



Jatiya Nari Unnayan Niti Paribartan Pratirodh Committee stages a demonstration in front of the High Court in the city yesterday protesting amendments to the National Women's Development Policy.

SUNAMGANJ BY-ELECTION

EC accused of violating HC directives

Speakers at a roundtable yesterday accused the Election Commission (EC) of violating the directives of the

Film censor appeal board reconstituted

The government yesterday reconstituted the Bangladesh Film Censor Appeal Committee with Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister as its chairman. The members of the reconstituted appeal committee are: Information Secretary, Principal Information Officer, Bangla Academy Director General, Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy Director General, Bangladesh Film Censor Board Vice-Chairman, Daily Independent editor Mahbul Alam, Daily Manobjain editor Motiur Rahman Chowdhury, Secretary General of Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalists (BFUJ) Ruhul Amin Gazi, Jatiya Press Club General Secretary Shaikat Mahmud and Information Ministry Deputy Secretary (films). The earlier notification of the Ministry of Information dated June 11, 2002 has been cancelled.

Obituary

Md Shamsul Haque, former chief engineer of Power Development Board (PDB), passed away due to cardiac arrest at his village home Gurudaspur in Natore early hours of yesterday at the age of 57, says a press release. He left behind his wife and three sons to mourn his death.

Abdus Samad Khan

Abdus Samad Khan, a social worker of Rajbari, passed away due to old-age ailments at the Holy Family Red Crescent Hospital in the city recently, says a press release. He was laid to rest at his family graveyard the same day at Khankhanpur in Rajbari district. His eldest son Shahiduzzaman Khan is the Executive Editor of The Financial Express.

Jyotsna Rani Goswami

Jyotsna Rani Goswami, mother of Dr Karunamoy Goswami, died at the Gulshan Shikder Medical College Hospital in the city on July 8 at the age of 80, says a press release. Her shradha will be held in Narayanganj on July 18.

Matiur Rahman Falan

Matiur Rahman Falan, an injured freedom fighter, died at his village home at Khanbaniara under Singair upazila in Manikganj yesterday afternoon at the age of 55. He fought during the War of Liberation under Sector-2. He was buried with state honour at the graveyard at his village.

High Court (HC) to collect details of the candidates and make them public ahead of the Sunamganj-3 by-election. "The EC's failure to comply with the directives is tantamount to contempt of court, and that's why we are thinking to go to HC again," said Prof Muzaffer Ahmed, convenor of Sujana, a coalition dedicated to promoting good governance. The roundtable was organised by Sujana at the National Press Club in the city. The HC had clearly directed the EC to collect detailed information about the candidates in order to inform the voters, he said, adding, "We do not know what the EC has so far done in this regard despite repeated attempts." Prof Ahmed said honest and competent people should be recruited to the EC for proper exercising of its power. "The HC directives are very crucial in keeping the black money holders away from the parliament election, but the commission has failed to implement them properly," said Member Secretary of Sujana Prof

Badiul Alam Majumdar. "With a view to knowing the details of the candidates of the by-election, we have sought original affidavits from the chief election commissioner (CEC), but failed to receive them despite repeated requests," he alleged. The CEC's remark that the HC directives are not mandatory will definitely foil the purpose of a free and fair election, said Prof Majumdar. The forthcoming Sunamganj by-election provides a test case for implementing the directives enabling the voters to know detailed information about the candidates, he asserted. Former law minister Abdul Matin Khasru stressed the need for reaching a consensus to keep the election free from the influence of black money and muscle power. Jatiya Party Presidium Member GM Kader MP, Awami League leader Dr Md Abdur Razzak MP, Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal leader ASM Abdur Rab, Prof Asif Nazrul, Prof Md Masum and Prof Anwar Hossain also spoke on the occasion.



Motiur Rahman, editor of the Prothom Alo, speaks at the inaugural ceremony of a training programme for young journalists of 'Mukta Khabar', a popular news programme on the Ekushey Television, at the ETV office in the city yesterday. On his right is ETV Chairman Abdus Salam and on his left is Chief News Editor Manjurul Ahsan Bulbul.

WEATHER TODAY section with a sun icon and a table of weather forecasts for Dhaka, Chittagong, Rajshahi, Khulna, Barisal, Sylhet, and Cox's Bazar.

Govt, Bapex, Niko blamed for Tengratila blowout

Speakers at a seminar yesterday blamed the government, the Bapex and the Canadian company Niko Resources for the blowouts in the Tengratila gas field. They also called on the government to take over the Niko's share in Feni gas field as compensation for the massive waste of gas. The Bangladesh Economic Association (BEA) organised the seminar on 'The impact of Tengratila gas well blowout on the country' in the city. Terming the Niko a small and inefficient company, the speakers criticised the government for signing a controversial agreement with it. There was no logic in awarding the contract to Niko as the three national companies -- Bapex, BGFCL and SGFCL -- have records of successfully conducting such operations, they said. BEA President Dr Qazi Kholiquzzaman said the BEA formed a 'Nagorik Commission' to detect all the irregularities in all the agreements signed for gas exploration and assess the losses caused by gas field explosions. Nuruiddin Mahmud Kamal, former chairman of Power Development Board, said that former state minister for energy AKM Mosharrif, former secretary Dr Tawfique Elahi Chowdhury and former chairman of Petrobranga Mosharrif Hossain are responsible for the gas field disaster. He also pointed out many faults in the Joint Venture Agreement with the Niko. "There is no mention of fixation of price in the agreement. It was an unequal deal between the Niko and the Bapex," he said. Presenting a keynote paper on 'Tengratila gas well blowout: Causes and consequences', Dr Badrul Imam, a professor of geology at Dhaka University, said Niko has totally failed to prevent repeated disasters at Tengratila. He said Niko took six months to drill a relief well after the first blowout at the main well and drilled it too close to the first blowout well. The gas field has developed many geological pockets in the sand layer where gas has spread, making further drilling highly risky, the geological expert said. "Niko's failure to apply the 'Blow-out Prevention' measure is now leading the Tengratila gas field to the stage of abandonment," he added. "If the gas field is abandoned, the nation will suffer a loss of 270 billion cubic feet gas worth around Tk 3,500 crore," he added. BEA General Secretary Dr Abul Barakat said that the estimated loss due to Tengratila blowout would be between Tk 3,175 crore and Tk 7,600 crore. But the amount would be much higher if other aspects are taken into consideration, he added.

WOMEN'S DEV POLICY Rights activists threaten movement

Women's rights activists staged demonstrations across the country yesterday in protest against the amendments to National Women's Development Policy, saying that the changes were made to curb the fundamental rights of the women. In the capital, leaders and activists of rights and non-government organisations and civil society members held a protest rally at the Central Shaheed Minar demanding immediate cancellation of the amended policy. They also called for the restoration of the original policy framed in 1997. The leaders also threatened to launch a tougher movement if their demands are not met immediately. They said the government amended the policy without any discussion with the women leaders, bringing fundamental changes to the policy. The amendments are designed to restrict the women's participation in politics, decision-making process and in economic activities, the leaders said. Jatiya Nari Unnayan Niti Paribartan Pratirodh Committee organised the programme.

Wasa needs Tk 12,958cr to upgrade city services

Dhaka Water and Sewerage Authority (Dhaka Wasa) needs over Tk 12,958 crore to implement 38 projects to upgrade its services for the city dwellers. This was stated by acting managing director Dr Quazi Ali Azam at a meeting between the government and foreign donor organisations at the external relations division (ERD) yesterday, Wasa sources said. Of the total amount, Tk 6,489 crore will be needed to implement 14 projects on water supply, Tk 4,559 crore for 16 projects on sewerage management and Tk 1,910 crore for eight projects on drainage management system. Presided over by ERD Additional Secretary Badiur Rahman, the meeting was attended by the representatives of Japan International Cooperation Agency, World Bank, Asian Development Bank, Department for International Development, Danish International Development Assistance, The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency and the Netherlands government. The participants at the meeting assured their assistance for the projects.

'Use ICT to enhance productivity'

Speakers at a seminar yesterday underscored the need for efficient use of information communication technology (ICT) to improve business and enhance productivity. The seminar was jointly organised by Bangladesh Association of Software & Information Services (BASIS) and Junior Chamber International (JCI) Bangladesh at a city hotel. Dr M Rokonzaman of Independent University of Bangladesh presented a keynote paper titled 'IT for business efficiency.' He said business and technology innovation are the key driving forces behind the productivity growth. IT plays a crucial role by providing creative management teams with a powerful tool to increase productivity, he added. President of American Chamber of Commerce Aftabul Islam attended the seminar as chief guest. He called upon business community to use IT as a tool for development saying "IT is the only solution and only future." BASIS President Sarwar Alam said without proper utilisation of IT and IT services, no business can achieve sustainable goal. Earlier, a memorandum of understanding (MoU) was signed between

Political parties, people should decide on CG

Says German envoy

The political parties and people of Bangladesh should take the decision on reforms of the caretaker government, said outgoing German Ambassador Dietrich Andreas yesterday. "It is not up to the foreign ambassadors. Rather, it is up to the Bangladesh people and the political parties to reach a consensus on the caretaker government issue," said the German envoy emerging from a farewell meeting with the Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Sheikh Hasina at her Sudha Sadan residence. During the meeting, they discussed various issues, including the bilateral relations between two countries, the envoy told reporters. Germany wants Bangladesh's democratic process to be stronger, Andreas said, adding that his country would do everything to consolidate the process. "We have the next general election to be held in a free, fair and transparent manner so that Bangladesh's journey towards the institutionalisation of democracy is consolidated," he added. Briefing the reporters, Syed Abul Hossain, international affairs secretary of the Awami League, said the issue of establishing the rule of law, state of democracy and human rights situation came up for discussion during the German envoy's meeting with the opposition leader. The German envoy wanted to know what would be the strategy of the Awami League in future to establish the rule of law and strengthen the democratic process, he said. Quoting the envoy, Abul Hossain said the EU and Germany want to see the next general election to be held in a transparent manner. "We have informed the ambassador of the Awami League's view on the country's law and order situation, human rights situation and reforms of the caretaker government," he added. Abul Hossain also said that there is a clear difference between the BNP-led alliance and the previous AL government in terms of establishing the rule of law and human rights situation in Bangladesh.



Communications Minister Nazmul Huda and Chittagong city Mayor ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury discuss a point at the inaugural ceremony of 96 tank wagons at the Chittagong Rail Station yesterday.

5 dists most vulnerable to earthquake

US Geological Survey expert says. The country needs a fresh and detailed geological survey to specify the dangers of earthquake, said the experts at a seminar yesterday. They said the existing geological data is not enough for the urban planners and engineers to take precautionary measures before planning any buildings or power plants. The seminar was organised by Bangladesh Earthquake Society at Brac University in the city. In a presentation on 'Seismic Hazard for Bangladesh', Dr John W Whitney of US Geological Survey identified Rajshahi, Sylhet, Comilla, Habiganj and Chittagong regions as most vulnerable to earthquake in the country. Proposing a detailed seismic survey, Dr Whitney, also one of the authors of National Geological Map of Bangladesh, said, "The engineers must consider the seismic data to learn the nature of the soil while expanding urban areas and constructing power plants or other factories." This is also important for the security of the local and foreign investors, he added. Dr Whitney said nobody knows how the underground soil is going to behave in the next 100 or 200 years. In this context, it is imperative that the country needs a realistic geological data, he said. The seminar was chaired by Prof Jamilur Reza Chowdhury, vice-chancellor of Brac University and chairman of Bangladesh Earthquake Society. He laid emphasis on more discussions on the issue and the steps to initiate a project on undertaking the survey. Director of Geological Survey of Bangladesh Mir Fazlul Karim and Prof Aftabul Alam of geology department of Dhaka University also spoke.

Cash, goods worth Tk 4.18 lakh looted

Armed robbers looted Tk 4.18 lakh in cash, gold ornaments and other valuables from a house in the city early yesterday. Police quoting the FIR (first information report) filed after the incident said a gang of six to seven entered the tin-shed house of one Sohrab Hossain at Shahjadpur in Gulshan cutting the window grill at around 2:30am. Confining the family members to a room at gunpoint, the robbers looted Tk 60,000 in cash, 30 tolas of gold ornaments, one mobile set and other valuables. Police could neither arrest anyone nor could recover the looted cash and kinds as of 7:00pm. In another incident, a gang of criminals took away Tk 1 lakh from two marketing officers of private firm feeding them something mixed with sedatives. Mamunur Rashid and Monir Hossain of Colour View Limited at Gulshan were admitted to Dhaka Medical College and Hospital (DMCH) in critical condition. Hospital sources said the gang fed them sedatives soon after they got into a bus from Gulshan on their way to Nayabazar.

DHAKA TODAY section with a list of events: Roundtable, Musical evening, Theatre, Oath taking ceremony, Death anniversary, Memorial meeting, Certificate awarding ceremony, Book launch.