

Waheedul Haq's body donated to BSMMU

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Family members of Waheedul Haq, veteran journalist, columnist and Tagore song specialist, yesterday donated his body to Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU) for medical research, family sources said.

They said the donation was made to the university as Waheedul mentioned it in his will.

Waheedul Haq, who was undergoing treatment at Birdem hospital for the past few weeks, passed away in the intensive care unit of the hospital on Saturday afternoon. He was suffering from pneumonia and lung and kidney diseases.

The body of Haq was kept at Birdem mortuary till yesterday evening.

Family members said Waheedul Haq lived in the hearts and minds of all and he wanted to live that way after his death as well.

KAPTAI 230MW PLANT

Generation falls to 40MW as 4 units closed

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangamati

With drastic fall of water level in Kaptai lake, power generated at Kaptai Hydroelectric Power Project (KHPP) has come down to only 40 MW a day against its usual production of 230 MW.

Four of the five units are now out of operation due to mechanical faults and KHPP has now kept generating power during peak hours from 5:00pm till midnight, KHPP sources said.

At a meeting at the power ministry in the last week of December, the KHPP project manager proposed to the secretary concerned to stop operation of all the five units of KHPP as water level of the lake drastically fell, sources said.

The KHPP authorities, however, introduced the ongoing process of power generation in peak hours.

"In the dry season the situation usually worsens. We hope to ensure better electricity production in the coming days," Md Ferdous Ali, acting project manager of KHPP and superintending engineer of Kaptai PDB, said.

BUSHRA MURDER HC confirms death sentence of one, acquits 2 in death row

UNB, Dhaka

The High Court (HC) yesterday confirmed the death sentence to a man and life imprisonment to his wife in Bushra murder case, but acquitted two others in the death row.

A designated division bench, comprising Justice M Iman Ali and AKM Fazlur Rahman, pronounced the judgment.

The HC confirmed the death sentence to MA Kader and life imprisonment to his wife Runa Kader, acquitting his brothers-in-law Sheikh Shawkatul Ahmed alias Ruhul and Sheikh Kabir Ahmed. Kabir was tried in absentia.

Rushdania Islam Bushra, 18, an honours student of City College, was killed after rape by the convicts in her house at Hajipara in the city on July 1, 2000.

On June 30, 2003, a tribunal had sentenced Kader, Shawkat and Kabir to death and Runa to life imprisonment in the murder case.

While acquitting the two convicts, the court observed that the prosecution had failed to prove the charges that on the night of the murder convicted prisoners Ruhul and Kabir were present in the house.

Emerging from the court, Bushra's mother Laila Islam told reporters that she was not happy with the judgment. "I haven't got proper justice as the main perpetrators have gone unpunished. I'll appeal to the Supreme Court against the judgment," she said with tears rolling down her cheeks.

Khandaker Mahbub Hossain appeared for the defence while Deputy Attorney General Golam Kibria for the state.

Prayer Timing		
January 30		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-35	6-10
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-15	4-30
Maghrib	5-46	5-50
Esha	7-15	7-45
Source: Islamic Foundation		

Polls must be interim govt's main priority

Says citizens' movement

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The prime job of the caretaker government (CG) is to prepare a correct and flawless voter list, and hold a free, fair and credible general election as early as possible.

And the CG should not spend much time in work other than election so that its credibility and acceptability does not diminish.

Expressing this view at a roundtable in the city yesterday, speakers demanded preparation of a voter list with pictures of voters to prevent forgery in polls and fake votes.

Political leaders, senior lawyers, social workers, ex-army officials and former bureaucrats were among speakers at the roundtable organised by Shujan -- a platform of

citizens for good governance -- at the Institute of Diploma Engineers.

Shujan President Prof Muzaffer Ahmed was in the chair while its Secretary Badiul Alam Mojumder presented the keynote paper on reforms for fair polls.

Former member of a caretaker government M Hafizuddin Khan said the Election Commission (EC) should maintain transparency and accountability in spending public money. Since election-related activities take place in a hurry, there is scope of wastage of funds at every stage, he pointed out.

The views of the civil society were reflected in the chief adviser's first address to the nation, and now it is time to implement those, he said.

Another former CG adviser A S

M Shajahan demanded steps against officials who allowed themselves to be used for political purposes. All loopholes in the election laws should also be plugged, he added.

Prof Muzaffer Ahmed stressed the need for an interface between the civil society and the CG for implementing various agenda. A strong civil society is yet to flourish in the country, and this is one of the major causes of corruption in the society, he noted.

Turning to the administration, he said it cannot even execute whatever powers it is given by law.

On politics, Prof Muzaffer said it is no longer service to the people and has turned to business.

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President visits army HQ

UNB, Dhaka

President and Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces Iajuddin Ahmed visited the army headquarters yesterday.

Army Chief Lt General Moeen U Ahmed and the principal staff officers of the army headquarters welcomed the president on his arrival, said an Inter-Service Public Relations (ISPR) press release.

"During the visit, the president inquired about different activities of the army and highly praised its disciplined role," said the press release.

Among others, Principal Staff Officer of the Armed Forces Division Major General M Jahangir Alam Chowdhury, Director General of the Forces Intelligence (DGFI) Major General M Sadik Hasan Rumi, and principal staff officers were present.

Proceedings of graft cases against Ershad adjourned

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday adjourned the proceedings of two graft cases filed against former president and Jatiya Party Chairman HM Ershad until February 25 following time petitions by the defence lawyers.

Judge Malik Abdullah Al Amin of the Special Court for Dhaka Division set the date after Advocate Sheikh Serajul Islam submitted two separate petitions stating that his client Ershad could not appear in court on personal grounds.

Earlier on September 27, October 30 and November 20 last year, Ershad was also absent from attending court on same grounds.

Meanwhile court sources said the prosecution could not produce witnesses except one since the charges were framed on April 3, 1995 and on April 18, 2003.

In the first case filed with Tejgaon Police Station, it was alleged that Ershad, while in power, directed the authorities concerned to purchase electronic news-gathering equipment worth about Tk 2.93 crore to be used by Ershad and his wife though all broadcasting facilities were available in his secretariat.

The former president also

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Butenis given assignment in Iraq by year end

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

US Ambassador to Dhaka Patricia A Butenis will leave Bangladesh later this year to assume a senior position in the United States Embassy in Baghdad.

Announcing Butenis' new assignment, a US embassy press release said, "Her reassignment will help further US goals in Iraq."

"The United States values its close relationship with Bangladesh, based on our common values and interests, and remains committed to fully supporting its democracy," the release said yesterday.

After her assignment in

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PHOTO: STAR

A painter gives finishing touches to an Ekushey Book Fair decoration piece on the Bangla Academy premises in the capital yesterday. The book fair begins day after tomorrow.

ECs may be asked to go tomorrow

President to make request during meeting

RASHIDUL HASAN

President Iajuddin Ahmed might request the acting chief election commissioner (CEC) and other election commissioners to resign when they meet him tomorrow at the Bangabhaban, sources said.

The election commissioners are likely to resign following the president's request, the sources added. It is also likely that the name of a new CEC will emerge at the meeting, they said.

The Election Commission (EC) commissioners had an emergency meeting on Sunday after Bangabhaban made a phone call to the acting CEC asking him along with other commissioners to be present at the Bangabhaban tomorrow.

The caretaker government has

the EC reconstitution issue high on its agenda and considers it a pre-requisite to holding a free and fair election.

"You will know if we go [to Bangabhaban] and if we resign," the acting CEC yesterday told reporters as he was leaving his office yesterday.

Election Commissioner SM Zakaria, who is now on leave, might go to Bangabhaban tomorrow, EC sources said.

However, none of the commissioners agreed to comment on their resignations.

Election Commissioner Modabbir Hossein Chowdhury said, "You will know everything on January 31 [Wednesday]."

Asked whether the election commissioners would go to

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Traders fined for selling toxic chemicals as food colour

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A mobile court yesterday raided 29 business entities in the old part of the capital and fined Tk 2 lakh 22 thousand for selling dangerous chemicals as 'food colour', marketing banned polythene and using faulty weighing tools.

The mobile court led by Magistrate Md Rokonud-Doula also sealed two illegal factories of polythene and mosquito coil and issued summons to four people as they escaped from their factory sites and houses.

A mobile court in Bogra fined Tk 4 lakh 50 thousand for preparing and marketing fake oral saline, salt, vermicelli and biscuit and keeping restaurant kitchens unhygienic.

In Dhaka, the mobile court raided 11 wholesalers of polythene bags in old Dhaka and seized all the bags found in those shops. They realised Tk 72,000 from eight wholesalers and issued summons

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Rajuk's CBA leaders among 2,002 held

STAR REPORT

The army-led joint forces arrested 2,002 people on various charges within 24 hours preceding 6:00pm yesterday including three influential CBA leaders of Rajdhani Unnayan Kartripakkha (Rajuk) as part of their ongoing anti-crime drive nationwide.

Members of an intelligence agency raided the Rajuk Bhaban in the afternoon and hauled up Rajuk CBA leaders Gazi Mohammad Amir Khashru, Sramik Dal president, Abdul Malek Mian and Aorangajeb Siddique Nannu, also leaders of Sramik Dal. They were handed

over to Motijheel police in the evening, sources said.

Meanwhile, Giasuddin Quader Chowdhury, industrial affairs secretary of BNP and former lawmaker, was released some time after the members of an intelligence agency detained him on Sunday night, sources added.

He was offloaded from a Singapore Airlines flight at Zia International Airport and placed under detention.

The joint forces of police and Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) arrested 1,914 people in 24 hours till 6:00pm yesterday. Among them, 23 were held under Arms Act, 25

were fugitive convicts, 967 had arrest warrants against them and 899 were picked up on other charges.

The army also arrested 88 people -- 48 listed criminals and 40 accused -- during yesterday's drive, said a home ministry news release.

The law enforcers seized 30 firearms -- the army recovered six firearms while police and Rab did 24. They also recovered 326 bullets during the drive.

So far, the joint forces arrested over 32,650 people since they launched the anti-crime drive on January 12 -- the day after the state

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PHOTO: STAR

An open rig of Dhaka City Corporation carries garbage spreading stench and leaving bits of trash on the streets. The photo was taken from Tongi Diversion Road yesterday.

Death toll rises to 300 in Najaf

US, Iraqi forces battle with militants

REUTERS, Najaf, Iraq

US and Iraqi forces killed some 300 gunmen from an apocalyptic Muslim cult in a day-long battle involving US tanks and aircraft near the Shia holy city of Najaf, Iraqi police, army and political sources said.

The US military said yesterday it was an ongoing operation so it could not provide any details.

An Iraqi army source said US forces took control of the operation on Sunday and bombing continued in the area until well after dawn on Monday, which was the climax of Ashura, the highlight of the Shia religious calendar.

Two Americans were killed, the US military said on Sunday, when an attack helicopter went down during the battle that was one of the strangest incidents of the 4-year

conflict. Iraqi officials said the helicopter seemed to have been shot down.

Police Colonel Ali Nomas said 300 to 350 gunmen had been killed in the operation and dozens more arrested. Three Iraqi soldiers were killed and six more missing, and five policemen were killed. Another 40 Iraqi police and soldiers were wounded.

According to one Iraqi political source, hundreds of fighters, drawn from both Sunni and Shia communities, fought throughout Sunday and late into the night.

A Reuters reporter at the scene, 160 km (100 miles) south of Baghdad, saw US tanks and heard blasts after dark on Sunday and an Iraqi officer said F-16 jets were bombing the area.

Details of the day's fighting were

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BNP vice-chairman Mir Shawkat quits over Jamaat issue

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Vice-Chairman Mir Shawkat Ali has handed in resignation to the party chairperson following differences of opinion with the party high-ups over Jamaat issue, sources said.

However, neither Shawkat Ali nor the BNP officials confirmed the matter.

Though the freedom fighter did not respond when contacted over telephone, an employee of his house told The Daily Star, "Sir (Shawkat Ali) is not at home...you can give your phone number so that he could contact you later."

Ali, who was a minister during BNP's 1991-96 rule, was inactive in the party for long after the BNP nominated controversial leader Nasir Uddin Ahmed Pintu to contest in the 2001 parliamentary elections from Dhaka-8 constituency.