCG), parliamentarians and politicians in mid-March for discussion. Following the discussions, the government will adopt the PRSP for implementation in 2005 to 2007.

"The donors want to use the

PRSP as the central focus of their future aid," said a planning ministry source.

"On behalf of the donors, the World Bank is now analysing the government's Annual Development Programme (ADP) to see how their future aid can be pumped into the ADP in the light of the PRSP," he added.
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AL hails US report

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Opposition Awami League (AL) hailed the US human rights report released on Monday saying it gave the real picture of human rights in Bangladesh.

Political Secretary to the AL chief Saber Hossain Chowdhury told the press that the human rights situation in Bangladesh was "going from bad to worse and every time we hit a bottom, we find that we are hitting new lows."
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JMJB's threat letter for Galib's release

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

An unverified letter of the 'special military unit of Jagrata Muslim Janata' last evening demanded the immediate release of the militant kingpin Asadullah Al Galib.

The letter, which was signed by the group's central muballigs (preachers), Abdul Latif and Mutalib Hossain, was sent to the post box at

the Rajshahi Press Club.

"We demand that our leader Dr Galib be released immediately," the letter reads. "The government should forget the dream of arresting Bangla Bhai and Abdur Rahman."

It declared five political leaders here to be 'murtad' and threatened them with death if the demand was not met by March 24.
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Asma Kibria blasts Moudud comments

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Asma Kibria, wife of Shah AMS Kibria, severely criticised the law minister's comment that the family of the former finance minister declined the government's offer to provide with helicopter to carry him to Dhaka after he was injured in
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BSF kills one in Naogaon

BDNEWS, Naogaon

The Border Security Force (BSF) shot dead a Bangladeshi youth at about 8:00pm yesterday on Agradigon border under Dhamuirhat upazila in Naogaon district.

BSF members fired at the Bangladeshi youth Babu Mia (35) as he tried to intrude into Indian territory cutting a barbed wire fence.

Babu was suspected to be a phensydil trader. His accomplice Sadeq Ali (33) managed to escape from the spot.

A flag meeting between BDR and BSF was held in this regard and BSF agreed to hand over the body of Babu to Bangladesh authorities after autopsy.

Rights defenders live dangerously

States Amnesty report on Bangladesh

BDNEWS, Dhaka

Amnesty International (AI), a worldwide human rights watchdog, reveals in a report that abusing the human rights (HR) defenders in Bangladesh has been continuing alarmingly due to sheer failure of the government.

The AI report titled "Bangladesh Human Rights defenders under attack", will be made public today.

The report says, "Hundreds of HR defenders, who act on promoting human rights (HR), have received death threats."

"Scores of them have been attacked. Many have been killed or seriously injured.

"Several journalists have had their fingers or hands deliberately

damaged so as not to be able to hold a pen. Many have had to leave their homes and localities in the face of continued death threats," it said.

Besides, some intellectuals and NGO workers were either attacked or arrested by the government for their alleged stand in anti-government political line, the report mentioned.

"Agents of the state including police, army and other law enforcement personnel, for whom successive governments in Bangladesh have been directly accountable, have perpetrated some of the violations against HR defenders," the AI said.

Also, of the perpetrators of HR defenders, there are individuals and
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India has a vital role to play

Seminar on Saarc told

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Noted economist Prof. Rehman Sobhan said the postponement of the 13th Saarc (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation) summit is a setback not only for the governments of the member countries but also for their citizens and civil society groups.

"Despite the postponement of the 13th summit, Saarc still remains important for both big and small countries," said Prof Sobhan, a member of the Saarc group of eminent persons, at a seminar yesterday in the city.

The Centre for Strategic and Peace Study (CSPS) organised the seminar, entitled 'The Postponement of the Saarc Summit: Implications for the future,' at the Cirdap auditorium.

Prof Sobhan pointed out that the
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Rab nabs Ctg top terror 'Gittu' Nasir

Takes him out for arms search, recovers AK47 from Hathazari

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) arrested 'Gittu' Nasir, a notorious Shibir cadre and a top kingpin of Chittagong underworld, in the capital's Jatrabari area on Monday night.

Acting on his confession, a Rab team yesterday also recovered an AK47 combat rifle from Hathazari in the district yesterday evening.

Tipped off, a special team of Rab-7 of Chittagong went to the capital Monday and arrested 'Gittu' with assistance from Rab-2 of Dhaka.

He was brought to Rab-7 headquarters at Patenga here at around 8.30 yesterday morning.

Sources said after primary interrogations, a Rab team at around 12.30pm yesterday set out along with Gittu for Fatikchhari and other parts of the district to recover firearms in possession of him and his gang. The law enforcers have still been hunting for the hidden firearms until filing of this report at 9:00pm last night.

However Rab officials here maintained total silence regarding 'Gittu's' arrest.

After his mentor Shibir Nasir had been arrested and jailed in April 1998, 'Gittu' Nasir, son of late Tofael Ahmad of Chalitatali in Panchlaish, became the number one linchpin of
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Prayer Timing		
March 2		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-20	5-55
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-30	4-45
Maghrib	6-03	6-07
Esha	7-30	8-00

Source: Islamic Foundation

