

Newsman should unite to face professional hazards

Says Mark Tully

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In the hour of crisis, journalists must try to discover the reasons behind the challenges and put in efforts to dissolve it sensibly and accurately, said eminent journalist Mark Tully yesterday.

He also called on the newsmen to gather under the same umbrella to face professional hazards resulting from commercialisation and politicisation of the media.

The veteran journalist was speaking at a seminar styled 'Journalism in the hour of crisis' organised by the Liberation War Museum on its premises in the city.

Referring to some media houses being barred by political leaders from covering news at the Hawa Bhaban, Sudha Sadan or Awami League office, he said journalists should be united when they face such obstacles and stop giving coverage to them. The parties would surely then start 'begging' for exposure, he added.

Mark Tully, who covered the War of Liberation in 1971 as a BBC journalist, also shared his experience gathered during that time.

Speaking at the seminar, Ataus Samad, advisory editor of the daily Amar Desh, called for a bold approach from journalists. "Try to ask rigorous questions to dig out the fact. The electronic media people must also remember that the camera cannot tell everything."

He also called on journalists working in the print media to provide more details in their stories.

Manzurul Ahsan Bulbul, president of Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalists (BFUJ), said journalists must be more efficient to carry out their duties properly.

"News sometimes gets a different and misleading shape because of the politicisation and commercialisation. Efficiency and greater responsibility on the part of journalists can help avert such

crises," he said.

Journalist Nadim Qadir called on newsmen to come out of the grip of partisan attitude. "First of all we should try to forget the perceived ideas while writing news on sensitive political issues."

Zaglul Ahmed Chowdhury, managing director and chief editor of Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha, underscored the need to make the state-run media autonomous.

Both the major political parties say before the election that the state-run media will be made autonomous, but after assuming the office, they start using it as a tool to serve their purposes, he said.

Dr Sarwar Ali, trustee and member secretary of the Liberation War Museum, moderated the programme attended by reporters from both the print and electronic media.



Eminent journalist Mark Tully, 3rd from right, speaks at a seminar at the Liberation War Museum in the city yesterday. On his right are Dr Sarwar Ali, Ataus Samad and Zaglul Ahmed Chowdhury while on his left are Nadim Qadir and Manzurul Ahsan Bulbul.

Ctg high-rise bldg fined for pilfering water

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Chittagong

A mobile court here yesterday fined a hotel, a community centres and a high-rise building for pilfering and wasting water and arrested four people in this connection.

The court fined Tk 1.5 lakh to the owners of the establishments for stealing huge quantity of water through illegal pumps from WASA line and bypassing the meters everyday.

Sources said the court unearthed the illegal connection at Royal Hotel and Restaurant, Shah Amanat Community Centre and a multi-storey building, in a drive at city's Halishahar area.

The court also held manager and caretaker of the establishments in this connection.

The court disconnected the water supply line and also seized the pumps and some sanitary materials, they added.

Chittagong Port Authority (CPA) Magistrate Md Munir Chowdhury, also acting as Chittagong WASA magistrate as his additional duty, led the drive.

### Dry weather likely

UNB, Dhaka

Weather is likely to remain mainly dry with temporary partly cloudy sky over the country having chances of light rain or drizzle at one or two places over Sylhet division and the regions of Tangail and Mymensingh in the next 12 hours until 6:00pm today.

Night temperature may fall by 1-3 degree Celsius over the country, Met Office said.

Highest temperature 29.8 degree Celsius was recorded yesterday at Patuakhali and lowest 13.6 degree Celsius at Srimongal.

**The sun sets in the capital at 5:13pm today and rises at 6:32am tomorrow.**

Highest and lowest temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

City/Town	Temperature	Humidity in percentage	in celsius
	Max	Min	Morning Evening
Dhaka	28.3	18.8	88 62
Chittagong	28.6	16.5	80 72
Rajshahi	26.3	17.2	96 91
Khulna	29.6	19.0	94 73
Barisal	29.6	17.0	95 87
Sylhet	23.0	16.0	84 80
Cox's Bazar	29.0	15.5	74 --

Expat woman robbed after doping

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Unidentified criminals drugged an expatriate woman returning from Oman and made off with her cash and valuables at Motijheel yesterday.

Mafia Begum, 41, from Majidpur in Cornilla, was found unconscious inside a passenger bus at around 4:00pm near a bus stop at Motijheel.

Other passengers of the bus noticed the unconscious lady and informed the police, who later admitted her to Dhaka Medical College Hospital, said police sources.

Police found a passport with the victim's belongings and confirmed her identity.

The police suspect that criminals in the bus might have used sedative drug to make Mafia Begum unconscious before getting off the bus with her valuables.

The victim's family members said they were not aware of Mafia's return from Oman.

Mafia went to Oman as a domestic help on September 26 and arrived in Dhaka yesterday on her way home.

TURYA MURDER Three on 10-day remand

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday placed three people, arrested on charges of killing young jewellery trader Turya Ghosh Roni, on a ten-day remand for interrogation.

Metropolitan Magistrate Mohammad Shafique Anwar passed the order after Detective Branch (DB) of police produced the three -- Turya's girl friend Shamsunnahar Shewli, 29, Al Mamun alias Mamun, 26, and Abu Syed, 30 -- before the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's (CMM's) Court in the afternoon.

The court ordered to send Shahadat Hossain Liton to the Dhaka Central Jail as the IO did not seek remand for him.

In his forwarding report about the ten days' remand, DB Inspector Nazrul Islam, also the investigation officer (IO) of the case, said the arrestees are directly involved in kidnapping and killing the victim for realising a large amount of money as ransom from the victim's family. So, they need to be remanded to find out the vital clues and whereabouts of their accomplices, Nazrul added.

The mutilated body of Turya, son of a leading jewellery trader in the city, was recovered from beneath the earth at Rampura on Monday, after 43 days of his abduction.

Following the incident, victim's father Jagannath Ghosh filed an abduction case with Uttara Police Station accusing Shewli and four others on November 7.

Police arrested Qayyum, Tajul Islam, Hiralal Ghosh, Khawza Azim and Farhad Alam but they were released on bail on different dates.

**SEDITION CASE**

**Tania Amir gets anticipatory bail**

UNB, Dhaka

The High Court yesterday granted ad interim anticipatory bail for six months to Barrister Tania Amir in a sedition case in connection with the November 30 vandalism on the Supreme Court premises.

The court granted her bail when she had surrendered before it immediately after returning home from abroad.

Passing the order, a division bench comprising Justice M Abdul Wahab Mian and Justice M Raisuddin issued a rule upon the government to explain why the petitioner should not be granted a regular bail.

Her father SCBA President Barrister M Amir-Ul Islam, Bar Council Vice-Chairman Barrister Rakanuddin Mahmud and five other lawyers had secured ad interim anticipatory bail in the same case on December 10.

The case filed with the Shahbagh Police Station by SC court keeper M Rafiqul Islam is now pending before the court of Chief Metropolitan Magistrate, Dhaka.

Barrister Rafique-ul Huq, Mahmudul Islam and Barrister Azmalul Hossain QC appeared for Tania Amir.



Ittefaq Workers' Union executives

Fazley Imam and Alamgir Hossain Khan have been elected president and general secretary of the executive committee of Workers' Union of the daily Ittefaq for the term 2006-2008, says a press release.

Other office bearers are Senior Vice-President Asad Ullah, Vice-President S M Selim, Additional Secretaries Babul Akter and Abu Kawsar, Organising Secretary Nazir Ahmed, Publicity Secretary Abdul Wahab, Cultural Secretary Shahjahan and Treasurer Abdus Salam Akon.

58 incidents of political violence from Nov 14-30

Reveals Odhikar report

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A total of 58 incidents of political violence took place mostly in Dhaka and Chittagong divisions from November 14 to 30 where Awami League (AL)-led 14-party alliance and BNP-led 4-party alliance clashed with each other killing two people and injuring 250 others, said a report yesterday.

Of them, the 14-party supporters were the perpetrators in 64 per cent incidents whereas 4-party supporters were the perpetrators in 55 per cent incidents while the perpetrators were both the supporters of both alliances in 24 per cents, the report added.

Odhikar, a human rights organisation, in association with International Foundation for Election Systems (IFES), organised a press conference at the National Press Club in the city yesterday for releasing its third report prepared with the support of The Asia Foundation.

Election Violence Education and Resolution (EVER), a project of Odhikar, prepared the report titled 'Election Violence in Bangladesh: Report 3' on the basis of the information of its observers who worked in 45 constituencies from November 14 to 30 this year.

Most of the incidents of violence took place on November 14 when

the 14-party alliance enforced their blockade programme, he said.

When asked about the goal of the project, Saidur Rahman, programme coordinator of EVER said their goal is to track the incidents of violence ahead of the general election in order to reduce them and create public opinion.

The report has been sent to the Election Commission, local and civil administration and different political parties, he added.

Lisa Kamerud, research coordinator of IFES, Angela Peltzer, programme coordinator of IFES, and Nasir Uddin Elan, office-in-charge of Odhikar also spoke.

Hasina makes 27 poll pledges

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event as the chief guest, pointed out to the business leaders various development works carried out by the previous AL government between 1996 and 2001.

Distinguished business leaders, noted citizens, media personalities, US Ambassador in Dhaka Patricia A Butenis, and AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil were also present among others.

The AL chief in her written speech said they want a free and fair election in the country in order to free the country from lack of governance, corruption and partisanship. "We believe in democratic politics and governments can be changed only through elections. As we handed over power in 2001 peacefully, we hoped that the move would be emulated in 2006," she said.

Hasina said at the time of BNP-Jamaat alliance's handing over of power, a conspiracy for election engineering was hatched by them, which has brought forth the present unrest in the country, and because of that her party was compelled to launch a movement.

She pointed out that 77 people had to sacrifice their lives in the movement of protecting the voting right of the people. The business community was also victimised by the unrest, she added. "If we can come to power, we will take steps to make up for those losses," Hasina assured the Amcham leaders.

She pledged to bring the power shortage down to an acceptable level within a year through establishing hydro electric power projects, Rooppur nuclear power project, solar energy project, wind energy project and small and large power plants.

"We will stop militancy and terrorism. We will identify, arrest and try terrorists and their godfathers. Political and administrative patronisation of terrorists will be stopped," the AL president pledged.

Independence and effectiveness of Anti Corruption Commission will be ensured, she said promising that corruption will be eliminated from all levels of the state and society, exemplary punishment will be meted out to corrupt persons, and their money and property will be confiscated.

The quickest steps will be taken to separate the judiciary from the executive branch of the government, and independence and neutrality of the judiciary will be ensured, Hasina pledged adding that a four tier strong local government framework will be made operational to decentralise the administration through arranging elections in the districts and upazila parishes.

Parliament will be made effective, and transparency and accountability of the government will be assured by bringing all the government offices under e-governance, said the AL chief.

Hasina promised that extra judicial killings will be stopped and all law and regulations contrary to the fundamental rights will be cancelled. "We will stop partisanship in the administration and judiciary, and merit and competence will be the basis for recruitment and promotion."

The verdict of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman murder case will be implemented and the trial of the accused in the case of jail killings of the four national leaders will be completed, all cases of political killings will be investigated and tried as well, Hasina firmly said.

She said distortion of history of the war of liberation will be stopped and the accurate history will be published. She said they will take initiatives to reopen the closed factories. Traffic congestion in Dhaka will be managed through construction of elevated roads, east-west and ring roads, and the country's rail network will be improved.

A guarantee of employment will be instituted to ensure employment for at least one eligible person from every family, the price of agricultural inputs will be reduced and agro based industries will be set up, she pledged.

In order to free the people from land related civil and criminal cases, the sector will be computerised, Hasina said.

Empowerment of women will be ensured by reinstating the Women's Development Policy of 1997, she said adding that direct elections of women to the reserved

seats in parliament will be introduced, and representation of women in all institutions will be increased.

Education will be brought to the world's standard and will be made free up to the bachelor's level for both men and women, Hasina promised.

The capacity of submarine cable will be increased so that the benefit of it reaches all throughout the country, the AL president said adding that they will ensure health for all by restarting 18,000 community clinics established during the previous AL regime.

The decision of making the state run television and radio independent will be implemented, she asserted.

The Chittagong Hill Tracts Peace Treaty will be implemented. Development of tribal communities and the communities that are falling behind will also be ensured.

"We will follow an independent foreign policy based on the principle of 'friendship towards all and malice towards none'. We will maintain friendly ties with our neighbouring countries. Regional cooperation will be strengthened to achieve economic emancipation of the poor people of South Asia," added Hasina.

Maximum utilisation of gas, coal and mineral resources in national interest will be ensured, port management will be modernised, and Chittagong and Mongla ports will be developed as major ports of South Asia, she said.

"We want to make Bangladesh a bridge between the east and the west by establishing a deep sea port, new airports, the Asian Highway and Railway."

Hasina said the nation will celebrate the Golden Jubilee in 2020. "Taking that as a milestone, we want to proceed with 'vision 2020' to leave behind a poverty free country, a democratic state and welfare society for the future generation," she added.

AmCham President Andrew L Fawthrop, Vice-president Syed Ershad Ahmed and Exicutive Director A Gafur also spoke.

Military must stay neutral

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was necessary to "ensure security of countrymen and to create a congenial and peaceful atmosphere ahead of polls."

On December 10, forces of the army, navy and air force deployed throughout Bangladesh. The police banned gatherings around the presidential palace in Dhaka.

"Past experience with Bangladeshis leaders deploying the military gives us serious cause for concern," said Brad Adams, Asia director of Human Rights Watch. "During the last major deployment, in 2002, more than 50 people died after being arrested by troops."

National elections are slated for January 23. Bangladesh is currently governed by a caretaker administration run by President Ahmed, who also holds the portfolios of defense and home affairs, says a press release.

A 14-party opposition coalition has staged regular demonstrations in recent weeks calling for electoral reform amid charges of bias by the caretaker government and large-scale voter registration fraud. More than 40 people have died and scores have been injured in pre-election protests.

On December 11, four members of the caretaker government advisory council resigned. One of them, human rights lawyer Sultana Kamal, said the entire cabinet had objected the move. "But he [the president] did not care," she told reporters. "The deployment of the army is against the democratic process ... it can provoke the political parties and create obstacles to holding a free and fair election."

The military has played a powerful role in Bangladesh since the country gained independence from Pakistan in 1971. Two presidents have lost their lives in military coups.

The last large-scale military deployment occurred in October 2002, when the government ordered more than 40,000 military personnel to fight spiraling crime in "Operation Clean Heart," which lasted 85 days. During that time, the army arrested more than 10,000 people, at least 50 of whom died in custody, in unclear circumstances. Officials attributed most of those deaths to "heart attacks."

Just before the operation ended in January 2003, parliament passed legislation to ensure that no member of the armed forces could face prosecution for abuses during the campaign. The Joint Drive Indemnity Ordinance of 2003 granted immunity from prosecution to armed forces and government officials for their involvement in "any casualty, damage to life and property, violation of rights, physical or mental damage" between October 16, 2002, and January 9, 2003.

To date, no military personnel are known to have been held criminally responsible for any of the 50 or more custodial deaths.

"Abusive members of the military have enjoyed near-total immunity for their violent crimes in the past," Adams said. "If the military is to promote law and order today, it must respect the law."

The military deployment comes much earlier than in past electoral cycles, 44 days before the election is scheduled, compared to 13 days in 2001, 18 days in 1996, and 23 days before the 1991 vote.

Human Rights Watch said it was concerned about the early deployment, given the experience with "Clean Heart" and the fact that the army's powers remain unclear. Newspapers have reported that the army will have the power of arrest, but the government has not clarified this point.

"Given the military's record of

human rights violations, it's crucial that the army follow strict rules limiting the use of force," said Adams. "The army is not trained in policing, and history shows that it abuses people's rights when asked to work as police."

Human Rights Watch said the deployment should be seen in the context of violence and extra-judicial killings by Bangladesh's security forces. Over the past three years, more than 350 people have died in the custody of the police and the Rapid Action Battalion, an elite paramilitary anti-crime and anti-terrorism force. Many deaths resulted from extra-judicial executions. Torture is common and often goes unpunished.

30 FFs to join Victory Day celebrations in Kolkata

A group of 30 freedom fighters will take part in joint celebrations on 'Vijay Diwas' (Victory Day) from December 15 to 17 in Kolkata, says an Indian High Commission press release.

The celebrations are being organised by Eastern Army Command at Fort William, Kolkata.

A group of 60 freedom fighters also visited India last year for the celebrations.

The celebrations of this year will consist of a commemoration ceremony at Vijay Smarak (Victory Memorial), cultural programmes, a social get together and meetings with officers of the Indian Army as well as civilians who were involved in the War of Liberation.

Book on Mughal architectures launched

DU CORRESPONDENT

The Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation Limited (HSBC) launched 'Mughal Monuments of Bangladesh', a book containing brief descriptions and photographs of Mughal architectures in Bangladesh, at Dhaka Sheraton Hotel in the city yesterday to mark its 10th founding anniversary.

The 160-page book holds 54 multi coloured pictures of Mughal monuments, including mosques and palaces, established during the Mughal reign in Bangla from 1576 to 1856.

Babu Ahmed took the photographs of the monuments while his wife Nazly Chowdhury wrote the texts. Prof Enamul Haque, chairman of International Centre for Study of Bengal Art, edited the book.

The book costs Tk 2500 and will be available at major city bookshops including Words 'n Pages and Etcetera soon.

The authors and the editor of the book, HSBC Bangladesh Chief Executive Officer Steve Banner, Head of Marketing and Public Relations of HSBC Mustafizur R Khan were present at the launching ceremony.

Steve Banner thanked the authors for their dedication and hard work in putting the book together.

He said all the proceeds from the sale of the book will be spent for charities and developmental works in Bangladesh.

Obituary



Rabeya Khatun Chowdhury, wife of Ragib Ali, chairman of board of governors of North South University Foundation, passed away at the Bungalow of Malonichora Tea-Estate in Sylhet yesterday, says a press release.

She left behind her husband, one son and one daughter to mourn her death.

Rabeya, co-founder of Leading University, Ragib-Rabeya Medical College & Hospital and Ragib-Rabeya Degree College, was buried at the family graveyard after namaz-e-janaza at Kamalabazar in Sylhet.

Death anniversary



Today is the 35th death anniversary of Rafiqul Haider Chowdhury, a married intellectual, says a press release.

On this day in 1971, Razakars, local collaborators of the Pakistani army, picked him up from his Shahidbagh residence and took him away blindfolded. He was later killed.

A milad mahfil will be held at Aminbagh Mosque in the city after Asr prayers to mark the day.

3 martyred brothers

Today is the 35th death anniversary of three martyred brothers -- Selim Reza, Nasir Uddin Ahmed and Azmal Hossain, says a press release.

They were picked up by the Pakistani army and their local collaborators on this day in 1971.

Qurankhwani and milad mahfil will be held at Pubail Station Jame Mosque in Tongi, Gazipur, after Asr prayers today.

Relatives, friends and admirers are requested to attend the milad and pray for the salvation of the departed soul.

Mahmud ul Hoque



nalist and freedom fighter, says a press release.

On the occasion, a doa mahfil will be held at his village at Jangalbadhal, Shingia, Jessore after Asr prayers.

Qulkhwani

Qulkhwani of former additional secretary Md Solaiman Khan will be held at his residence at 79/C, Asad Avenue today, says a press release.

Solaiman passed away due to cancer at a city hospital on Thursday night at the age of 56.

He left behind his wife, a son and a daughter.

Admirers and relatives are requested to attend the qulkhwani and pray for salvation of the departed soul.



Golam Mainuddin, deputy managing director, British American Tobacco Bangladesh (BATB), hands over the champion trophy to Institute of Business Administration, the winner of 'Battle of Minds' 2006 -- a business case solving competition -- at Brac Inn centre in the city recently. The BATB organised the competition and The Daily Star was the media partner.