

National security council a must to fight terrorism

Experts tell seminar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Security experts at a seminar yesterday recommended constituting national security council (NSC) to combat terrorism successfully.

They also laid emphasis on strong political will, training up of law enforcement and intelligence agencies and zero tolerance to firearms trafficking.

The two-day seminar styled as 'A Strategy for Combating Terrorism in Bangladesh' was organised jointly by Bangladesh Enterprise Institute (BEI) and British High Commission at BEI conference room in the city.

The seminar was held in nine sessions focussing on different aspects of terrorism.

Speaking at the concluding session, the speakers said confrontational politics contributes in many ways to terrorism which is largely home-grown, and the nation needs to unite to address the root causes of the menace that include poverty, unemployment, poor governance, injustice, illiteracy and corruption.

Apart from local measures, regional cooperation which is not up to the mark, needs to be boosted up, they added.

"Given political will, it is easier to combat terrorism in Bangladesh as situation is not as complex as in neighbouring countries that are fighting the menace," said CM Shafi Sami, a former diplomat who recently resigned from the post of adviser to caretaker govern-

ment, adding that the government must be firm at this moment to handle the situation.

"Instead of taking media reports on militant activities in the northern part of the country seriously, the immediate-past government reacted angrily. It however initiated steps few months later after the militants banded to the fore, but much blood spilled in the meantime," he said.

The former secretary also called for stopping human rights violation saying terrorism is prompted by such violation.

Reaz Rahman, former adviser of foreign ministry, underscored the need for a multi-faceted fight against terrorism.

Saying that fundamentalism and extremism were alien term to people of this country, he stressed the need for a stringent law that may award death sentence to the patrons of the terrorists.

Detailing the steps taken by the immediate-past government, Reaz called for a durable framework to address the issue and a three-tier short, medium and long-term steps to fight terrorism successfully.

There was a deliberate attempt to prove Bangladesh as a den of terrorists, he said.

Presenting his paper, BISS Research Director Dr A Rob Khan focused on the recommendations of the previous eight sessions.

BEI President Farooq Sobhan proposed for constituting the NSC with the prime minister (PM) as its head to

Saber blames EC for two different voter lists in his constituency

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Saber Hossain Chowdhury, political secretary to Awami League chief, yesterday accused the Election Commission (EC) of violating the constitution by preparing two completely different voter lists in his constituency putting the legitimacy of his election nomination at stake.

Speaking at a press briefing at his office in the city, Saber said this reflects a pattern to engineering the election.

Citing the voter list of Khilgaon West Chowdhury Para in his constituency Dhaka-6, he mentioned the cases where different names were registered as voters in the same holdings.

Saber said two different voter lists have put his nomination at risk as an election nominee will not be allowed to participate in the election if the required proposer and supporter of his nomination are not in the final list.

"We have sent over 50 letters of complaint to election officials about these discrepancies but they are yet to take any steps in this regard," he alleged.

'Health inequities a major challenge to cut poverty'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Continued gap in health condition and healthcare consumption among different sections of people has become a major cause of concern, said the speakers at a press briefing yesterday.

They said health inequities have emerged as a major challenge and health conditions as well as healthcare consumption gap between the rich and the poor, men and women, urban and rural residents and people living in different regions of the country have become a major cause of concern, particularly in the light of the national commitment to eradicate poverty and strengthen democracy.

The press briefing was organised by James P Grant School of Public Health at Brac University at the National Press Club to announce that the publication ceremony of 'The State of Health in Bangladesh: Report 2006' will be held tomorrow.

Nobel laureate Dr Amartya Sen will unveil the report at Brac auditorium. Health Watch, a network of the organisations working with health issues, prepared the report with the theme 'Challenges for Achieving Equity in Health.'

While presenting the summary of the report compiled from research findings of different organisations, the speakers said despite the establishment of a nationwide infrastructure to deliver healthcare, the quality of services still remains poor.

They said though some progress has been achieved in health sector, it is uneven and its quality is threatened by rising prevalence of childhood disabilities, especially in economically disadvantaged populations.

"The poor dominate the consumption of public healthcare at primary level. At the same time the rich dominate the consumption of private healthcare and public healthcare at tertiary level," said Dr Rounaq Jahan.

"Only 11 percent of poor children receive professional medical treatment for Acute Respiratory Infection (ARI) while the non-poor children receive 45 percent. Similarly only three percent of poor women could use skilled birth attendant during delivery while among the non-poor women it is 40 percent," she said.

Dr Rounaq said it is also found that women bear the burden of fertility reduction, especially the poor and less educated women.

She said in government's equity-oriented policies and programmes, there is a gap between policy intention and implementation that limits the results especially for the poor and disadvantaged group.

The speakers said the Health Watch would work with the policy makers and donors to ensure equity in health service at every level.

Meanwhile, it would involve the civil society for advocacy mechanism, they added.

Dr AZ Faisal of Engender Health, Abbas Bhuiyan of ICDDR,B, AMR Chowdhury of Brac, AM Zakir Hussain of ADB, Ubaidur Rob of Population Council and Sabina Faiz Rashid of Brac University were present at the press briefing.

Special security measures ahead of Eid

UNB, Dhaka

Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) has taken special security measures in cattle markets, shopping centres, railway stations and bus and launch terminals for smooth and secured movement of the people ahead of the Eid-ul-Azha.

Plain clothed police will be vigilant along with uniformed policemen to prevent extortion, mugging, pickpocket and harassment of buyers and sellers in the cattle markets.

Legal actions will be taken for selling train, bus and launch tickets in black markets.

ILLEGAL FOREX Biman staff sacked

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Biman Bangladesh authorities yesterday sacked Iqbal Ahmed Sabir, flight steward of Biman Bangladesh Airlines in charge of carrying foreign currency illegally, Biman sources said.

Management of Biman has sacked him, as he was caught red handed, said the Public Relation (PR) department of Biman.

Customs officials on Thursday held Iqbal and seized local and Saudi currencies worth around Tk 44.8 lakh from him at Zia International Airport.

Anwara Syed Haq wins Anonya Literary Award

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dr Anwara Syed Haq was awarded 'Anonya Literary Award 1413 (Bangla)' yesterday for her outstanding contributions to literature.

The fortnightly Anonya organised the award giving ceremony at Sufia Kamal auditorium of National Museum in the city.

Dr Anwara received a crest and Tk 50,000 from the chief guest Prof Kabir Chowdhury.

Dr Anwara, professionally a psychologist, is the 12th authoress to receive the award. She has written in various forms of literature that includes novel, short story, essay, travelogue, autobiography and child literature.

Former adviser to the caretaker government Sultana Kamal and Prof Syed Manzoorul Islam addressed the function as special guests presided over by Anonya Editor Tasmina Hossain.

While discussing the literary works of Dr Anwara, author and publisher Mofidul Haque said that the reflection of profession is prevalent in Anwara's writing through which she enters into the deep insight of the whole society.

Sultana Kamal said multidimensional identities of human being in different contexts, including society and politics, are visible in Dr Anwara's literary works.

Kabir Chowdhury hoped that the concerned political party would retreat from its decision to surrender before communalism.



PHOTO: STAR

Dr Anwara Syed Haq receives 'Anonya Literary Award 1413' from Prof Kabir Chowdhury at National Museum auditorium in the city yesterday. Anonya Editor Tasmina Hossain, second from left, Prof Syed Manzoorul Islam, extreme left, and former adviser to the caretaker government Sultana Kamal, extreme right, are also seen.

All parties to participate in upcoming polls

Hopes British High Commissioner

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

British High Commissioner Anwar Chowdhury yesterday said he is optimistic that all political alliances will participate in the upcoming elections.

He made the comment after a meeting with Awami League (AL) chief Sheikh Hasina last evening.

Choudhury, however, also stressed the need for minimising the abuse of the imperfect voter list in all aspects of the election process.

"I am optimistic the alliance look to be strong in their engagement to participate in elections," said Choudhury to reporters after an hour-long meeting with Hasina at Sudha Sadan.

"The good news is that we have reasons to be optimistic that there will be participatory elections," said an upbeat Choudhury, adding, "We are hopeful that everybody can participate in the elections on the 22nd."

When asked whether he thought the Saturday's agreement between AL and Khelafat Majlis on certain issues might affect religious minorities such as the Ahmadiyyas, he said, "No matter what the nature of the alliances are, I hope that freedom of speech, the maintenance of human rights and respect for the freedom to practice one's religion will remain within the people and the political parties of Bangladesh."

On the controversy over the voter roll, Choudhury said, "There are no perfect voter lists," but, "What is important is the voter list has to be backed up by the other processes that ensure that excess voters cannot be abused."

Choudhury said the voter list is a single issue and it alone cannot prevent a free and fair election, adding that there is much to work on the voter list for the caretaker government and there is a need to implement the checks and balances that prevent the system from being abused.

When asked about British contribution to the elections, Choudhury mentioned that over 1 million pounds sterling have been provided by his government to different organisations that are working to facilitate the electoral process and raise awareness on electoral issues.

British observers would be sent through the European Union, which is set to establish a full team, Choudhury added.

TIB concerned

Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) yesterday expressed grave concern over Supreme Court's stay order on the candidates' obligation of apprising the Election Commission (EC) with eight types of information including the candidate's educational qualification, source of income and involvement with criminal cases, says a press release.

The press release said that the stay order is like snatching people's right to franchise away because all these information are necessary for choosing the most competent candidate through elections.

Case against eminent lawyers protested

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Sammita Ainjibi Samonnoy Parishad, a platform of pro-Awami League lawyers, yesterday staged countrywide demonstration protesting what they said false and baseless case against 13 eminent lawyers and demanding withdrawal of the case.

As part of the programme, a meeting was held at Shaheed Ahad Hall on Supreme Court premises in the city. The meeting was followed by a procession.

Blaming the BNP-Jamaat alliance for plotting to damage the positive relationship between the bench and bar, the leaders urged the lawyers' community to resist BNP-Jamaat alliance's politicisation of judiciary.

They also demanded punishment to the people involved in submitting 'false' charge sheet against the eminent lawyers.

Advocate Khandakar Mahbub Hossain chaired the meeting while Subrata Chowdhury, M Enayetur Rahim and Abdul Halim spoke.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh Bar Council in a statement yesterday condemned filing case against the eminent lawyers. It termed the case 'false' and politically motivated.

Salim Bhuiyan elected Dhaka Club president

Salim Bhuiyan was elected president of Dhaka Club unopposed yesterday for the year 2006-2007, says a press release.

The executive committee members are Nurul Islam Khan (Akkas Khan), Khawjah Zain Niaz, Nazim Shafkat Choudhury, Ashrafuzzaman Khan (Puton), AS M Ali Khabir Chand, Khandaker Mahbubuzzaman, Tulu Kalimullah, Shakil Huda, Mahmud Koli and Shahjahan Chowdhury.

Sultana Shaheda new Gulshan Club president

Sultana Shaheda Islam was elected president of Gulshan Club Ltd for the year 2006-2007 at its Annual General Meeting on Friday on the club premises, says a press release.

She is the managing director of SS Builders & Developers Ltd and chairman of REHAB Social Welfare Committee. She was the first woman district governor of Lions Club International.

Executive Committee members are: Engr. Md Enamul Haque, Kazi Sharek Kader, Shahabuddin Khan, Sabrina Samad, Dr Misbahul Alam Khan, Mohammad Ali Khokon, Shawkat Hyder (Tito), Ummei J Khan, Ziaul Amin and Mahbub ul Alam.

BNP leaders submit nomination papers

FROM PAGE 1

The BNP chairperson, submitted nomination paper to the returning officer on behalf of Khaleda Zia for Dinajpur-3 constituency while former state minister Aman Ullah Aman filed papers for the party chairperson for Dhaka-12.

Earlier on December 21, Dinajpur district Jamaat-e-Islami Secretary General Tahir Uddin Ahmed also filed his nomination for Dinajpur-3.

Tarique Rahman, also BNP senior joint secretary general, registered himself from Bogra-7 to contest a parliamentary election for the first time. He also submitted nomination on behalf of his mother for Bogra-6. Tarique's younger brother Arafat Rahman accompanied him at the time.

Khaleda was also registered for Barisal sadar as local leaders led by Barisal city Mayor Mujibur Rahman Sarwar submitted her nomination paper to the returning officer.

Speaker Jamiruddin Sircar submitted his nomination for Panchagarh-1 constituency while local leaders submitted nomination of former finance minister M Saifur Rahman for Sylhet-1.

Former lawmaker Mahbubuddin Ahmad yesterday submitted nomination for Dhaka-9, Nasir Uddin Pintu for Dhaka-8, Salahuddin Ahmad for Dhaka-4, Mirza Abbas for Dhaka-6, and Quamrul Islam for Dhaka-5.

Hundreds of party leaders and workers brought out processions to accompany their leaders.

Meanwhile, two factions of the BNP locked in a clash yesterday over submission of nomination papers for Sylhet-3 constituency by former lawmaker Shafi Ahmed Chowdhury and Jubba Dal leader Abdul Qaiyum Chowdhury.

According to sources, the party high-ups do not want to give its rebel leaders, who had sought party nomination for the upcoming election, any chance to contest as independent candidates or leave the party.

BNP leaders and activists from Kushiya yesterday staged demonstration in front of Hawa Bahadur against its former lawmaker Reza Ahmad Bachchu Mollah while a group of workers from Noakhali brought out a procession chanting slogans against their former lawmaker Joyнал Abedin Farukh.

Kabir Hossain, who recently left the BNP and joined Liberal Democratic Party and left it again for BNP ticket, failed to get party nomination and is now trying to get the 14-party alliance's ticket for Rajshahi-2 constituency. The BNP high command nominated Rajshahi City Corporation Mayor Mizanur Rahman Minu as its candidate in the parliamentary seat.

A good number of BNP leaders, who apprehended that they would not get party tickets, are submitting nomination papers as independent candidates. The party high command is busy sitting with the dissident leaders to manage the situation.

Rebel BNP leaders Nabiullah Nabi filed nomination paper as independent candidate for Dhaka-4 despite a meeting with alliance leader Khaleda Zia recently.

Dissident leaders of Narayanganj also submitted nomination papers at least in three of the five parliamentary seats there.

Taimur Alam Khandaker, Narayanganj district BNP general secretary, Nuruzzaman Khan, Rugganj upazila BNP general secretary, and Mahfuzur Rahman, organising secretary of Rugganj upazila BNP, submitted nomination papers for Narayanganj-1.

Former lawmaker Ataur Rahman Angur and his brother Badruzzaman Khasru, secretary of small and cottage industry affairs of the party, filed nominations for Narayanganj-2 while Safar Ali Bhuiyan, Monirul Alam

Accord with Khelafat sparks widespread condemnation

FROM PAGE 1

The AL also pledged to pass blasphemy law.

Leaders of these organisations said the AL has tarnished the image of the nation as fatwa and blasphemy law violate the spirit of the Liberation War and human rights.

They said the AL had upheld the spirit of the Liberation War and secularism but now the party has violated its principles ahead of the upcoming elections.

They demanded the immediate cancellation of the agreement in the greater interest of secularism and human rights.

Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK), an NGO, in a press release said if laws were passed according to the agreement, it would violate section 39 of the constitution. They said it would tarnish the respect and honour of the courts as giving alements the power to issue fatwa will create another court alongside the existing courts.

It would hurt all secular-minded people in the country, the ASK said.

Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat yesterday said the signing of the accord between AL and Khelafat Majlis is part of a great conspiracy to turn Bangladesh into Pakistan and to take Bangladesh into the dark ages.

"As a citizen of Bangladesh, we are astonished and worried," Missionary in-Charge of Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat Abdul Awal told The Daily Star yesterday.

He said, "The omnipotent Allah is enough to protect us. Our faith doesn't depend on any person or any party. We are least bothered about what anyone thinks about our religious status."

Leaders of South Asian People's Union Against Fundamentalism & Communalism and Ekatturer Ghatok Dalal Nirmul Committee issued a joint protest statement against the agreement between the AL and Khelafat Majlis.

Blasting the AL, they said progressive people across the country are shocked because they did not expect such an agreement from an open-minded party which is based on the spirit of the Liberation War.

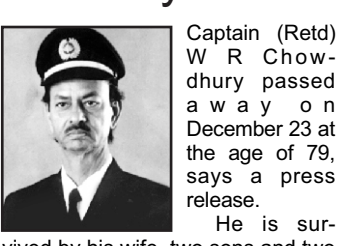
"How could Awami League sign the agreement with a political party which is based on fundamentalism," the statement said.

Prof Kabir Chowdhury, Justice KM Sobahan, Binod Bihari Chowdhury, singer Kalim Sharafi, Major General (retd) CR Dutta, poet Syed Shamsul Haque, Prof Ajoy Roy, journalist Shahriar Kabir, Prof Muntasir Mamun and painter and cartoonist Rafiqun Nabi were among the signatories of the statement.

Communist Party Bangladesh (CPB) said the agreement between AL and Khelafat Majlis encourages communalism and fundamentalism.

Among others Nagorik Udyog, Bangladesh Hindu, Buddha Christian Oikya Parishad, Bangladesh Udichi Shilpi Goshthi, Bangladesh Sramajibi Nari Mooltee, Gono-Sanskritik Front and Sammita Sangskritik Jote also condemned the agreement.

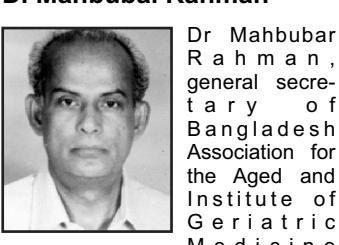
Obituary



Captain (Retd) W R Chowdhury passed away on December 23 at the age of 79, says a press release.

He is survived by his wife, two sons and two daughters.

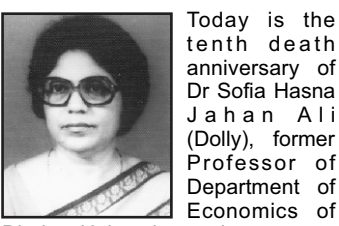
Dr Mahbub Rahman



Dr Mahbub Rahman, general secretary of Bangladesh Association for the Aged and Institute of Geriatric Medicine (BAAIGM) and former resident representative of World Health Organisation (WHO), passed away at city's Apollo Hospital due to old age complications at the age of 73 on Saturday, says a press release.

He left behind his wife, two sons, one daughter and a host of relatives and admirers to mourn his death.

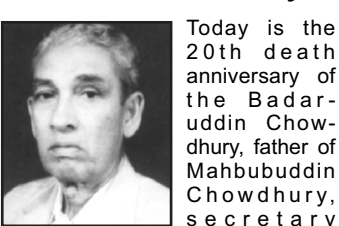
Death anniversary



Today is the tenth death anniversary of Dr Sofia Hasna Jahan Ali (Dolly), former Professor of Department of Economics of Dhaka University and a sports-woman, sport organiser and social worker, says a press release.

On the occasion, a doa mahfil will be held after Maghrib prayers at the residence of her husband Dr Shaikh Maqsood Ali at 135 Eastern Road, Lane 5, New DOHS Mohakhali in the city.

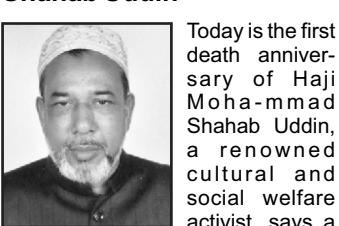
Badaruddin Chowdhury



Today is the 20th death anniversary of the Badaruddin Chowdhury, father of Mahbubuddin Chowdhury, secretary general of National Association of UNESCO Clubs in Bangladesh, says a press release.

On the occasion, a milad mahfil and doa will be held after Zohr prayers today at his Faridabad residence in the old city.

Shahab Uddin



Today is the first death anniversary of Haji Mohammad Shahab Uddin, a renowned cultural and social welfare activist, says a press release.

A daylong Qurankhwani and milad mahfil will also be held after Zohr prayers at his residence at House no 16/A, Road no 18, Banani.

Qulkhwani

Qulkhwani of MA Wadud, former official of the Establishment Ministry, will be held today, says a press release.

On the occasion, Qurankhani and doa mahfil will be held and the destitute will be fed at the house of the deceased at T-40, Noorjahan Road, D Block, Mohammadpur in the city.

DHAKA TODAY

Art competition

Samay organises a children's art competition to mark its 10th founding anniversary. Venue: Aziz Super Market. Time: 10:00am.

Memorial meeting

Rhythm Cultural Society will hold a memorial meeting to pay tribute to the 15 army officers who died in Benin air crash while working for the UN Mission. Venue: National Press Club. Time: 11:00am.

Memorial lecture

Ain O Salish Kendra organises Salma Sobhan Memorial Lecture to mark the 20 years of its being. Venue: National Museum auditorium. Time: 4:30pm.

Reunion

A reunion of the ex-students of Motilal Central Government Boys' High School will be held. Venue: School premises. Time: 8:00am.

Inauguration

The inaugural ceremony of Mechanical Engineering Conference (MEC) and 11th Annual Paper Meet (APM) will be held. Venue: Engineers' Institute. Time: 9:30am.

Roundtable

Nirbas Foundation Bangladesh will hold a roundtable titled 'Measures to improve the standard of Madrasa education: Bangladesh perspective'. Venue: National Press Club. Time: 9:00am.

WEATHER TODAY

Dry weather likely

UNB, Dhaka

Dry weather will prevail over the country in the next 12 hours until 6:00pm today.

Light to moderate fog may occur over the river basins of the country during early morning, Met Office said in a forecast.

Slight fall in night temperature is expected over the country.

Highest temperature 29.4 degree Celsius was recorded yesterday at Chittagong and lowest 11.4 degree Celsius at Srimongal.

The sun sets in the capital at 5:18pm today and rises at 6:39am tomorrow.

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

| City/Town | Temperature | Humidity in celsius |
|-------------|-------------|---------------------|
| percentage | Max | Min |
| Dhaka | 26.6 | 18.2 |
| Chittagong | 29.4 | 16.6 |
| Rajshahi | 26.4 | 13.2 |
| Khulna | 26.5 | 15.0 |
| Barisal | 26.4 | 14.4 |
| Sylhet | 28.6 | 15.5 |
| Cox's Bazar | 29.0 | 17.2 |