

Free judiciary must

FROM PAGE 16

walks of life to achieve a sustainable human development and to protect human rights. And that, he said, "could be possible only through strengthening of the democratic institutions and providing an independent judiciary having command over the hearts and minds of the people."

He also observed that the concept of human rights and human security become meaningless for the poor and indigent people. "In fact, poverty not only denies access to justice but also makes the poor people unconscious about their right to get justice," he added.

If the judiciary were not made accessible to all including the poor and disadvantaged, the whole concept of human security and dignity would be nothing more than a theoretical and futile exercise, the chief of judiciary said.

The CJ also regretted the huge backlog of cases in the courts and delay in dispensation of justice.

But Law Minister Moudud Ahmed quipped that the country has a very active judiciary, which frequently issues show-cause notices on the government.

He also claimed that the country has all the preconditions of good governance including a fine constitution, a parliament, an independent judiciary, a free media, vibrant private sector and NGOs, and an elected democratic government.

However he admitted to some weaknesses in the judicial system, particularly in criminal justice and public prosecution service, which now functions only at an ad hoc stage.

Lack of an independent investigation system is also a setback in bringing criminals to trial, Moudud said. To remove the weakness, he announced, the government has undertaken an initiative to set up independent investigation units in 300 police stations. Thirty such units, which do not engage in the regular police activities, have already come into operation.

UN Special Rapporteur on Trafficking in Persons Advocate Sigma Huda, who presided over the function, stressed the need of introducing a human rights commission and a speedy separation of the judiciary.

A report of the Campaign on Human Security in Bangladesh was also presented at the meeting. Under the one-year project, BNLWA conducted a countrywide campaign on the key findings of a UNDP study in 2002 on the human security issues and concerns in Bangladesh. It held 31 district-level workshops participated by cross-section of people including members of administration, judiciary, local government, bar and civil society.

The campaign found high cost of litigation, outdated laws, lack of access to judiciary, political pressure and intervention, lack of co-operation among the agencies

concerned, biased and lengthy investigation, pervasive bribery and nepotism in recruitment of police, and people's lack of legal awareness as some of the cardinal concerns.

The report recommended speedier trial, revision of the Code of Civil Procedure, separation of investigation and other police officers, more media exposure, raising public awareness, stepped up co-operation among the agencies and GO-NGO partnership in legal aid to improve the human security and rights situation.

UNDP Resident Representative Jorgen Lissner, Netherlands Ambassador Kees Beemsterboer and BNLWA Executive Director Advocate Salma Ali also spoke at the seminar.

Rocca

FROM PAGE 1
government officials and members of the civil society today and tomorrow.

Rocca will call on Prime Minister Khaleda Zia. She is expected to meet the Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Sheikh Hasina at Sudha Sadan at 4:00pm today.

The trip of Rocca, who flew in here at 8:35pm, is the first high-level one from America after President Bush was inaugurated for a second term in the White House.

Whip's APS

FROM PAGE 16
that Nazmul Haq Nannu, APS of whip Ashraf Hossain, called him on his cell phone at around 11pm while he was having his dinner at his house in Sonadanga.

Nannu first asked Nandi to explain why he wrote a news item, published in the Janakantha on Tuesday, detailing arguments between the Khulna mayor and Whip Ashraf.

"As I refused to answer his question, Nannu told me I'll be forced to reply," said Nandi, adding, "When I said I am not bound to reply, he hurled abusive words at me and threatened to give me a good lesson."

"You've witnessed many incidents. You need to be punished for this," Nandi quoted the APS as saying. "He threatened to kill me, saying no one will be able to save me."

Nandi filed a general diary (GD) with the Sonadanga Police Station yesterday, seeking security.

Locals said Nannu had been an armed cadre of the Khalishpur thana unit of BNP's student wing, Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal, before he was made APS to Whip Ashraf Hossain.

Our Khulna correspondent was unable to reach Nannu over the phone for his version despite repeated attempts yesterday.

Four to die for rape

FROM PAGE 1

case--Anis Shaikh and Kalam Sarder-- have been awarded life imprisonment and 10 years of rigorous imprisonment.

Judge M Kadir Newaz of the women and children Repression Control Tribunal, Bagerhat, pronounced the judgement at noon. A total of 22 prosecution witnesses deposed in the court during the trial.

According to the prosecution, the convicts stormed into the house of fish trader Niranjana Thakur at Komorpur village under Bagerhat Sadar upazila on the night of March 8, 2003 to commit robbery. During the heist, they raped two female inmates of the house, Anima and Sheuli, and killed Tapan Thakur, younger brother of Niranjana.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia called Anima, Shiuli and Niranjana Thakur to her office few days after the incident. The prime minister handed over a cheque for Tk two lakh to Anima, wife of slain Tapan Thakur.

On March 10, Niranjana Thakur lodged an FIR with Bagerhat Sadar Police Station, accusing six people

of gang rape and murder.

Investigating officer pressed charges against the accused in June, 2003. The case was transferred to Speedy Trial Tribunal, Khulna, on January 11 last year. But it was sent back to Bagerhat Women and Children Repression Control Tribunal on February 24 this year for trial as the speedy trial tribunal failed to dispose of the case within 135 working days.

JCD activist

FROM PAGE 1
recovered from them. Nazmul's body was kept in the morgue of Narsingdi Sadar Hospital. Injured Sohail and Dulal were sent to Dhaka Medical College and Hospital for treatment.

Sources said the JCD men were allegedly selling arms in BSCIC Industrial Area at about 3:00pm. "As a Rab patrol team challenged the JCD men, they opened fire, trying to flee. In the exchange of fire, Nazmul died," the sources added.

Mohiuddin thanks

FROM PAGE 16

Mohiuddin said the people of Chittagong gave mandate in favour of his 40-point election agenda and sought prime minister's sincere cooperation in implementing the pledges. The pledges include establishment of "metropolitan government" in Chittagong, construction of Karnaphuli tunnel and hanging bridge and installation of 10 power stations.

"Being a part of the government, I expect your all-out cooperation in discharging my responsibilities for the development of Chittagong," said the mayor, who defeated the ruling coalition candidate with a big margin in the much-publicised city corporation polls.

THANKS HASINA
The newly elected Chittagong City father has expressed gratitude to Awami League President Sheikh Hasina for her all-out support and cooperation in the May 9 mayoral polls that helped him win the election.

"I express my gratitude to you and through you to all party MPs, central and different district-level leaders as they formulated strategies and worked for me under your direct and indirect cooperation, supervision, directives and guidelines," he said in a message to Sheikh Hasina yesterday.

Foreign ministry

FROM PAGE 16
"The reality is that Ms Rocca did not discuss anything about Bangladesh in New Delhi. Even The Hindustan Times as has been quoted as a source in your item did not carry any such report," it said.

BDNEWS' REPLY
Regarding the news, BDNEWS has given the following reply: "Quoting Indo-Asian News Service (IANS), the HindustanTimes.com published the report that US Assistant Secretary of State for South Asia Christina Rocca on May 9 met senior Indian officials in New Delhi and discussed developments in Nepal and Bangladesh.

The website address, where the report would be available, is: http://www.hindustantimes.com/news/7598_1353981_000500020009.htm"

Tk 1.8 crore cellphone sets seized in Sylhet

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Customs officials seized mobile phone sets, chargers and photo film worth about Tk 1.8 crore from the luggage of a Bangladesh Biman flight that arrived from Dubai at the Sylhet Osmani International Airport in the early hours yesterday.

A customs official said Sylhet Customs Commissioner Firoze Shah Alam and an assistant commissioner, tipped off by customs intelligence and the National Board of Revenue, seized eight pieces of unaccompanied luggage containing a huge number of mobile phone sets, chargers and camera film.

The luggage was booked under the names of four passengers--Fakhor Uddin, Abdul Jabbar, Anu Miah and Torikul Islam.

The customs officials made an inventory of the seized items in the presence of the police and other department officials. The filing of cases was on process, the official said.

KIBRIA KILLING

Qaiyum's bail prayer rejected

UNB, Habiganj

The District and Sessions Judge's Court here yesterday rejected the bail prayer of AKM Abdul Qaiyum, the prime accused in the former finance minister Shah AMS Kibria murder case.

Judge Md Azizul Islam directed the authorities concerned to send all documents of the case to the magistrate court, which had earlier rejected Qaiyum's bail prayer.

Court sources said the judge also turned down the prayer of Qaiyum's lawyers, seeking more time to procure necessary papers and documents for submission.

Kibria was killed in a grenade attack at Boiddyer Bazar in Sadar upazila of the district on January 27.

Nasir greets

FROM PAGE 16

the mayor would continue uninterrupted for the welfare and development of the people of Chittagong.

Mohiuddin Chowdhury won the CCC election for a third consecutive term, defeating the ruling coalition-backed candidate, Mir Nasiruddin, by 91,481 votes.

HC extends

FROM PAGE 1
political parties and professional bodies.

Rights organisations view the ban as the government's surrender to agitation by anti-Ahmadiyya zealots believed to be spearheaded by Islamic Oikya Jote, coalition partner of ruling BNP.

Six civil society groups and a member of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat, Bangladesh (AMJB) filed the writ challenging the ban on December 20.

They are AK Rezaul Karim, an AMJB member and former deputy general manager of Bangladesh Bank, Odhikar, Sammilita Samajik Andolan, Ain o Salish Kendra, Karmajibi Nari, Jatiya Ainjibi Parishad and Nijera Kor.

The HC stayed the ban for two weeks in two phases and later for four months.

Gazette notification on the ban, which was underway, stopped in the wake of the stay order.

The anti-Ahmadiyya zealots, who have used different banners in course of their agitation and are now operating under International Khatme Nabuwat Movement, Bangladesh, demonstrated against the stay order.

They also issued threats at several rallies to the petitioners and lawyers moving the petition and took a swipe at civil society, rights organisations and newspapers for 'supporting the Ahmadiyyas'.

Govt to probe

FROM PAGE 1

Sources concerned said that the meeting had discussion on the concerns expressed by European Union and others over the extra-judicial killings.

The main opposition Awami League also took a tough stance on the issue after a mid level leader of the party, Dudd Mia, was killed in crossfire last week.

Among others present in the meeting were Law Minister Moudud Ahmed, Housing and Public Works Minister Mirza Abbas, Fisheries and Livestock Minister Abdullah Al Noman, cabinet secretary, home secretary, law secretary and inspector general of police.

The cabinet committee also discussed the organogram of Bangladesh Police. The government will adopt a new organogram for the 115,000-member police force, the meeting was told.

Other issues discussed at the meeting were police act, law and order situation, renewal of firearms licences and withdrawal of politically-motivated cases.

The meeting was informed that the number of police stations under Dhaka Metropolitan Police will be 51 in next three years from existing 22.

Creation of separate investigation unit in police stations across the country is also under process while procedures have started for appointing 600 investigation officers.

The separate investigation units are now working in 30 police stations. Such units will be introduced in 270 other police stations in phases.

Grenade found

FROM PAGE 16

device, possibly a hand grenade, had been thrown near the stage during Bush's speech, hit someone in the crowd and fallen to the ground.

Bezhuashvili said, however, that it was not thrown but "found."

"The goal is clear -- to frighten or to scare people and to attract the attention of the mass media," he said. "The goal has been reached and that is why I'm talking to you now."

"In any case there was no danger whatsoever for the presidents," he said, referring to Bush and Georgian President Mikhail Saakashvili.

Bezhuashvili said the grenade was found in "inactive mode." He described it as an "engineering grenade" -- one that is used for demolition or to simulate the effect of an artillery shell. Such grenades' blast-effect can be fatal at close range, but unlike offensive grenades, they are not designed to spread shrapnel.

"I am not an expert, but it was not possible to detonate it there," Bezhuashvili said.

A spokeswoman for the US Embassy in Dhaka said "this question will be resolved jointly by American and Georgian specialists."

Security was very tight at Freedom Square, where Bush and Saakashvili gave speeches. Georgian police were deployed, and U.S. snipers were visible on the rooftops, scanning the crowd with binoculars.

US agents, together with their Georgian counterparts, manned the security gates, making even Georgian performers who in some cases were decked out with fake ammunition as part of their costumes remove every piece of metal before passing through the detectors.

Many in the crowd were carrying plastic soda bottles, which they

used to squirt water on each other to stave off the heat after hours of standing without shelter under the bright sun. There were many young people horsing around during the speeches especially when the translation was muffled and the speech unintelligible and some threw plastic bottles at one another for entertainment.

HSC exams

FROM PAGE 1

in the business administration examinations, and 48,052 will appear in the Madrassa Education Board examinations.

The total number of candidates under the Dhaka board this year is 133,690, of which 32,744 are from the science group, 56,347 from the humanities group, and 44,599 from the commerce group.

The total number of HSC candidates under the Rajshahi board is 105,740; 34,630 under the Comilla board; 70,066 candidates under the Jessore board; 33,174 candidates under the Chittagong board; 27,766 under the Barisal board; and 17,405 under the Sylhet board.

The total number of examination centres is 991, of which 261 centres including five in Doha, Abu Dhabi, Jeddah, Riyadh and Tripoli fall under the Dhaka board.

This year the total number of candidates has decreased by 72,000 while the number of centres has increased by 22 compared to those of the previous year.

The reason there are fewer candidates this year is that cheating has been significantly checked on the one hand, and on the other, principals have been instructed not to allow any student unqualified in the test exams for the final exams, said Chairman of the Dhaka Board Prof Shaheda Obaed.

"This will keep the rate of failure low," she said.

Sultry weather leaves

FROM PAGE 1

be boiling," said Raju, a rickshaw puller from Daskhin Khan.

A traffic policeman standing at a corner at the Mahakhali rail crossing almost collapsed, not realising how much heat he had taken while standing in the scorching sunlight yesterday at noon. "I could not take the heat anymore. I was feeling drowsy and at one stage almost collapsed," said Borhanuddin.

The met office yesterday said a mild heat wave is sweeping through the northwest, southwest and central regions of Bangladesh. The highest temperature recorded yesterday was in Rajshahi, at 39.4 degrees Celsius. The met office said the heat wave may last for another few days in the northern districts, including in the capital.

The heat wave is now sweeping over Syedpur, Dinajpur, Rangpur, Rajshahi, Tangail, Faridpur, Satkhira, Chuadanga and parts of Dhaka.

The met office also said that, in the next 24 hours beginning at 9am today, there are chances of rain and thundershowers over Dhaka, Khulna, and Chittagong divisions.

Officials said temperatures this season may set a new record. "We are not certain about the mercury descending in the northern districts in the next few days, but it is assumed by the existing trend that this season's mercury may cross last year's record," said an official of the met office yesterday.

Meanwhile, doctors have advised people to drink enough water, if possible cold and particularly during the daytime, to replace dehydrated water.

"Excess water is naturally drained out from the body, but it can be dangerous if one does not possess enough water in the body to replace the dehydration," said a physician of Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

BNP, AL meet

FROM PAGE 16

party leaders said.

The government is yet to make its position clear about reforms in the EC.

After the working committee's decision and finalisation of the draft proposal, the main opposition party will prepare an unanimous proposal for reforms in consultation with all opposition parties and present it by this month.

The opposition parties will start greater antigovernment agitation on the issue to force the government to meet the demands.

AL and its like-minded parties have been demanding reforms for what they called strengthening the non-party caretaker government and the EC for making the future parliamentary elections more credible.

Mohiuddin seeks

FROM PAGE 16

problem, he pointed out.

"The government would not have to spend money on the development of Chittagong because it has a lot of resources. The only need is to use those resources properly."

He said if the government does not have reservations about the idea of a city government, he will arrange the money and technical know-how necessary for the development of the city.

Asked how, the mayor gave an example.

"If I am given the charge of the project director of a hanging bridge over the river Karnaphuli, I would implement the project on a build-operate-transfer basis within two years after which the government would own the bridge."

In this case, the government would not have to spend Tk 2 lakh a month in salary for the project director, he pointed out.

He referred to the steps he had previously taken to increase the earnings of Chittagong City Corporation. "Earlier, the earnings of the corporation were very insignificant, but now the earnings have increased so much so that we can give loans to banks."

Asked what was the secret of his overwhelming victory this time, Mohiuddin told this correspondent to ask three sections of people in society -- affluent, middle class and lower class. "Even the government officials in Chittagong were happy with my victory," the over-60-year-old veteran politician claimed.

Mohiuddin believes that his main rival and ruling coalition-backed candidate Mir Mohammad Nasir Uddin would not have polled more than 25,000 votes had the government machinery not operated for him.

Big plan

FROM PAGE 1

allocations for each of their constituencies because of the elections.

Meanwhile, in the first nine months of the current fiscal year, 46 percent of the ADP could be implemented. Although this is better than last fiscal year's 40 percent for the same period, planning commission officials are sceptic about any marked improvement in the scenario at the end of the budget year.

Last year's ADP was trimmed to Tk 19,000 crore from Tk 20,300 crore. But ultimately the government could spend Tk 16,796 crore.

Trial of four robber Rab men starts

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Trial of four members of the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) and their two informants began yesterday on charges of their involvement in a robbery.

Locals on March 23 caught red-handed Rab Sergeant Atiqur Rahman, 30, while five others managed to flee with Tk 7.8 lakh robbed from cattle trader Ratan Ali at Mirpur in the city.

Complainant Ratan yesterday identified the accused Rab sergeant in the dock and demanded justice.

Metropolitan Magistrate Towfiqul Alam of the Speedy Trial Tribunal, Dhaka recorded Ratan's statement, while the defence lawyers also cross-examined him.

On completion of the cross-examination, the court fixed May 15 for next hearing of the case.

The court also directed the deputy commissioner (West) to take departmental action against three policemen for violating its order.

The policemen -- havilder Hiron Miah and constables Abul Kalam Azad and Nasir Ahmed -- appeared before the court for giving their statements in the case as witnesses on May 5. But they left the court without permission, the court in its order said.

The court also directed the authorities to send a copy of its order to the Dhaka Metropolitan Police commissioner.

During hearing, Ratan told the court the Rab sergeant and five others went to his Mirpur house at about 12:20pm. They identifying themselves as members of the Rab-4 and asked him how much he had in cash.

Following his reply, they stole Tk 7.8 lakh from his almira and threatened him with death in 'crossfire', said Ratan.

Locals held the Rab sergeant but his accomplices drove off in two CNG-run three-wheelers.

Police questioned Sgt Atiq, arrested Rab members Waliullah and Khorshed Alam following his statement and recovered Tk 2.55 lakh from them.

Ratan filed the case with Mirpur Police Station under the Speedy Trial (Law and Disruption) Act the same day against six people.

The investigation officer in the case, AKM Nahidul Islam, assistant superintendent of police (ASP) of Rab-1, pressed charges against Sgt Atiq, Sgt Waliullah, ASI Rafiq Islam, constable Khorshed Alam and their informants Mozfar Rahman alias Babul and Masud Mridha.

Atiq, Waliullah, Khorshed and Babul were present in the court, while Rafiq and Masud are at large.

Robbers stab Dutch couple, loot NGO office

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Salkhira

Robbers knifed a Dutch couple and looted cash and valuables said to be worth over Tk 50,000 from an NGO office in the town in the early hours Tuesday.

Police said a group of armed robbers entered Rishilipi (a non-government organisation) complex and tied up the night guards. They broke into the NGO building and looted cash and valuables and hacked indiscriminately Dutch national Yan Branshauw and his wife Nelly.

Hearing the couple's scream, locals rushed there and took them to a hospital.

The police nabbed four people including three night guards for their alleged involvement in the robbery.

The officer-in-charge of Kotwali Police Station said they are interrogating the guards -- Nurul Islam, Ashok Kumar and Pradip -- and arrested a youth -- Alauddin of Magura village in the sadar upazila.

Hunger strike

FROM PAGE 16

intellectuals, professionals and political leaders, will join the hunger strike from 3:00pm to 6:00pm.

Kibria was killed in a Habiganj grenade attack on January 27.

"We have organised the programme to press our demands, including a proper judgment in the Kibria murder case and punishment of the real culprits," said advocate Masud-ul-Rauf, member secretary of Narayananganj District Committee of Sammiito Ainjibi Samonnay Parishad.

Finance and Planning Minister M Saifur Rahman earlier said he would place the budget before the House on June 9.

JS session

FROM PAGE 1

AM S Kibria as the speaker denied adjoining the House after adopting the obituary reference.

The much talked about bill proposing a blanket immunity to the World Bank regarding its operations in Bangladesh is likely to be passed in this session as a parliamentary body has already okayed the bill for passing.

Meanwhile, Speaker Jamiruddin Sircar hinted that the session will be a very short one and new session will be summoned for the budget of the next fiscal year.

Finance and Planning Minister M Saifur Rahman earlier said he would place the budget before the House on June 9.

N Korea raises nuke stakes

REUTERS, Seoul

North Korea sharply raised the stakes in its nuclear standoff with regional powers yesterday, announcing it had finished extracting nuclear fuel rods at its Yongbyon plant and taken steps to expand its atomic arsenal.

It was the first time North Korea had effectively confirmed it had been working on its reactor at the Yongbyon nuclear complex north of the capital Pyongyang. Regional powers, notably South Korea, voiced concern and urged it to return to talks designed to end its nuclear ambitions.

The North said in February it was pulling out of the six-country talks and confirmed for the first time it had nuclear weapons. It has since said it would enhance its deterrent force, and Washington fears Pyongyang could be preparing a nuclear test.