

Basic reforms a must before election

Says British official

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Rowan Laxton, deputy head of the South Asia Group in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in the UK, said the British government as well as the international community is hopeful about the future of democratic process in Bangladesh.

Democracy should be restored here as soon as possible, he said, but some effective measures for reforms should be taken before the election.

Time is not so important, but the long-felt and the basic reforms are a must, he added.

The British official made the comment while talking to The Daily

Star yesterday afternoon at the regional liaison office in Sylhet after separate meetings with Sylhet City Corporation Mayor Badar Uddin Ahmed Kamran, Divisional Commissioner Aziz Hasan and officials of the Sylhet Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

Head of Chancery in the British High Commission in Dhaka Duncan Norman accompanied him during the meetings.

Laxton came to Sylhet yesterday as part of his five-day visit to Bangladesh. He arrived in the country on Tuesday.

He said the caretaker government has got a great chance to address some issues, which the

previous government failed to accomplish, and bring some fundamental changes to different sectors.

The international community is also expecting early process for credible election in the country, Laxton said, adding that but drive against corruption is a must before the election.

The ongoing British assistance for the development of Bangladesh will not be hampered in the near future, the official said.

Referring to his meeting with people in the last two days, he said, "I think it is possible to organise an acceptable election within a year or one and a half years."

Acting Ctg mayor vows to protect civic rights

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Monjurul Alam Monju, a CCC ward commissioner, took over as the acting mayor of Chittagong City Corporation (CCC) here yesterday with a pledge to safeguard the civic rights of the city dwellers.

He took over the office at a simple ceremony held at the CCC auditorium in presence of CCC officials and ward commissioners at around 3:45pm.

The Chittagong City Corporation finally got a chief 22 days after Mayor ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury was detained on March 7.

Monju, a commissioner of ward No. 10 North Kattali, was selected as the acting mayor as per the nomination of detained CCC mayor.

A letter containing Mohiuddin's nomination for Monju reached CCC chief executive officer from the deputy commissioner, Bandarban,



Monjurul Alam Monju

by fax on Thursday afternoon.

After taking the charge, the acting CCC mayor called upon the CCC officials and staff to discharge their duties with utmost sincerity and honesty in order to ensure proper service and civic amenities to the

city dwellers.

The acting mayor urged the concerned officials and staff to build up CCC as a corruption-free institution as per the directive of the present government.

The CCC officials and ward commissioners at the ceremony hailed Monju in his new office.

CCC Chief Executive Officer Mostafa Kamaluddin, ward commissioners Syed Golam Haider Mintu, Iqbal Hafiz Jubaraz, Saleh Ahmad Chowdhury, Md Shahidul Alam and woman ward commissioner Advocate Rehena Kabir Ranu also spoke at the ceremony.

While talking to journalists, Monju said the CCC would investigate all the reported irregularities in CCC performance.

"If anyone is found guilty, immediate action would be taken against him," he added.

Man throws acid on mother-in-law over dowry in Ctg

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Chittagong

A woman sustained severe burn injuries as her son-in-law threw acid on her in the port city on Thursday night for dowry.

The victim, identified as Rasheda Akhter, 35, wife of Abul Kalam Azad, hailing from Munshipara of Gaibandha, was living at a slum adjacent to city's Sholoshahar Railway Station.

Sources said Rasheda married off her daughter Anjumara Ara Begum to Manir Hossain with a dowry of Tk 50,000 last year.

Few months after the marriage Monir reportedly started torturing Anjumara for more dowry and forced her to go back to her father's house around two months ago.

On Thursday evening, Monir along with his nephew Akhter Hossain came to his in-law's house to settle the matter.

At one stage, they asked Rasheda to come out of the house saying they have something 'important' to tell her. As she stepped out of the house, they threw acid on her.

Rasheda was rushed to Chittagong Medical College Hospital. Doctors said Rasheda had burns on her chest and neck.

Death anniversary



Today is the 3rd death anniversary of Dr Noorunnahar Fyzennessa, a professor of the Institute of Education and Research (IER), Dhaka University, says a press release.

She played a significant role in the movement for establishing women's rights and the country's liberation struggle.

The first elected woman member of DU Syndicate, Dr Fyzennessa was an eminent personality widely respected in academic and liberal political circles. She initiated the Liberation War memorials on the DU campus and Rokeya Hall premises.

The founder of Chayaneer, she launched a merit scholarship project, Rokeya Memorial Foundation. She was also the president of Dhaka City Mahila Parishad and Usha and the vice-president of Women for Women.

Dr Fyzennessa was also a member of the Pay Commission and Asian Regional Population Association, Bangkok. She also served as provost of the Rokeya Hall of DU.

On the occasion of her death anniversary, food will be distributed among the students of Deep Shikha, a school for the underprivileged, and among orphans at an orphanage in Dhaka.

DHAKA TODAY

Annual sports

The annual sports and cultural competition 2007 of Sheikh Borhanuddin Post Graduate College will be held. Venue: Institute of Diploma Engineers. Time: 5:00pm.

Launching ceremony

The launching ceremony of the 3rd outlet of ETC, a concern of Etcetera Bangladesh Pvt Ltd, will be held. Venue: RAK Tower, Uttara. Time: 11:00am.

Handicrafts exhibition

A month-long handicrafts exhibition will begin. Venue: Public Works Directorate ground. Time: 4:00pm.

Art competition

Dhanmondi Kachikantha High School organises a national art competition on the occasion of the Earth Day. Venue: School premises. Time: 9:00am.

Award giving ceremony

Dr MH Khan will be awarded Khanbahadur Ahsanullah Gold Medal. Venue: Dhaka Ahsanika Mission auditorium. Time: 4:00pm.

Memorabilia sale

The concluding ceremony of the 'Celebrity memorabilia sale' organised

by BracNet will be held. Venue: Radisson Water Garden Hotel. Time: 7:00pm.

Award giving ceremony

Shahjalal Islami Bank Limited will reward the students who secured the 1st, 2nd and 3rd positions in the MBA Programme with 'Islamic economics and banking' from Dhaka University. Venue: Conference room, Faculty of Business Studies. Time: 4:00pm.

Launching ceremony

The launching ceremony of the 'Training programme for the lawyers on combating trafficking in persons' will be held. Venue: Dhaka Sheraton Hotel. Time: 3:30pm.

General meeting

The 13th monthly general meeting of Asiatic Society of Bangladesh will be held. Venue: Society seminar room. Time: 4:30pm.

Discussion

Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon (Bapa) will hold a discussion titled 'Spread of bird flu in Bangladesh: Cure and prevention'. Venue: Bapa Solar Room. Time: 11:00am.

Rotary Dhaka Central

The regular meeting of Rotary Club of Dhaka Central will be held. Venue: Dhaka

WEATHER TODAY

No change in temperature

UNB, Dhaka

Weather is likely to remain mainly dry with temporarily partly cloudy sky over the country in the next 12 hours till 6:00pm today.

Day temperature may remain nearly unchanged over the country, Met Office said in a forecast.

Yesterday's highest temperature of 37.0 degree Celsius was recorded at Rajshahi and Jessore and the lowest of 17.0 degrees at Srimongal.

The sun sets in the capital at 6:14pm today and rises at 5:51am tomorrow.

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

City/Town	Temperature in celsius		Humidity in percentage	
	Max	Min	Morning	Evening
Dhaka	36.7	22.4	43	32
Chittagong	35.6	21.3	65	73
Rajshahi	37.0	20.4	65	44
Khulna	36.3	22.0	62	34
Barisal	35.5	21.0	76	56
Sylhet	36.1	20.3	38	32
Cox's Bazar	32.5	22.2	72	70

Housewife held for torturing domestic help

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A housewife was arrested for allegedly torturing her domestic help in the city on Thursday night.

Receiving information about torture, police arrested Shikha Rani from her house at Uttarkhan at around 8:00pm.

The police also rescued the domestic help, Jyoti Rani, 12, and took her to One-Stop Crisis Centre (OCC) of Dhaka Medical College and Hospital. She had injury marks in her hands and cheek.

When asked about the injury marks, Jyoti said her employer Shikha Rani beat her while preparing bread on Tuesday morning.

Later at night, Shikha also pressed a hot iron pot to her hands and cheek, Jyoti added.

However, Shikha denied all the allegations and said Jyoti received injuries while cooking.

Police sent Shikha to jail yesterday.

CA offers fateha at grave of freedom fighter

UNB, Dhaka

Chief Adviser Dr Fakhruddin Ahmed visited the grave of martyred freedom fighter Lt. Col. Dr SA Hai and offered fateha at the Azimpur Graveyard in the city after Juma prayers yesterday.

He also prayed for the salvation of the departed souls of those who sacrificed their lives for independence.

Lt. Col. SA Hai, brother-in-law of the chief adviser, was shot dead by the Pakistani army at Jessore Cantonment on March 30 in 1971.

Khaleda attends doa mahfil for KM Obaid

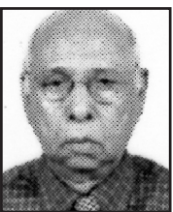
UNB, Dhaka

A doa and milad mahfil in memory of veteran politician and BNP leader late KM Obaidur Rahman was held at Banani Chairmanbari ground in the city yesterday.

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia, Speaker Jamiruddin Sircar, party standing committee members Khandaker Delwar Hossain, Dr RA Gani, Advocate Khandaker Mahbubuddin Ahmed and Lt Gen (ret'd) Mahbubur Rahman, Mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka, Jamaat Secretary General Ali Ahsan Mohammed Mujahid, Workers' Party leader Rashed Khan Menon, JSD leader ASM Abur Rob, Hasanul Huq Inu and leaders of other political parties attended the programme.

Later, the BNP leaders exchanged pleasantries with Khaleda.

Obituary

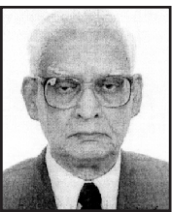


Justice Mohammad Abdul Jalil, a former election commissioner and former chairman of Labour Appellate Tribunal, passed away due to old-age complications at his residence at Paribagh in the city on Thursday at the age of 77, says a press release.

He is survived by two daughters and four sons.

His quikhwani will be held at his residence after Asr prayers on April 1.

Zahurul Huq



Zahurul Huq, former director (commercial) of Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Corporation (BIWTC), passed away due to old age complications on March 28 at the age of 84, says a press release.

He left behind two sons, one daughter and a host of relatives and admirers.

He hailed from Saturaia at Rajapur in Barisal and served Mclean Kilburn, RS IGN and Pak Bay before independence.

His Quikhwani will be held at his residence after Asr prayers today.

Moulavi Md Altaf Uddin

Moulavi Md Altaf Uddin, father of photojournalist Rafiq Uddin Enayet of The New Nation, passed away at his house in Hatiya on Thursday at the age of 75, says a press release.

He is survived by nine sons, a daughter and a number of grandchildren.



Visitors at a three-day Housing Fair that began at Dhaka Sheraton Hotel yesterday. Bangladesh Real Estate Directory organised the fair.

ROUNDTABLE ON DISASTER PREPAREDNESS

'Introduce community-based training to raise awareness'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a roundtable yesterday stressed the need to prepare a comprehensive disaster preparedness plan in order to reduce losses and sufferings.

They also laid emphasis on introducing disaster preparedness and management in the national curriculum and adequate publicity in mass media to help raise awareness in this regard.

The roundtable titled 'Accident management and disaster preparedness in the cities of Bangladesh - present perspective and future expectations' was jointly organised by the Centre for Development Research, Bangladesh (CDRB) and Bangladesh Real Estate Directory (BD-RED) to mark the inauguration of BD-RED Abasan Mela (housing fair) 2007 at a city hotel.

The speakers said the state of public awareness campaign about

disaster management is very poor and there is no preparedness at individual, familial, organisational and community level in the country.

They urged both print and electronic media to publish and broadcast relevant programmes on disaster management more frequently as they can play a significant role in building awareness about the issue.

The speakers also recommended introduction of community-based disaster management training to meet any situation that may arise following severe storms, earthquake, fire or building collapse.

CDRB Chairman Mizanur Rahman Shelley said, "We have built many high-rise buildings in the city but paid a little attention to build a safe city."

Disaster preparations have not been taken properly and people also are not aware of proper steps resulting in more casualties, he added.

"We must take lessons from different accidents of immediate

past and prepare ourselves with a comprehensive accident management," he said.

Barrister Harun-ar Rashid said disaster management is taught at school level in the developed countries but we don't have any such system in our country.

The issue of disaster management should be included in the school curriculum so that the next generation could have a practical knowledge from their early age, he added.

Selim Newaz Bhuiyan, deputy director of the Department of Fire Service and Civil Defence, said disaster preparedness is not possible without the training of the first responder or the neighbour as concerted and coordinated actions are needed to face the situation.

He said training on disaster management has been going in different units of the fire service.

Abu Naser Khan, convener of Paribesh Bachao Andolon, said real

estate companies are building beautiful houses in one hand and on the other hand pushing the city towards disaster by not keeping any open space around their high-rise buildings.

He urged them to keep open spaces around the building so that people can rush there if any accident or disaster happens.

Prof Aminur Rahman of Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology presented a keynote paper on the subject.

Moderating the roundtable, Prof Dr Nazrul Islam of Dhaka University said the real estate companies should concentrate their attention on environmental sustainability, cultural and social relevance and safety while constructing the buildings.

The deadly terror outfit, rise of its kingpins

FROM PAGE 1

home and abroad after the August 17 countrywide bomb blasts, the government arrested many JMB militants, including top leaders, which led to yesterday's hanging.

But the loss caused by the countrywide bombings in the name of Islamic revolution and cleansing outlaws in northern districts during the tenure of the previous government is almost impossible to be compensated.

Bangla Bhai

JMB operations chief Siddiqui Islam alias Bangla Bhai, son of Nazir Hossain Pramanik of Karnipara village in Gabtoli upazila of Bogra, was actively involved in the politics of Islami Chhatra Shibir, student wing of Jamaat-e-Islami, for a long time.

Also known as Azizur Rahman and Omar Ali alias Litu, he taught at the Shibir-run Retina Coaching Centre in Bogra town and another Shibir-run coaching centre in Dhaka.

Bangla Bhai was arrested in Bagerhat on August 17, 2002 in an attempt-to-murder case but was released after three months as his name was not included in the charge sheet.

A rice trader, Bangla Bhai came in contact with JMB chief Abdur Rahman through his past involvement with Islamist organisations. The JMB chief sent Bangla Bhai to Afghanistan where he mastered operating different kinds of firearms and making bombs.

Talking to journalists at a government office in Bagmara upazila in Rajshahi on April 13, 2004, he said, "My organisation has started working to cleanse the area of outlaws in association with some ruling party leaders and police officers."

On May 17, the JMB activists caught Idris Ali alias Khejur Ali, Bashar and Abdul Qaiyum Badsha from different villages of Raninagar upazila in Naogaon.

Bangla Bhai killed Badsha and hanged his body from a tree three days later in Bamangram village of Nandigram upazila in the district. The incident saw widespread talks across the country.

The police later disinterred the body of Ali, sliced in seven pieces, in Bhitigram in Naogaon on May

28.

Bangla Bhai set up five camps in Rajshahi and Naogaon in a bid to "cleanse the region of outlaws".

Regional JMB commander told reporters that policemen both in plainclothes and uniform used to guard the camps and that Bangla Bhai held a meeting with a deputy minister on April 10, 2004 in front of him.

The JMB men received a vehicle from a directorate under the agriculture ministry for their task. Bangla Bhai used the vehicle for two months.

Sources said the then superintendents of police in Rajshahi and Naogaon used to advise Bangla Bhai over mobile phone.

Although the JMB men killed 22 people including a former army person in Rajshahi and Naogaon, Bangla Bhai was not accused in any of the cases filed in connection with the murders. Arrest warrants in some cases against him in Bogra, Khulna and Kushtia were, however, sent to his Karnipara house.

The militant linchpin spent two years at a mosque and madrasa at Jhaulata under Khulshi Police Station in Chittagong before emerging as Bangla Bhai.

Sources said during his two-year assignment in the port city, Bangla Bhai spread militant network in the entire greater Chittagong region, especially in the three hill districts and Cox's Bazar, and established some militant training centres.

For his contribution to the expansion of Ahle Hadith and militant networks in the region, the JMB chief brought Bangla Bhai back to Bagmara in 2004 and promoted him as operations commander of JMB to root out leftist extremists in Rajshahi region, sources said.

In Chittagong, Bangla Bhai used to supervise militants' training at different centres and brainwashed fresh recruits of the Darul Hadith Salafia Madrasa.

The JMB chief visited the madrasa several times to monitor the activities. A large number of militants used to gather there every Friday to review their activities.

Bangla Bhai also supervised militant training centres in

Sitakunda and Hathazari, detective police sources said.

JMB Chief Abdur Rahman

Self-styled as Shaikh (spiritual leader), Abdur Rahman was the chief of JMB that started militant activities in the country secretly in 1998.

Born in Charshi Khalifapara village of Jamalpur Sadar upazila, Rahman joined Islami Chhatra Shibir when he was a student.

He studied at Madina Islami University in Saudi Arabia in the early 1980s and later worked at the Saudi Embassy in Dhaka for five years from 1985. He travelled to many countries including India, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Malaysia.

Rahman's father, late Moulana Abdullah Ibne Fazal, was a member of Jamiatul Ahle Hadith, lately led by arrested Rajshahi University teacher Asadullah Al Galib.

Rahman used to run Al-Madina Islamic Cadet Madrasa and a mosque in Jamalpur. Saudi NGO Rabeta-e-Islam and Kuwait-based NGO Revival of Islamic Heritage Society provided financial assistance to establish those institutions.

Rahman's existence as a militant kingpin came to light when JMB started its outlaw-cleansing operations in the Rajshahi region in 2004.

In an interview with The Daily Star in May 2006, Rahman admitted that he had been secretly operating the JMB since 1998. He said the outfit had trained up some 10,000 full-time activists across the country.

Our correspondent from Tangail reports: In 1998, Rahman formed JMB in Jamalpur to conduct "Jihadi" movement in Bangladesh and declared himself as Amir of the organisation. He also set up a soap factory in Jamalpur town the same year.

Later, he got fertiliser dealership of Jamalpur, Rajshahi, Rangpur, and Mymensingh.

JMB started its militant activities in the country openly in 2002. Although the militant outfit initially started its activities in 38 districts, it expanded its activities in 58 districts within six months.

JMB published several monthly magazines, including Al Magazi, Al Islam, Al Madani, and Al Rahmat, through which Rahman called for

armed jihad to establish Islamic rules in Bangladesh.

After a bomb blast in Dinajpur, the militant outfit went underground and shifted its headquarters from Jamalpur to Rajshahi in 2003. On instruction of Abdur Rahman, JMJB operations commander Bangla Bhai carried out several vigilante operations in Natore, Rajshahi and Naogaon in 2003 and 2004.

The JMJB was renamed Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh after a fight between Rahman's disciples and the police at a secret training camp in Joypurhat in August 2003.

Ataur Rahman Sunny

JMB military chief Ataur Rahman Sunny, brother of Abdur Rahman, was the kingpin of the countrywide bomb blasts on August 17, 2005. Sunny, in charge of Dhaka region, also trained JMB members on making bombs and explosions.

Quoting Sunny an intelligence officer told the media that the seven-member Majlish-e-Shura, highest policymaking body of JMB, decided to carry out the countrywide bomb attacks at a meeting held in Rajshahi in March 2005.

Intelligence sources said Khaled Saifullah trained the JMB men in bomb-making. They believed Saifullah learnt bomb-making in Afghanistan when he visited the county during the Taliban regime.

Saifullah had been a leader of Harkatul Jihad al Islami (Huji) Bangladesh before he joined JMB. One of the seven-member Majlish-e-Shura, Faruq Hossain alias Khaled Saifullah was the in-charge of Rangpur-Dinajpur region.

Shaikh Abdur Rahman's son-in-law Abdul Awal Sarker was a JMB Majlish-e-Shura member and in-charge of Rajshahi region. Awal was assigned to smuggle in the detonators from India for using in the outfit's bomb attacks.

Another JMB activist hanged yesterday is Iftekhar Hasan Al Mamun was a suicide bomber.