

IGP promises better vigilance to fight child trafficking

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police chief Nur Mohammad yesterday said his department would tighten vigilance at airports and border points to help prevent trafficking of children.

Despite a renewed promise of upgrading the vigilance, the Inspector General of Police, however, said his officials alone cannot combat the trafficking, a criminal offence as per the country's law.

"It needs cooperation from everybody," he told a seminar on "GO-NGO Cooperation and Coordination for Combating Child Trafficking: Bangladesh Context".

The Bangladesh Shishu Adhikar Forum (BSAF) organised the discussion for better cooperation among various departments of the government and independent anti-trafficking campaigners.

The IGP said the trafficking was one of the worst crimes that often

destroys families and lives of many children.

He said the trafficking gangs often spread their nets to rural Bangladesh to trap children through assurance of good jobs or a better future.

Poverty often compels the parents of these children to hand over their kids to the traffickers, but they ultimately end up in brothels or in other risky professions in or outside the country, he said.

"The sufferings of the trafficking victims are more painful than deaths," he said.

The police chief said rights campaigners were doing a good job in informing people about the danger of such an "inhuman act".

He said his department would extend all possible helps if NGOs sought its cooperation to fight the menace.

Prof Ishrat Shamim, Executive Director of the Centre for Women

and Children Studies, in a keynote paper said most of the victims in South Asia come from Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka while India and Pakistan are the destinations.

Most of the victims finally perish in the Middle East, she said.

She said the smuggled-out children have a huge demand in Bahrain, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates where they face sexual exploitation.

She said boys are also routinely trafficked to the United Arab Emirates and Qatar where they are often forced to work as camel jockeys and beggars.

Since Bangladesh shares a porous border with India it is easier to smuggle the children out of the country, rights campaigners say.

Border guards and other security officials assigned to stop such trafficking often take their share from the traffickers to allow them to do their shady business, they say.

4 deer die in Sirajganj eco park

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sirajganj

Four deer, out of 14 that were released in the eco park near Jamuna Bridge in Sirajganj, have died within four days of the park's inception.

Sources in forest department and park authorities said two deer died of illness on Wednesday night. Another deer died on last Monday after it was bitten by foxes while the other died after a dog bit it on Tuesday.

The eco park was inaugurated on March 9 in an ordinary function and seven deer were released on that day. Seven more deer were also released in the park the next day by forest department.

Sources said that due to lack of proper maintenance system and inefficiency of the park authorities, the deer had to suffer the fate.

Cancellation of Private Security Service Act demanded

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Differing with the government decisions, two associations of private security companies yesterday demanded the cancellation of Private Security Service Act 2006 and Private Security Service Rules 2007.

At a press conference in the city, they also refused to pay Tk 500,000 as fixed deposit money, Tk 200,000 as registration fee, and Tk 50,000 as renewal fee to the government.

The press conference was organised under the banner of Metropolitan Security Management Services Group (MSMSG) supported by Dhaka Divisional Security Service Owners' Group (DDSSOG) at the National Press Club.

The press conference was attended by Maj Gen (ret'd) Amin Ahmed Chowdhury, Maj Gen (ret'd) AMS Amin, Lt Col (ret'd) MA Hannan Mridha, Barrister Tania Amir and Maj (ret'd) Akhteruzzaman.

The association leaders said they would not take licence from the Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) and training from the Ansars.

They alleged that former state minister for home Lutfuzzaman Babu prepared the acts and rules during the past BNP-Jamaat-led four-party alliance government to protect the interest of some specific companies.

They said if the government does not change its decision, about 50,000 security guards of 450 companies would become jobless.

BAF course certificate award ceremony held

UNB, Dhaka

The certificate award ceremony of No. 40 Flight Safety Officers' Course of Bangladesh Air Force (BAF) was held at Flight Safety Institute (FSI) at Dhaka Cantonment yesterday.

Chief of Air Staff Air Marshal SM Ziaur Rahman attended the ceremony as the chief guest and distributed certificates among the student officers.

Nine officers from Bangladesh Air Force, one each from Bangladesh Navy, Indian Air Force and Sri Lanka Air Force attended the course.

Squadron leader Shanmuga Ramesh of the Indian Air Force was awarded the "Chief of Air Staff's Trophy" for his best performance in the course.

Speaking on the occasion, Ziaur Rahman advised the student-officers to share the knowledge that they have acquired and exploit it further to refine their talent through dedication and innovative ideas in promoting safety.

Referring to the overseas student-officers participation, Chief of Air Staff said that the mutual sense of solidarity and friendship would further be strengthened in future through such participation.

Assistant Chief of Air Staff (Operations and Training) Air Vice Marshal Muhammad Enamul Bari, senior BAF Officers and diplomats of the participating countries were present on the occasion.

Birth anniversary of Dr MA Hasan today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Today is the 58th birth anniversary of Dr MA Hasan, a freedom fighter and human rights activist.

Born in Bagerhat in 1950, Dr Hasan is a renowned researcher in the field of mass killing and woman repression during the liberation war.

He has been working in this field since 1990.

War criminals, mass killing and search for trial and 'War and Women' are two of his notable documentations.

He was awarded a C-in-C for his role as a freedom fighter during the liberation war.



Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed was given a guard of honour by the members of three services on his arrival at Dakar International Airport in Senegal on Wednesday.

UK introduces toughest immigration system

UNB, Dhaka

The British government is introducing the toughest immigration processes in 45 years with a point-based system to ensure only the best can work in the UK, licences for overseas workers and on-the-spot fines for those to be found hiring illegal workers.

"We're now introducing processes based on an Australian-style Points Based System, which are clear and objective. These processes are backed up with technology such as biometrics -- the taking of fingerprints and digital photographs... We now know who we want to come to Britain and who we don't," Acting British High Commissioner Duncan Norman said at a seminar on UK Visa at Lake Shore Hotel in the city.

The British government has also

introduced a licensing system for employers who want to recruit from overseas and bring skilled workers into the UK, he said.

"No company will be granted a sponsor's licence without being approved in advance by the Border and Immigration Agency," he said, adding that employers bringing in skilled workers under Tier 2 of the scheme which takes effect this autumn can now start applying for that licence.

This year would see the establishment of a new UK Border Agency to ensure the UK has one of the toughest borders in the world, he added.

Further measures include the introduction of a new system to count people in and out of the UK and ID cards to strengthen the UK border and help keep out those who do not have the right to stay in the

UK, he said.

Norman said the relationship with Bangladesh is very important to Britain. People travel between the two countries to do business, to visit relatives or to utilise their skills in a new country. And migrants benefit Britain economically, contributing an estimated £6bn to the UK's national output, as well as socially and culturally.

Head of Visa Services Jonathan Verney, Director of UK Trade and Investment Kevin Ringham and Entry Clearance Officer Hasina Rahman and other officials also spoke at the seminar.

At the seminar, the British High Commission signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Dhaka Chamber of Commerce to provide a fast-track visa processing service for the members of the Chamber.

RIGHT TO INFORMATION ORDINANCE

'Include journalists in info commission'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a seminar yesterday called for inclusion of journalists in the information commission as proposed in the draft of Right to Information (RTI) Ordinance 2008 because they are the major stakeholders.

They also demanded cancellation of the provision for 20 days to get information and urged the government to discuss the matter with the representatives of political parties as the elected government will ratify the ordinance.

The seminar titled 'Right to Information Ordinance 2008' was organised by the National Press Club in the city where editors of different newspapers, senior journalists, academics and lawyers were present.

In his keynote paper, press club President Shawkat Mahmud said instead of the chairman of Public Service Commission and

University Grants Commission, the chairman of the Press Council and an editor of a newspaper should be included in the commission which will select the chief information commissioner and two other commissioners.

He said 20 days are too long to wait for journalists to get required information.

Sadeque Khan said the proposed law should be made easy and the 'inconsistencies' in the draft proposal should be removed.

He said journalists should have been included in the committee that prepared the draft proposals.

Zahid Ahmed Chowdhury said this is a positive initiative and steps to be taken to make it more acceptable to all.

It is the right of the people to know everything except the issues involved with national securities, he said, adding that only free flow of information can help establish rule of law.

The Bangladesh Observer Editor Iqbal Sobhan Chowdhury said the involvement of political parties in the draft is a must as the law will be ratified in parliament.

Advocate Alena Khan said the timeframe of the information commission should be extended to five years, instead of four as proposed in the draft.

Presided over by ABM Musa, the seminar was also addressed by Kamal Uddin Sabuj, general secretary of National Press Club, Amanullah Kabir, editor of the Amar Desh, Alamgir Kabir, editor of the Naya Diganta, Manjurul Ahsan Bulbul, executive editor of the Sangbad, journalist Mozammel Haque, Amir Khashru of Voice of America, Robayet Ferdous and Shamim Reza of Dhaka University.

Sanjida Sobhan and Barrister Tanzimul Alam, who were in the draft committee, also spoke at the seminar moderated by Reazuddin Ahmed, editor of the News Today.

FFs' unity could expedite dev: Akbar Ali

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Regulatory Reform Commission (RRC) Chairman Dr Akbar Ali Khan yesterday said rich-poor gap and disparity between urban and rural people have widened due to lack of proper utilisation of national resources.

"We have failed to utilise our resources properly. Rich-poor gap is widening continuously. Huge income disparity has been created between urban and rural people. We should give attention to overcome these problems," said Akbar Ali, also former adviser to the caretaker government, while addressing a book launching ceremony in the city.

"Our dreams of liberation war are yet to be fulfilled. Country's freedom fighters are not united. Our development activities could be expedited if all freedom fighters were united," he added.

Earlier, Akbar Ali unveiled the cover of the book titled 'Rahugrasta Swadesh: 1/11' by Freedom Fighter Razzak Hawlader at the National Press Club.

Poet Belal Chowdhury presided over the programme which was also addressed by Sub-sector Commander Hemayet Uddin Bir Bikram, and Journalist Rezaul Karim Talukder.

Youth gunned down in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

An armed gang gunned down a youth in the city's Golapbagh area last night.

The victim was identified as Masud Rana, 32, a migrant worker who returned from Kuwait last year.

Hasi Begum, elder sister of Rana, told reporters that an unknown caller told her over phone that her brother was shot at Golapbagh at about 8:00pm.

She then rushed to the spot and took critically injured Rana to Shahjahanpur Islami Bank Hospital. He was later shifted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) where the doctors declared him dead at about 9:30pm.

Children submit report on child rights to UN

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A huge number of children are still deprived of education because of negligence of their parents who do not send their children to school, according to an alternative report prepared by the children.

Many people also have a discriminatory attitude towards girls and are unwilling to send them to school, they said in the report titled 'Amar Kotha Ami Boli' (These are my words).

The alternative report has been sent to the United Nations Child Rights Committee recently.

The report was prepared by the members of four children's organisations -- including Ichchhey Media, Child Brigade, Bhorer Alo and National Children Taskforce Bangladesh of Save the Children Australia. The first three organisations are affiliated with Save the Children Sweden-Denmark.

Some 12,225 children of 28 organisations took part in the process of preparing the report.

The children of four organisations exchanged their views on their final report at a meeting at the LGED auditorium on Wednesday.

As Bangladesh ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Child (UNCRC) in 1990, the government sends a report on child rights to the UN Child Rights Committee every five years.

The alternative report was also sent to the UN body that highlighted the child rights situation in the country.

The children observed that their opinion on education is neglected by the family and very few people in society really believe in children's right to education and that the country lacks child-friendly school.

Country Representative of Save the Children Sweden-Denmark Niels Bentzen Pedersen, Deputy Country Representative Obaidur Rahman and Child Rights Protection Adviser Eise Ostergaard were present at the view exchange meeting.

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	32.2	23.0	80	45
Chittagong	29.0	20.6	76	81
Rajshahi	32.5	18.7	81	53
Khulna	33.2	23.0	86	65
Barisal	32.7	22.2	82	60
Sylhet	32.0	21.0	71	62
Cox's Bazar	30.5	20.0	74	81



Dry weather likely

UNB, Dhaka

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

There are chances of light rain or drizzle at one or two places over Sylhet division and the regions of Mymensingh, Tangail and Dhaka during the period, Met Office said, predicting nearly unchanged day temperature over the country.

Highest temperature 35.0 degrees Celsius was recorded yesterday at Rangamati and lowest 18.7 degrees Celsius at Rajshahi.

The sun sets in the capital at 6:07pm today and rises at 6:07am tomorrow.

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EC asks govt to relax emergency for polls

UNB, Dhaka

The Election Commission (EC) has asked the government to relax the state of emergency since, they say, elections cannot be held with hands and feet tied.

"We've already said that elections could not be held with hands and legs tied if there is no relaxed atmosphere. We can't hold even municipal elections if this kind of situation prevails," Election Commissioner Brig Gen (ret'd) M Sakhawat Hussain told reporters after the EC held an hour-long meeting with Bangladesh Kalyan Party (BKP).

He also hoped that the emergency issue could be settled through dialogue between the political parties and the government.

The EC asked the government to ensure that proper electoral atmosphere prevails before, during and after the announcement of the election schedule, Sakhawat said.

BKP Chairman Maj Gen (ret'd) Syed Mohammad Ibrahim, who led a five-member delegation at the talks with EC, told reporters that they

asked the EC to request the government to take a decision on lifting or relaxing the state of emergency.

The newly floated parties could not conduct their activities at the district level due to the restrictions imposed under the emergency rules, he said.

The EC sat with political parties for discussing electoral reforms based on some specific criteria, Sakhawat said, adding that they are still receiving suggestions from the parties outside the dialogue.

"We've sent the draft electoral laws to those parties and asked them to send their suggestions within March 15 to 20. We'll finalise the draft of electoral laws within this month considering all suggestions," he said.

BKP Chairman Maj Gen (ret'd) Syed Ibrahim suggested holding upazila elections before the national elections or holding both the elections simultaneously.

He said the elections must be held as per the EC-announced electoral roadmap, that is, by December. "The elections can't be delayed by any means," he added.

Islamic leaders discuss Women Dev Policy with home adviser

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A group of Islamic leaders yesterday met with Home Adviser Major Gen (Ret'd) MA Matin and discussed the recently announced National Women Development Policy 2008.

They told the adviser that they would not accept any policy that would go against the Quran and Sunnah.

In reply, the home adviser said that the government has not incorporated any controversial section and there is no provision in the just announced policy that might go against the Quran and Sunnah.

Islami Oikya Jote leader Fazlul Haq Amin, monthly Modina Editor Muiyuddin Khan, IOJ Secretary General Abdul Latif Nezami, ex-MP Mohammad Wakkas and Khelafat Majlis leader Yusuf Ashraf were present at the meeting.

'Implement Nat'l Women Dev Policy soon'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Women rights activists yesterday demanded steps to implement the National Women Development Policy 2008 immediately.

In a statement yesterday, Samajik Protirodh Committee, a platform of 40 women and human rights organisations, said the policy would help ensure equal rights and status of women in every sphere of life and remove discrimination against women.

The statement signed by Ayesha Khanam also said the women and human rights organisations have long been demanding such a policy and that this policy has fulfilled their demand.

In another statement, Sangukta Mahila Parishad General Secretary Kazi Rina Reza congratulated the caretaker government for formulating the National Women Development Policy.

She also called for taking effective steps to implement the policy at all levels.

Qulkhwani

The Qulkhwani of Dr Abu Ahmed Muhsini will be held at his residence at House 30, Road 7, Dhanmandi in the city at 4:30 pm today, says a press release.

Prof Muhsini, a faculty of Mymensingh Agricultural University and the president of the teachers' association of the university, passed away due to a cardiac arrest at Bangladesh Medical College on March 10.

He was the elder brother of former Finance and Planning Minister AMA Muhtith.

Relations, friends and admirers are invited to attend the Qulkhwani and pray for the salvation of the departed soul.

\$35m WB grant for persons with disabilities

The government yesterday successfully completed negotiations with the World Bank for a \$35 million interest-free credit from the International Development Association (IDA) to increase the use of social and rehabilitation services by persons with disabilities, vulnerable children and adolescents, says a press release.

Additional secretary to the Economic Relations Division and Qaiser M Khan, lead human development specialist, World Bank South Asia Region, led the government and the IDA delegations, respectively, in the two-day negotiations that began on Tuesday.

The proposed Disability and Children-at-Risk Project (DCRP) also seeks to improve health, education and employment opportunities for persons with disabilities, including raising general public awareness for their empowerment.

The proposed DCRP will focus on three areas-- disability services, awareness and capacity building, children-at-risk services and capacity building of the Ministry of Social Welfare.

National Foundation for the Development of Disabled People (NFDDP) will implement the first focus area, aimed at transforming the agency into a centre of excellence for disability services. NGOs with a disability focus will undertake awareness activities through area-based performance contracting, training and support to partner organisations, and innovation grants, to be approved by the NFDDP Board.

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Poet Jasimuddin's anniversary of death today

A CORRESPONDENT, Faridpur

Today is the 32nd death anniversary of poet Jasimuddin popularly known as Pali Kabi.

Different organisations have taken elaborate programmes, including placing of wreaths, discussion, doa and milad mahfil, marking the day.

Faridpur district administration, Jasim Foundation, Sahitya Parishad, Shilpakala Academy, Sahitya O Sangskriti Unnayan Sangstha, Shahed Sufi Pathagar and Sangbadik Samity will place wreaths at grave of Jasimuddin at Ambikapur village in the town this morning.

Pratap Uddin Ahmed

Today is the 10th death anniversary of Pratap Uddin Ahmed, founder general secretary of National Democratic Front and Bangladesh Trade Union Association, says a press release.

On the occasion, a committee to celebrate his death anniversary will place wreaths at his grave at the Mirpur Martyred Intellectuals Graveyard at 7:00am today. A discussion will be held at Shaheed Tajul auditorium at Purana Paltan in the city at 4:30 pm tomorrow.

Rab workshop on human rights ends

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A 12-day training workshop on human rights for Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) officials ended in the city yesterday with a call to the participants to disseminate their newly acquired knowledge among other Rab members.

Fifty-four Rab officers took part in the training programme organised jointly by British High Commission in Dhaka and the Rab Forces Headquarters.

"You're now well aware of human rights. Disseminate your knowledge to your colleagues and follow it while performing duties," said Rab Additional Director General Col Gulzar Uddin Ahmed at the concluding session of the workshop.

He hoped that the knowledge on human rights would enable the Rab members to act as the protector of HR.

Head of counter-terrorism in the British High Commission in Dhaka D Brown also spoke.