

OIC needs reforms to meet challenges

Foreign adviser tells journalists

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Foreign Adviser Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury yesterday criticised the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) saying it is limited to 'political platitudes' and is becoming moribund in the absence of effective reforms to make it operational.

Iftekhar made the observations at a press briefing on his return home from the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers (ICFM) meeting in Islamabad yesterday, where he said, "the OIC is confined to platitudes in the political arena," adding that the organisation has become "moribund" and unable to respond to changes and present-day requirements.

"The OIC needs to be modernised to make it enable to respond to present-day requirements," he said, adding, "We would be most benefited if it can be made development centric."

Asked why reforms were not made, Iftekhar said, "Some of them are not ready for the change and many are afraid of the change. There are some established centres of power and some are fearful of a shift of that power-base."

He said the OIC member states control 70 percent of global oil resources and 40 percent of other resources and that shows the scale of opportunities that can be explored by the organisation.

Bangladesh, he said, hopes to utilise the OIC to contribute to the

country's development, by improving market access to the wealthier OIC countries.

Iftekhar said he hopes the organisation can become development centric to address the most pressing problems of its member states.

At bilateral meetings on the sidelines of the ICFM, Iftekhar held talks with Pakistan Foreign Minister Khurshid Kasuri and stressed the need for resolving the matter of repatriating stranded Pakistanis and ways to 'confront' matters of the past to move towards the future.

He said Brunei's foreign minister had expressed interest in visiting Bangladesh during their bilateral talks, in which case Dhaka

would like to discuss exporting a specialised workforce to the kingdom.

The foreign affairs adviser termed the upcoming June 20-24 visit by Bahrain's state minister for foreign affairs as 'significant' as Bahrain is resourceful enough to support a number of Bangladesh's projects.

Iftekhar hinted that Bangladesh is looking to set up a diplomatic mission in Khartoum, he said, there is a lot of potential including investment opportunities in Sudan.

He also met with his counterparts from Turkey and Iran for bilateral talks on the sidelines of ICFM meeting.



Canadian High Commissioner to Bangladesh Barbara Richardson calls on Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed at his office in the city yesterday.

Implement PRSP to ensure gender equality

Rights leaders tell workshop

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Implement Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) to eliminate all kinds of violence against women and ensure gender equality, said human rights leaders at a workshop yesterday.

They also called for an action plan to ensure full participation of women in mainstream economic activities for political empowerment.

The workshop on 'Women's rights

and implementation of PRSP' was organised jointly by Oxfam GB-Bangladesh and PRIP Trust at the Institution of Diploma Engineers in the capital.

The speakers said awareness about gender equality has to be raised from the grassroots level and attitudes of the policy makers will have to be changed.

They suggested launching of special training programmes for government officers and bureaucrats to make them consciousness about gender equality.

They said poverty cannot be eradicated from the society without ensuring social, political and economic equality of women.

Former adviser to caretaker government Advocate Sultana Kamal said PRSP is a tool, which will help reduce poverty.

"Women enjoy only 10 percent of the total national income and control only one percent of economy though they provide around 66 percent labour," she said while addressing as chief guest at the workshop.

The government should immediately implement the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), Beijing Platform for Action (PFA), National Women Development Policy and PRSP to eliminate all kinds of violence against

women and ensure their empowerment, she added.

Barrister Tania Amir, chairperson of PRIP Trustee Board, said only four paragraphs have been written in PRSP about gender equality which is not enough.

"Without involving women in all sectors and ensuring gender equality, we will not be able to achieve Millennium Development Goals (MDG) by 2015," she added.

Economist Dr Atiur Rahman, chair of Unnayan Shamunnay, suggested that if there is a male speaker in parliament then a deputy speaker will have to be selected from the female members to establish gender equality.

Aysha Khanam, general secretary of Bangladesh Mahila Parishad, said the government officer should be trained on issues related to PRSP and gender equality.

Oxfam-G B Country Representative Anil P Tambay, Women for Women President Dr Mahmuda Islam, Researcher and Gender Expert Dr Kaniz Siddique, Steps Towards Development Executive Director Ranjan Karmakar, Bangladesh Nari Sangbadik Centre President Nasimun Ara Haque Minu, Anannya Editor Tasminia Hossain, Bangladesh Mahila Parishad Vice-president Makhduma Nargis Rana and PRIP Trust Executive Director Aroma Dutta also spoke.

Nazrul Sangeet Sammelon begins tomorrow

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A two-day Nazrul Sangeet Sammelon begins in the city tomorrow marking the 108th birth anniversary of National Poet Kazi Nazrul Islam.

Nazrul Sangeet Shilpi Parishad is organising the music conference at the National Museum with the participation of its members as well as 10 eminent artists from all divisions of the country.

Eminent Nazrul researcher Prof Rafiqul Islam will inaugurate the function at the Shaheed Zia Auditorium at 7:30pm.

Two senior most Nazrul Sangeet artists Juhusuddin Ahmed and Abdus Sattar will be awarded on this occasion. Grameen Phone will sponsor the programme while media partner of the Parishad Ekushey Television will broadcast the first one and half hour programme directly.

Recitation from Nazrul's poems and a dance drama based on Nazrul's songs and poems under the direction of two national level dance artists will be the added features of the whole programme.

Nazrul Sangeet Shilpi Parishad is working for popularisation of Nazrul song among the people. Its activities are going on in every division by organising programmes on Nazrul song, workshops and seminars.

Parishad is also going to create a website with the photographs, interviews, clippings of song of noted Nazrul Sangeet artists including life and works of the poet.

Robber beaten to death

BSS, Narayanganj

A robber was beaten to death by angry mob while he and his seven accomplices were fleeing away after a crowd had suspected their movement at Chandra bus stand under Araihazar upazila on Saturday night.

Police quoting eyewitnesses said a group of seven to eight robbers assembled at Chandra after getting down from a bus at 9:00pm. Being suspicious about their movement, the villagers chased the robbers and caught one of them.

After he was beaten black and blue, the unidentified robber was brought to Araihazar health complex where the attending doctors declared him dead.

Qulkhwani

Qulkhwani of Syed Shamim Ahsan, former secretary, will be held at the Baridhara Baitul Atiq Kendriya Jame Masjid at Road No 8

Baridhara in the city after Asr prayers today (Monday), says a press release.

Ahsan passed away at his Baridhara residence on Friday morning.

He is survived by his wife.

He was laid to rest at Banani graveyard after namaz-e-janaza after Asr prayers at the Baridhara Baitul Atiq Kendriya Jame Masjid in the city on Saturday.

Ahsan, son of Syed Mainul Ahsan and grandson of Sir A F Rahman, was born in Kolkata on November 19 in 1936. He joined the civil service of Pakistan in 1961 and retired in 1994 as the health secretary.

Syeda Salma Fatima

Qulkhwani of Syeda Salma Fatima, a retired government official, will be held at Khanbahadur Garden at 195/2 Shantibagh in the city today, says a press release.

On the occasion, doa and milad mahfil will be held. Foods will also be distributed at an orphanage.

Salma, daughter of late advocate Syed Mohammad Hashim, passed away on May 17 at the age of 53.

Self-assessment of NGOs stressed

The Federation of NGOs in Bangladesh (FNB) at its 4th annual general meeting in the city on Saturday underlined the need for correct and positive perception of NGOs in the society in commensurate with their extensive pro-poor multifaceted activities throughout the country, says a press release.

FNB Chair Dr Muhammad Ibrahim said despite invaluable contribution of NGOs at the grassroots level since independence, there seems to be lack of understanding and appreciation among the policy makers, mass media and opinion makers.

Emphasising the need for self-assessment instead of complacency, the meeting was of the opinion that while talking about transparency and accountability of other establishments, the NGOs should take care that their good governance, transparency and accountability are not questioned.

The meeting took a stock of the activities of the Federation since it was established four years ago including the establishment of NGO Foundation to help finance small NGOs, modification of a number of rules and regulations removing factors detrimental to implementation of programmes, and formulation of the code of conduct for NGOs.

The meeting was informed that steps are being taken to develop the capacity of the small NGOs and launch a programme for advocacy among the different sectors to establish proper image of this vital sector so that the NGOs may have their due recognition in the society as a major development partner.

The meeting commended the vital reforms initiated by the caretaker government including its anti-corruption measures.

Referring to the positive attitude of the government towards the role of the NGOs especially at the grassroots level, the meeting hoped that their unhindered functioning would be ensured at the local level.

Held at the Institution of Engineers, the meeting was attended by the chief executives of the member-organisations from 61 districts and members of the National Executive Board.

Body to help acid victims, disadvantaged freedom fighters

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A group of SSC exam-appeared students formed an organisation named TRUE yesterday with a view to helping acid victims and disadvantaged freedom fighters.

TRUE is a social platform of 150 students of city's different schools, including Ideal School, Motijheel Model High School and Motijheel Central Government High School. They announced their launching at a function at Biswa Sahitya Kendra in the city with former adviser and Editor of the daily Independent Mahbul Alam as chief guest.

He appreciated the initiative of the teenagers to utilise their leisure in social work.

Executive Director of Democracy Watch Taleyta Rehman, singer Mahmuduzzaman Babu, businessman Mahbul Hossain and freedom fighter Rafiqullah Khan spoke as special guests.

Rafiqullah, who participated in the liberation war under sector no. 6 in Dinajpur, shared his experience at the battle field.

TRUE President Tashdik Habib Abir said their members will conduct a survey on freedom fighters and acid victims visiting door to door to know their condition.

They have already started the work and selected 40 freedom fighters to provide financial support, he said.

Abir urged the wealthy citizens and civil society members to extend their helping hands for this noble initiative.

GRAFT CASE Special court blames prosecution for failure to produce accused

UNB, Dhaka

A special court yesterday came down heavily on the prosecution for its failure to produce the accused facing trial after fixing the dates for deposition by the prosecution witnesses (pws).

"I have never seen in my 27 years of career in judiciary that the prosecution has failed to produce the accused after fixing the date of trial," Judge M Firoze Alam told the court, pointing at the Public Prosecutor (PP) of the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC).

"I did not face such a problem at the Speedy Trial Tribunal for disposing of the cases within the timeframe," the judge said.

The judge's observations came as PP Mahub Ahmed informed the court, after it resumed at 12:45pm for recording deposition by one pw, about the absence of accused Sabera Aman, a co-accused in the graft case filed against former state minister Amanullah Aman.

Later appearing before the court, court-inspector Enamul Hq referred to the jail authority's report that Sabera was sick and could not appear in the court for standing trial.

The judge interrupted the court inspector, and said the conduct of the jail authorities is very "unfortunate", as the information was transmitted lately.

"Such conduct amounts to vitiating the trial process, because the trial has to be disposed of within the timeframe," a visibly irate judge said and warned legal actions against the prison authorities.

"I will write letter to the home ministry asking them to issue show-cause notice upon the jail super, jailer and the court inspector for such conduct that impedes the trial process," he told the court, especially set up by the caretaker government for trying bigwig

corruption suspects. Sunday was fixed for commencing the trial with the testimony of the prosecution witnesses. The pw and complainant in the graft case, ACC deputy director Abdullah Al Zahid, was present at the court.

Earlier, accused Aman, now in custody, was brought before the court amid tight security.

The court adjourned the hearing until today (Monday).



Road crash kills NSU Foundation ex-chairman

ABM Kamal Uddin Khan, founder life member and former chairman of board of governors of North South University Foundation and former president of Gulshan Club, was killed in a road accident yesterday, says a press release.

He was seriously injured in a road accident on Dhaka-Chittagong Highway on the way to his factory. He was rushed to Apollo Hospitals in the city where he succumbed to his injuries at 2:00pm. He was 55.

Kamal, also chairman and managing director of the Minhaz Group of Industries, was involved in many socio-economic, academic, and philanthropic activities.

He left behind his wife, one son, two daughters and a host of admirers to mourn his death.

Wife's appeal to chief adviser

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Cg

Wife of Chittagong city mayor yesterday made an appeal to the chief adviser to the caretaker government for withdrawal of detention order and returning the confiscated passport to help send Mayor ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury abroad for treatment, said a press release.

In the appeal, Begum Hasina Mohiuddin referred that her husband was admitted to Chittagong Medical College Hospital (CMCH) when he fell seriously ill due to heart and urinary complications at Bandarban district jail in the early hours of May 14.

With further deterioration of condition the mayor was shifted to Dhaka central jail and was admitted to Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU) hospital on May 16.

Hasina Mohiuddin said Mohiuddin is suffering from chest pain, uncontrolled diabetes, blood pressure, urinary retention caused by enlarged prostate and kidney problem.

The complications were also detected in different medical tests conducted on him at BSMMU hospital suggesting for taking him abroad for advanced treatment, she said.

In this regard she further referred that Mohiuddin has already got ad-interim bail in two cases that put him behind the bars.

However, he could not be taken abroad for advanced treatment due to the detention order, said Hasina Mohiuddin making a fervent appeal for withdrawing the detention order and returning the seized passport to help take Mohiuddin Chowdhury abroad on humanitarian ground and save his life.

Two alleged Rab sources held while taking bribe

OUR CORRESPONDENT, N'ganj

Detective Branch (DB) of police caught two alleged Rab sources red-handed while taking bribe from a Jubo Dal leader's wife at Water World Park at Sayedabad in the city yesterday.

The arrestees were identified as Army Azad alias Sagar and Jamal Hossain.

Parvin Dewan, wife of Dewan Mohammad, joint secretary of Ruppagan Jubo Dal, told the journalists that members of Rab-3 arrested her husband and her brother-in-law from in front of a bazar at Ruppagan on Saturday night.

Following their arrest, two people identifying themselves as Rab sources, demanded Tk 50000 over phone as bribe to release them at around 8:00am and threatened to kill them in crossfire or file cases against them if they do otherwise, she said.

After negotiations, the sources agreed on Tk 30000 for their release.

She also informed Narayanganj police just after receiving the call. Once they received the money, DB police caught the criminals red handed.

The arrestees claimed they have been working as Rab sources for four years.

Commanding officer of Rab-3, however, said there is no relationship between the arrestees and Rab.

Ensure copy-free public exams

Education Adviser Ayub Quadri made surprise visits to a number of examination centres in the city and spoke to the examinees and the invigilators, an official release of the education ministry said.

He called upon all to ensure that the public examinations are free from all types of unfair means.

The colleges that the adviser visited are Kolatia College, Ramerkanda Ispahani College, Sheikh Borhan Uddin College and Badrunnesa Women's College.

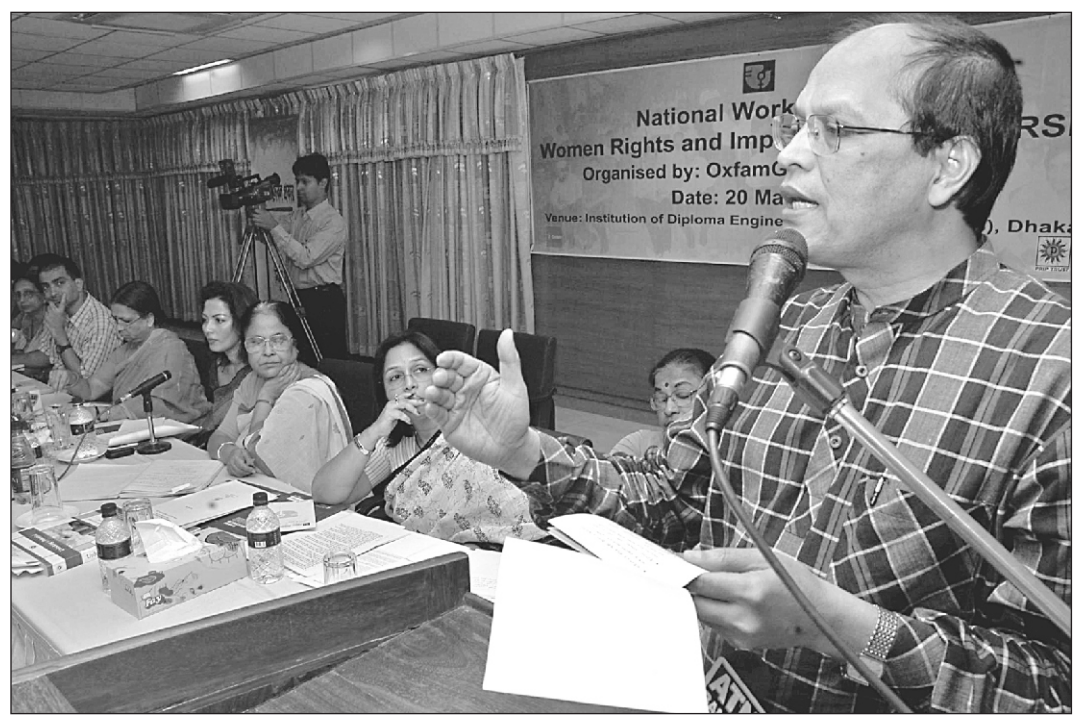
Death anniversary

Today is the 13th death anniversary of Mohammad Nasir Uddin, editor of the Sawgat and founder of the monthly Begum, says a press release.

On the occasion, foods will be distributed among the poor at his residence at 38 Sharatgupta Road at Narinda in the city. A milad mahfil and discussion will also be held at his residence after Asr prayers.

Engr Shamsuzzaman

Today is the 36th death anniversary of martyred intellectual engineer Mohammad Shamsuzzaman, the then chief engineer of Chittagong Port Trust, says a press release. Pakistani occupation forces took him from his Bandar Bhaban office on this day in 1971 while he was on duty. Friends, relatives and admirers are requested to pray for salvation of the departed soul.



Economist Dr Atiur Rahman speaks at a workshop on 'Women's rights and implementation of PRSP' at the Institution of Diploma Engineers in the city yesterday.

Marine ports still under Signal No 3

BSS, Dhaka

The north Bay of Bengal has continued to remain rough as squally weather is still prevailing due to deep convection churning out clouds there, since the Cyclone Akash made the landfall on May 15. Due to heavy seas and high winds roaring over the Bay, the Met office has continued its advisory for the maritime ports of Chittagong, Cox's Bazar and Mongla to keep flying the local cautionary Signal Number 3.

The warning for fishing boats and trawlers in the north Bay has also remained in force, until further notice, asking the fishermen to keep their boats close to the coast and negotiate the sea cautiously, Met office sources said.

Under the spell of the convective clouds, coastal areas in the south-east have had some heavy showers. Cox's Bazar recorded the highest 100 mm of rains, Kutubdia 75 mm, Sandwip 13 mm, Comilla 11 mm, Majdi and Bhola each had 6 mm, and Feni 5 mm yesterday between 6:00am till 12:00noon.



No change in temperature likely

UNB, Dhaka

Rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty or squally wind is likely at a few places over Dhaka, Barisal, Chittagong and Sylhet divisions and at one or two places over Rajshahi and Khulna divisions in next 12 hours until 6:00pm today.

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

Highest temperature 36.5 degree Celsius was recorded yesterday at Jessore and lowest 23.2 degree Celsius at Faridpur.

The sun sets in the capital at 6:37pm today and rises at 5:13am tomorrow.

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

Table with 3 columns: City/Town, Temperature in Celsius (Max/Min), Humidity in percentage (Morning/Evening). Rows include Dhaka, Chittagong, Rajshahi, Khulna, Barisal, Sylhet, Cox's Bazar.