

'Withdraw total ban on indoor politics'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Gono Forum at its presidium meeting yesterday demanded withdrawal of the ban on indoor politics across the country and asked all political stakeholders to remain vigilant in order to maintain national unity.

They also demanded that the government rein in rising cost of living, take steps for immediate payment of salary and bonus to garment workers, and step up its rehabilitation programme in flood-hit areas.

Gono Forum President Dr Kamal Hossain presided over the meeting at the party's central office, where the leaders said they would re-evaluate the effectiveness of the 14-party alliance.

The party said the ban on indoor politics should be withdrawn all

over the country.

"The countrymen are united for honest politics, and we think that a conspiracy could be planned to destroy this unity," said a party press release.

The presidium also decided to

hold reform talks with the Election Commission after discussing the matter with other parties and civil society members.

Gono Forum also urged the government to take steps to boost the economy.

Science, tech promotion trust formed

BSS, Dhaka

The government has formed a science and technology promotion trust under the Ministry of Science and Information and Communication Technology to promote scientific research and education in the country.

The chief adviser has approved the file of the promotion trust recently, an official handout said.

Technology Museum will operate the trust. Science fair, seminar and workshop will be arranged by the trust with a view to popularising science at grassroots level.

The trust will also organise science and technology weeks on regular basis, provide financial and technical support to science clubs and award scholarship to students and non-professional scientists for their innovative works.

PALLABI MURDER CASE 4 arrested for involvement in gruesome killings

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Detective police have arrested four people for their alleged involvement in gruesome murder of six people in the city last year.

They are Zakir Hossain alias Bahar, Masum Matobbar, Kamruzzaman alias Kamrul and Mohammad Azim.

Of them, Zakir, Kamrul and Masum have already given statements to the magistrate confessing that they killed the six people during a robbery at a house in Pallabi as the victims could recognise two of them, said the DB police at a press conference yesterday.

The gang slaughtered six people, a guard and five domestic helps of a house owned by contractor Kazi Sirajul Huq on October 13, 2006. The dead were guard Milon, 27, and domestic helps Munir, 11, Rizla, 35, her son Tofael, 15, Anna, 11, and Khadiza, 14.

Police said they arrested Masum, former driver of Sirajul, from Gulshan on September 10 tracking his mobile call list.

At one stage of interrogation, Masum admitted his involvement in the robbery and killings.

Following his confessional statement, a high-powered DB team arrested Azim, an employee of Sirajul, Zakir and Kamrul recently.

The suspects said Azim and Zakir made a blueprint to loot Tk 20 lakh which Sirajul was supposed to keep inside his house.

To implement the plan successfully, Masum was assigned to collect two more aides and as per the decision he hired two of their associates Zakir and Kamrul.

As Sirajul went out of his house to join an Ifar party on the day of the incident, the criminals armed with two knives started their operation at 8:00pm.

But as the guard and domestic helps could identify Azim and Masum, they killed all the inmates in a bid to eliminate witnesses.

Sirajul filed a case with Pallabi Police Station on that day.

After the investigation, the then investigation officer Mesbahuddin told reporters that an outlawed group of Chuadanga had killed the six, as the house owner refused to pay them toll.

But as Sirajul denied the investigation saying that nobody demanded money from him, the case was transferred to DB police in May this year.

DB Joint Commissioner Abdul Jalil, Deputy Police Commissioner Mainul Hasan, Additional Deputy Commissioner Asaduzzaman, Assistant Commissioner Mehedi Hasan and Investigation Officer Forman Ali were present at the press conference.

Rapport chairman honoured



Achievers Award-2007 for his outstanding contribution to the field of management education and training, says a press release.

Shree Chanakya Education Society's Indira Group of Institutes presented the award to him along with 19 other eminent personalities from across the world.

Chairperson of Indira Group of Institutes Tarita Mehendale gave away the awards at a colourful ceremony at the society's auditorium at Pune in India recently.

Among the awardees were outstanding educationists, top business executives, social workers, and management and marketing executives from the USA, South Africa, Bahrain, Pakistan, Sudan, Romania, Sri Lanka and Malaysia.

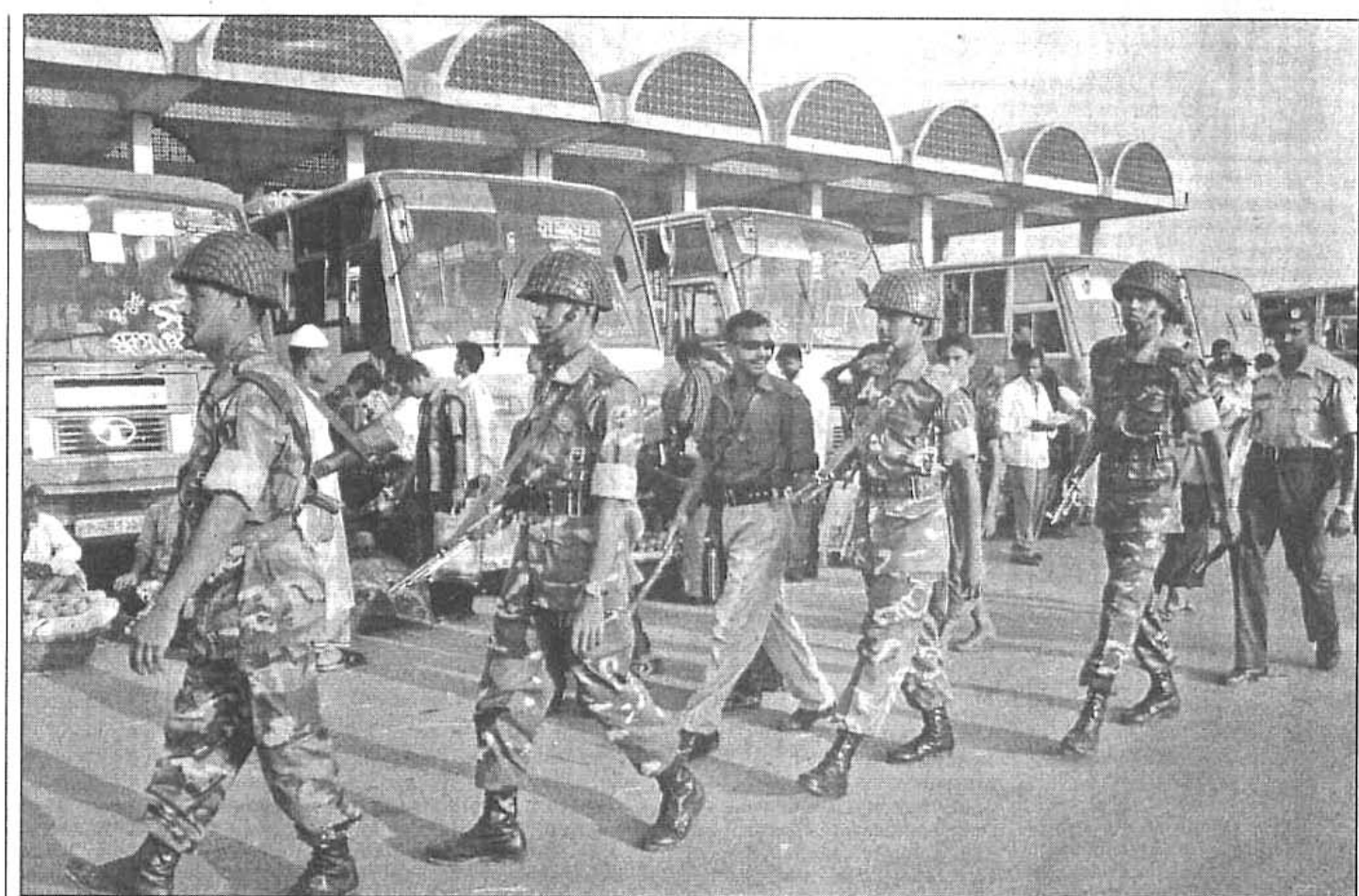
Pollution cuts life expectancy in Europe

AP, Belgrade, Serbia

Poor air and water quality, and environmental changes blamed on global warming, have cut Europeans' life expectancy by nearly a year, Europe's environmental agency warned yesterday.

More must be done -- fast -- to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and to improve air and water quality, the European Environment Agency said in a 400-page report presented at a ministerial conference held in Serbia.

Hundreds of thousands of people across Europe are dying prematurely because of air pollution, it said. "The estimated annual



Members of the joint forces patrol Gabtali Bus Station in the city yesterday to ensure safety of homebound people who are leaving Dhaka ahead of Eid-ul-Fitr.

Pak general elections in January: PM

AFP, Islamabad

Pakistan Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz said yesterday that general elections will be held in "the first part of January" next year.

"The national parliament and provincial assemblies will complete their terms on November 15 and elections will be held 60 days after that," Aziz said.

"With the presidential election held successfully, the first phase of the election process has been completed and now general elections will be held in a transparent and free manner," he said.

Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf has been embroiled in political crisis for months and has suffered a slump in popularity amid growing pressure for a return to democracy.

Fake Rab member held in Ctg

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Chittagong

Members of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) arrested a fake Rab member and recovered Tk 1.40 lakh from his possession in the port city on Tuesday.

The arrestee was identified as Liton Kanti Das, 35, son of late Minmoy Das of Bankhal.

Sources in Rab-7 said members of the elite force in a four-day raid with the help of Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) arrested one Jasim Uddin on charges of alleged involvement in illegal VoIP business from Chawkbazar area on September 26.

Meanwhile, Liton contacted Md Mujibul Haq, brother-in-law of Jasim, identifying himself as a Rab member and demanded Tk 2 lakh for Jasim's release.

Mujibul agreed and Liton received the money at around 11:30pm the same day.

Meanwhile, Rab released Jasim at around 11:00pm on the next day as he got that he was not at all involved in the illegal business after quizzing him, said a senior Rab official.

Sniffing something unusual, his relatives informed the officials of Rab-7 about Liton on September 27.

Acting on a tip-off, a team of Rab-7 arrested Liton from the city's Muradpur intersection at around 3:30pm on Tuesday.

During interrogation Liton confessed his involvement in the incident.

Acting on his statement, Rab members raided his residence at Chawkbazar Urdu Lane on Tuesday evening and recovered Tk 1.40 lakh.

'Nepal struggles with peace process'

AFP, Kathmandu

The top United Nations envoy to Nepal warned yesterday that failures in implementing key elements of the country's peace process were endangering the pact to end a decade of civil war.

The 11-month-old peace deal has hit major hurdles in recent months, with the former rebel Maoists guerrillas walking out of a coalition government in September and last week forcing the cancellation of elections on the country's political future.

Nepal's political crisis is "a result of weaknesses in the overall management in the peace process, particularly failure to implement agreements on certain key issues," said Ian Martin, the head of the United Nations Mission in Nepal (UNMIN).

As part of last November's peace deal that ended a 10-year Maoist insurgency, the UN was asked to monitor former guerrillas confined to camps as well as assisting in elections.

But the government's failure to resolve the future of thousands of ex-rebel fighters in camps has "contributed to Maoist concerns that the government is not fulfilling its commitments," Martin told

reporters.

In addition, the Maoists -- who formally renounced violence when they signed the peace pact -- are either unwilling or unable to stop their Young Communist League (YCL) from using strong-arm tactics.

"The reluctance of the CPN-M (Maoists) to ensure that its YCL ends its use of intimidation and sometimes violence has badly eroded public confidence that the Maoists are indeed willing to enter a genuinely democratic process," Martin said.

On November 22, Nepal should have been voting for a body to rewrite the constitution and decide the fate of the Himalayan country's monarchy.

But Maoist demands that the 239-year-old dynasty be scrapped immediately and that the election system be changed meant that the polls were indefinitely postponed last week.

On Thursday, the Maoists and political parties will begin a special session of parliament aimed at resolving the deadlock.

Debate on the adoption of a new election system as well as the possibility of abolishing the monarchy through parliament will be discussed and put before a parliamentary vote next week.

Tornado damages 150 houses in Sunamganj

BSS, Sunamganj

About 150 kutcha houses were damaged and at least 15 people injured when a tornado lashed four villages under Chamardani and Dhakshin Bangshikunda union of Dharmapasha upazila in the district on Tuesday night.

Locals said the tornado lasted for about half an hour. Tornado

victims took shelter at the houses of their relatives and neighbours. At least 15 people were injured as trees and corrugated iron (CI) sheets fell on them during the tornado.

Dharmapasha Upazila Nirabahi Officer Mamunur Rashid said a three-member team was sent to tornado-hit areas to provide relief to the tornado victims.



ATM Kamal speaks at a press conference organised by Bikalpa Dhara Bangladesh at Dhaka Reporters' Unity auditorium yesterday.

TRAWLER CAPSIZE Two bodies recovered

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

The bodies of a minor boy and his grandfather, who went missing following a trawler capsizing in the river Lata at Mehendiganj on Tuesday, were recovered on Wednesday morning.

The victims were identified as Tofael Ahmed, 53, and his grandson Arif Hossain, 6, of Kasbaunion. Upazila administration sources said a trawler carrying six passengers and cargos capsized on Tuesday afternoon.

Obituary

UNB, Dhaka

Dr Shahjadi Haroon, wife of Awami League Advisory Council member Prof Dr Shamsul Huda Haroon, passed away due to old age ailments at a city hospital yesterday morning at the age of 72.

She was buried at Banani Graveyard after namaz-e-janaza at Gulshan Azad Mosque after Zohr prayers.

Her qukhani will be held at her residence at Ivy Concord Tower in Gulshan after Asr prayers on Friday.

Abdul Khalek

Abdul Khalek, a city Awami League leader, passed away due to prolonged illness yesterday at the age of 60, says a press release.

Khalek, an AL leader at the ward no 60, was buried at Azimpur graveyard following a namaz-e-janaza at Shaheed Nagar Jame Mosque at Lalbagh in the city.

Acting General Secretary of Dhaka City Awami League Advocate Kamrul Islam in a statement condoled the death of Abdul Khalek and conveyed sympathy to the bereaved family.

AKM Nurul Islam

AKM Nurul Islam, brother-in-law of Sirajul Islam Bachchu, vice president of Bangladesh Football Federation, passed away at his residence at Naya Palatan in the city yesterday at the age of 65, says a press release.

He had been suffering from diabetes and leukaemia. He left behind his wife, a daughter and a host of relatives.

Nurul Islam was the treasurer of Roving Federation and worked at media committee in different tournaments organised by Bangladesh Football Federation.

President of Bangladesh Football Federation SA Sultan, acting general secretary, all the members of executive committee and employees of the federation condoled the death of Nurul Islam and prayed for his departed soul.

Barapukuria mineworkers continue strike

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

The mineworkers of Barapukuria Coal Mine Company Ltd (BCMCL) have been observing work abstention for the last five days.

They also held a press conference at Phulbari Press Club in Dinajpur yesterday to press their eleven-point demands, including payment of outstanding salaries and Eid bonus, said BCMCL sources.

Convener of Barapukuria Mineworkers' Association Md Rabiul Islam readout the keynote paper at the press conference in presence of about hundreds mineworkers.

Sources said that the work abstention has reduced the coal production of the mine to zero line since last Friday.

A negotiation was initiated but failed to resolve the deadlock, sources added.

However, Managing Director of BCMCL MA Aziz Khan could not be contacted for his comments.

Rajshahi people happy over voter registration

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

All eligible voters in Rajshahi were registered during the voter registration and people are satisfied with the registration process compared to previous registrations, said a recent survey of Election Working Group (EWG).

EWG conducted the survey on people's experiences with the registration process in the slum and non-slum areas of Rajshahi City Corporation as part of EWG's awareness raising programme for the voter registration initiative.

The survey revealed that virtually all-eligible voters in slum and non-slum areas of Rajshahi City Corporation were registered and almost all those who registered had their photograph taken at the registration centre.

The survey also said reluctance to be photographed for religious reasons was not an issue and neither cultural nor religious norms affected women's ability to register.

Besides, more than half the respondents were not aware that the registration process is for both voting and issuance of a national ID card.

The survey was developed with technical assistance from The Asia Foundation and Data International Ltd (DIL).

The Election Working Group is a 33-member coalition of civil society organisations that share a common commitment to free and fair elections and good governance in Bangladesh.

KARMOJIBI MAHILA HOSTEL Withdrawal of increased seat rent demanded

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Boards of Nawab Foyzunnessa Karmojibi Mahila Hostel have demanded the withdrawal of increased seat rent which was declared last month without any prior notice.

They already submitted memorandum to the dormitory authorities including director, director general and additional director of the Directorate of Women Affairs.

The boarders claimed that the authorities did not pay heed to their appeal and threatened to cancel their seats.

"If the present boarders can be expelled, the dormitory authorities would be able to earn more money by allocating seats to students at the increased rate," one of the aggrieved boarders preferring anonymity told The Daily Star on Tuesday.

They claimed that they have been paying more than the seat rent of the dormitory directed by the Directorate of Women Affairs at Nilkhet since its inception.

However, the seat rent has been increased so much that it has become difficult for them to bear other expenses, they added.

The seat rent for two-seat room has been increased to Tk 1025 from Tk 725 and the seat rent for three-seat room from Tk

625 to Tk 825 from the last month.

On the other hand, the seat rent of Nilkhet dormitory remains unchanged.

The seat rent of two-seat room at Nilkhet dormitory is Tk 835 and three-seat room is Tk 610.

INT'L WOMEN QURAN CONTEST

Sajeda wins first prize

BSS, Dhaka

Hafeja Sajeda Khatun has secured the first position in the International Women Hifzul Quran competition held in Libya.

The competition was held in Tripoli from Ramadan 20 to 24, where contestants from 61 countries took part.

Sajeda Khatun is the first Bangladeshi woman who achieved this rare success.

She was awarded Tk 20 lakh in cash, a certificate and other prizes, a press release of the Islamic Foundation Bangladesh said yesterday.

Iran and Oman secured second and third position in the competition.

Dr Ayasha Moamer Kadhafi, daughter of Libyan President Moamer Kadhafi, distributed the prizes among the winners.



Light to moderate rain likely

UNB, Dhaka

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

Day temperature may rise by 1-2 degree Celsius over the country, Met Office said.

Highest temperature 33.6 degree Celsius was recorded yesterday at Jessore and lowest 22.2 degree Celsius at Rangpur.

The sun sets in the capital at 5:36pm today and rises at 5:54am tomorrow.

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	32.4	23.5	82	67
Chittagong	29.8	24.9	79	90
Rajshahi	30.0	23.8	83	88
Khulna	33.0	23.6	87	84
Barisal	32.5	25.6	89	83
Sylhet	28.8	24.4	92	84
Cox's Bazar	30.0	25.0	96	92