



Law Minister Moudud Ahmed speaks at a seminar on 'Security of journalists in national perspective' organised by Mass-Line Media Centre at the National Press Club in the city yesterday. On his right is Dr Sakhawat Ali Khan and on his left is Quamrul Hasan Manju.

Hold UZ, zila parishad polls

Suggests parliamentary body

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A parliamentary body yesterday asked the government to hold elections to upazila and zila parishads to make the local government system effective and build a corruption-free administration.

At a meeting on the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP), the Parliamentary Standing Committee on the establishment ministry also placed a set of recommendations to build an efficient public administration free from corruption.

The parliamentary body observed that there is no alternative to holding elections to upazila and zila parishads to ensure people's representation in the local administration.

The lawmakers also proposed separate budgetary allocation for the local government bodies, meeting sources said.

"We recommended to the government to make the four-tier local government system effective by ensuring accountability of the local administration. It will also help the government in its effort to make the local administration free from corruption," Committee Chairman Sardar Shakhawat Hossain Bakul told The Daily Star.

At present, the four tiers of the local government exist in paper only as the election to upazila and zila parishads is not being held for a long time.

The last upazila election was held in 1990, but the BNP government annulled the upazila system in 1991. However, the upazila and zila parishad were reintroduced in the local government structure during the tenure of previous Awami League government.

The parliamentary body also suggested imparting training on technical and moral issues to the public servants to build an efficient and corruption-free public administration.

The opposition Awami League lawmakers, who are members of the committee, proposed forming a parliamentary body with lawmakers from all parties to deal with the appointments to the chief election commissioner, chairman of the Public Service Commission, and comptroller and auditor general.

"If such system is introduced, persons appointed to these posts on the basis of political consensus will be able to work independently," said AL lawmaker KM Jahangir Hossain. Opposition Chief Whip Abdus

Shahid suggested introducing a permanent policy on the promotion of the public servants.

PM declares 2005 as 'Science Book Year'

BSS, Dhaka

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia has announced 2005 as "Science Book Year."

The government has constituted an 11-member National Committee for celebrating the Science Book Year in a befitting manner, an official handout said here yesterday.

State Minister for Cultural Affairs and the Secretary of the ministry will act as the adviser and the chairman respectively of the committee.

Other members of the committee are: one representative from the Ministry of Science and Information and Communication Technology, one representative from the Ministry of Information, Director General of Bangla Academy, Director General of Bangladesh Shilpakal Academy, Director of the National Library Directorate, Director of Bangladesh Archives and Library, Deputy Secretary-2 and Senior Assistant Secretary of the Cultural Ministry.

TAX OMBUDSMAN LAW, 2005

Cabinet to further scrutinise draft

BSS, Dhaka

The cabinet at its regular meeting yesterday discussed in detail the draft of Tax Ombudsman Law, 2005 to appoint tax ombudsman.

It also took decision to place the law at the cabinet meeting again after more scrutiny of the draft of the proposed law.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia presided over the meeting at the Prime Minister's office, an official handout said here.

The cabinet also discussed the draft of the coordinated multipurpose transport policy placed at the meeting. It also decided to place the draft policy at the cabinet after scrutinizing its different aspects.

The meeting adopted a condolence resolution expressing deep shock at the death of Pope John Paul II.

Cabinet ministers and concerned state ministers attended the meeting. Cabinet secretary and con-

cerned secretaries were present.

Skop curtails strike to 24 hrs

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Sramik Karmachari Oikya Parishad (Skop) curtailed its countrywide 48-hour strike, which began at 6.00am yesterday, to 24 hours.

The Skop leaders decided to reduce the strike hours at a meeting yesterday evening but did not give any reason. However, they said they will announce another programme on April 18.

Meanwhile, the strike was observed in mills and factories in some parts of the country, according to the Skop leaders.

The Skop called the strike to press for its demands, including fixing the national minimum wage and stopping layoffs in the state-run mills and factories.

WORKSHOP ON MDGS ENDS

'Development not at cost of environment'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A two-day workshop ended in the city yesterday with a call to give more efforts for achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015.

In collaboration with the British High Commission, the Democracywatch and the Centre For Sustainable Development organised the workshop titled 'Millennium Development Goals: Target 2015 and Bangladesh' at the Cirdap auditorium.

Addressing the concluding session as key speaker, Editor of The Daily Star Mahfuz Anam said environmental degradation has to be taken into consideration while moving for development.

"Development is necessary, but it should not take place at the cost of the environment," he said, adding that no development work would sustain without protecting the environment.

On the role of media in achieving MDGs, Anam said although media in Bangladesh has been playing an important role in this regard, it will have to be more proactive.

"Most of the newspapers here are giving due importance to environment and gender related issues which are very vital for achieving the MDGs," he added.

Anam said concerted efforts by both the developed and the developing countries are needed to achieve the MDGs by 2015.

Schoolboy shot on DU campus

DU CORRESPONDENT

Four hoodlums yesterday opened fire on Curzon Hall premises of Dhaka University (DU) injuring a teenager and panicking other students and teachers.

Al Azad, 14, student of Pirojpur Town High School, was rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) with a bullet injury in the left leg.

Ramna police picked up Azad from the DMCH for interrogation after the doctors removed the bullet from his leg.

Azad, along with his sister Naznin Aktar, came to his uncle's residence at Rampura in the city to attend a marriage ceremony.

They came to the campus for wandering, and while their rickshaw reached in front of the Curzon Hall, a bullet hit Azad's left leg, police said.

According to eyewitnesses, the

four youths in a private car were playing music in high volume at the west gate of Curzon Hall.

When a student of Fazlul Haque Hall challenged the youths, they fired a blank shot.

At this, other students chased the private car but the youth fled the scene after firing two more shots that hit the schoolboy.

Police said they are investigating the incident to know whether they youths were muggers or drug peddlers.

Sources said the youths came to sell drugs to a student leader of the Curzon Hall.

Police said two groups comprising at least 10 youths peddle drugs using a couple of private cars inside the campus from the early evening to midnight.

"We are keeping close eyes on those private cars," said an on-duty police official.

AHSANULLAH MASTER MURDER

Charges against accused proved beyond doubt

PP tells court

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The prosecution lawyers in the Awami League (AL) lawmaker Ahsanullah Master murder case yesterday said it is the most gruesome killing in the history of Bangladesh.

During the arguments, Special Public Prosecutor (PP) Abdul Latif Talukder told the court that the killers assassinated the lawmaker in the pre-planned way. The prosecution proved the charges against the accused beyond doubt and sought exemplary punishment to them, the PP added.

Another state-appointed Advocate Kazi M Sajwar Hossain argued on different points taking from the first information report (FIR), inquest and post-mortem reports, charge sheet and statements of 34 prosecution witnesses.

The lawmaker was killed for his role against the drug business led by Jatiyatabadi Jubo Dal leader Nurul Islam Sarker, the prime suspect in the case, Sajwar said. Offence of the accused is so heinous that they can not get any mercy from the court, he added.

After a five-hour hearing on arguments, Judge Shahed Noor Uddin of Speedy Trial Tribunal-1 fixed today for next hearing. The prosecution will make sub-

missions on some points on law in support of punishment to the accused.

After completion of arguments from the prosecution, the defence lawyers will begin their turn today.

Earlier, the tribunal recorded statements of prosecution witnesses, including victim's brother complainant Matiur Rahman and son Zaid Ahsan Sohel.

About 20 gunmen fired on a rally of Swetchchhabak League, the volunteer front of the AL, and killed Ahsanullah Master at Naogaon near his residence in Tongi on May 7 last year.

Schoolboy Omar Faruq Ratan was also killed and at least five others were injured in the incident.

Nine of the accused, including Nurul Islam Sarker, are now in the custody while Al Amin, Pappu Sarker, Mohammad Ali and Monir are on bail. Jatiya Chhatra Samaj leader Nurul Islam Dipu and 16 others are absconding.

Special PP Abdul Latif Talukder and advocates Mahub Ahmed, M Sajwar Hossain, Mohammad Ali, Sahara Khatun, Montazuddin Mehedi, Abdur Rahman Howlader and Sayedul Haq Nanna Miah appeared for the state.

Experts suggest using alternative energy sources

75 pc people lack access to electricity

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government should harness unconventional energy sources like solar power, wind, biomass and biogas alongside gas and oil resources to ensure maximum electricity coverage in the country, energy experts at a workshop said yesterday.

They also suggested allowing more private investment in the energy sector to bring discipline and make overall improvements in the power sector.

The Sustainable Energy Unit, Power Division, Ministry of Power, Energy and Mineral Resources and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) organised the 'National Consultation Workshop on Sustainable Energy Programme (SEP)' at a city hotel.

About 75 percent of people in the country lack access to electricity, leading to low productivity and low quality of output, said Kamal Rijal, sustainable energy policy advisor of UNDP Regional Centre in Bangkok.

Lack of access to electricity in rural areas also leads to destruction of forest as villagers continue to use

trees as fuel wood, inviting natural disasters such as floods, he noted.

The speakers said the total demand for electricity in the country is 4200 MW, with a production shortage of 300-500 MW.

Gas is the major contributor to electricity production, generating 89 percent of the total output. Six percent comes from fuel oil and five percent from hydro-electricity projects. On the other hand, the alternative sources, solar power and wind, generate only 2.5 MW and two MW respectively, the workshop was told.

The use of renewable energy in the country is very negligible compared to different countries in the region such as India, Thailand and Malaysia, Kamal said.

Subir Nathak, team leader of Programme Formulation Team, Sustainable Energy Unit, said Bangladesh can use paddy husks to generate electricity in rural areas. About 1.2 million paddy husk can produce 1 MW of electricity, he added.

BD Rahmatullah, director of Power Cell and Sustainable Energy Unit of Power Division, said high

system loss and dependence on gas for power generation are the major factors responsible for frequent load-shedding, lack of access to electricity and high power tariffs for industrial use.

Describing the energy management scenario, he said poor revenue collection and huge outstanding bills also leads to fund constraint, hampering maintenance of the power transmission system.

Speaking as chief guest, State Minister for Power Iqbal Hassan Mahmood said, "We have to bring reform to the electricity transmission system and for that we need to go for privatisation."

UNDP Resident Representative Jorgen Lissner hoped that the small energy plants now operating in the country will emerge as major contributors to the power sector.

Akhter Hussain Khan, secretary of Planning Commission, Shireen Kamal Sayeed, assistant resident representative of UNDP, Nazrul Islam, secretary, Power Division, also spoke.



Sramik Karmachari Oikya Parishad (Skop), on the first day of its strike, took out a procession at Matijheel in the city yesterday.

Interns begin strike at Osmani Medical College

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

The interns of Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical College went for an indefinite strike yesterday to press for their 8 point demands, including security during duty hours and withdrawal of the DG Health.

They also brought out a procession and handed over a memo to the Hospital Director Brigadier General Zillur Rahman.

Misbehaviour and threats from the relatives of a patient who died at the hospital made the students go for the strike, sources said.

Hospital sources informed, Abul Khoyer, 25, of Sunamganj, was admitted into the hospital after he sustained serious injuries in a road accident at about 7:30pm on Monday.

He succumbed to his injuries soon after the interns pushed as many as 5 injections on his body at about 10:30pm, the relatives of patient said, alleging that the wrong treatment was responsible for the death.

When contacted, the director of the hospital told The Daily Star that a committee had been formed to probe into the incident.

Bomb attack on BSS condemned

BSS, Dhaka

Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalists (BFUJ) and Dhaka Union of Journalists (DUJ) yesterday condemned the bomb attack on the office of Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha (BSS) calling it an attempt to stop operations of the national news agency.

"It's a direct threat to freedom of expression," said BFUJ President Gias Kamal Chowdhury and Secretary General Ruhul Amin Gazi and DUJ President Elahi Newaj Khan and General Secretary Sardar Farid Ahmed in a statement.

"If political opponents find any report undesirable, they could issue protests. They even could go to court if their rejoinder is not published," they said.

"But the use of muscle power through bomb attacks is nothing but an attempt to stop the independent activities of a news agency and expression of fascist attitude," they added.

The union leaders urged all to show restraint for the protection of the freedom of the press.

Hasina calls on Filipino president

UNB, Dhaka

Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Sheikh Hasina yesterday called on the Philippines President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo at the President's Palace and exchanged views on matters of bilateral interests.

Hasina also attended the ceremony marking the birthday of President Arroyo and joined the cake-cutting function.

She was accompanied by AL International Affairs Secretary Syed Abul Hossain MP, according to a message received here.



Prof Shamsuzzaman Khan addresses a meeting organised by Bangabandhu Adarshya Mulyayan O Gobeshona Sangsad at the National Press Club in the city yesterday.

WEATHER TODAY

Dry weather likely

UNB, Dhaka

Rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty or squally wind is likely at one or two places over Rajshahi and Sylhet divisions and weather may remain mainly dry elsewhere over the country till 6.00pm today.

Day temperature may rise slightly over the country, Met Office said. Highest temperature 34.6 degree Celsius was recorded yesterday at Cox's Bazar and lowest 17.8 degree Celsius at Srirongal.

The sun sets in the capital at 6:17pm today and rises at 5:44am tomorrow.

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	32.7	22.6	72	53
Chittagong	32.5	24.0	83	75
Rajshahi	33.6	20.5	75	54
Khulna	33.5	23.5	82	70
Barisal	33.3	22.2	81	68
Sylhet	32.2	20.2	58	53
Cox's Bazar	34.6	23.5	74	71

Book launching ceremony postponed

The launching ceremony of a book titled 'Muslim revolutionaries and the British' by late K Ali Afzal, which was scheduled for today, has been postponed, says a press release.

The fresh date of the ceremony will be announced later.

Death Anniversary



On the occasion, various organisations will take up different programmes, including discussion, Qurankhwani and milad mahfil at home and abroad.

Today is the ninth death anniversary of MAHaq, former minister for Land Re-form and Land Administration, says a press release.