

Revise draft RTI ordinance

Speakers tell roundtable

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a roundtable yesterday called on the government to revise the draft of the Right to Information (RTI) ordinance, saying that it has a number of flaws and inconsistencies.

They also urged the government to shorten the list that restricts the disclosure of information in certain cases.

They suggested deleting the Section 8 of the draft ordinance, saying that it would create obstacles to ensuring the right to information.

Mass-line Media Centre (MMC) and Article 39, an international organisation, jointly organised the roundtable at the IDB auditorium in the city, with human rights activist Dr Hameeda Hossain in the chair.

Barrister Amir-Ul Islam, former Awami League lawmaker Suranjit Sengupta, former BNP lawmaker

MK Anwar, Prof Mizanur Rahman, Asst Prof Shameem Reza, Barrister Tanjib-ul-Alam and Chief Adviser to ATN Bangla Saiful Bari took part in the discussion.

The speakers said the draft RTI ordinance has many provisions, which would create obstacles to ensuring the right to information.

The government has consciously included such provisions in the ordinance to hinder the right to information, they alleged.

They also said there are some major loopholes in the draft, which need to be removed.

Hameeda Hossain said the government should ensure maximum disclosure of information and shorten the list that restricts disclosure of information.

Suranjit Sengupta said the government has formulated the

ordinance without consultation with the people and political parties.

Formulating laws without the participation of political parties in the process would not bring any good, he added.

He also called on the government to start dialogue with the political parties without delay.

He also alleged that the government is now suppressing information rather than ensuring the right to information.

Mizanur Rahman called on the government to simplify the draft so that general people can easily understand it.

Monjurul Ahsan Bulbul, executive editor of the Sangbad, moderated the roundtable while Kamrul Hassan Monju of MMC gave the welcome address.

Tk 700cr UK help for English language programme

UNB, Dhaka

The British government will provide 50 million pounds sterling, equivalent to around Tk 700 crore, for developing English language skills in Bangladesh.

A nine-year-long programme on 'English in Action', to be implemented with the fund, is expected to significantly increase the quality of education for 25 million people contributing to economic and social development in the country, said a DFID press release yesterday.

The innovative and comprehensive programme will target people of different ages and groups.

It will provide teachers at primary and secondary levels with a firm foundation for teaching English and it will offer opportunities for using and practising English in a variety of economic and social contexts. By raising the standard of English language, the programme will also address a major skill gap in the workforce and help the country become more competitive in internal and international labour markets.

2100 Yaba tablets seized, six held

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Detective Branch (DB) of Police seized 2100 Yaba tablets and Tk 3.31 lakh during raids on different places in the city on Wednesday and also arrested six people in this connection.

The six -- Manzurul Hasan Rony, 29, Saiful Mahmud Rajan, 26, Mohammad Karim, 30, Uzzal, 20, Lokman Hakim, 47, and Abul Kalam, 28, -- were arrested during the raids in Moghbazar, Uttara, Bijoy Nagar and Amin Bazar areas.

SG Mehedi Hasan, senior assistant commissioner of DB, said the drug peddlers again become active recently.

Rony and Kabir were arrested with 500 Yaba tablets from the gate of Central Law College at around 11:30am, he said.

Acting on their statement, the DB police raided Rajan's residence in Azampur and found 500 tablets in his possession.

Later, they arrested Rajan's friend Karim with 400 Yaba tablets at Maghbazar.

The police also raided Karim's house at Amin Bazar and recovered 800 more Yaba tablets and Tk 3.31 lakh and also arrested his uncle Hakim and Kalam from the house.

Karim told reporters that a gang from Myanmar gave them the tablets in Chittagong to supply them in the capital.

Bpra election April 11

BSS, Dhaka

The election of Bangladesh Public Relations Association (Bpra) will be held on April 11 at the association office in the city.

The election schedule of the Bpra was finalised at a meeting on Wednesday at the association office with president of the organisation Mustafa-E-Zamil in the chair.

SCF nat'l convention today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Sector Commanders Forum (SCF) will hold its national convention in the capital today with a call to form a special tribunal under the supervision of the United Nations immediately to try war criminals.

Freedom fighters and members of pro-liberation organisations will gather at the convention at Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre to demand the trial of the war criminals.

The Forum will also call on the people to boycott war criminals

and anti-liberation elements socially and nationally. Ekushey Television will broadcast live the convention beginning at 9:30am.

Former chief adviser justice Muhammad Habibur Rahman, Prof Anisuzzaman, Prof Serajul Islam Choudhury and Dr Mizanur Rahman will address the inaugural session of convention as guests.

Meanwhile, the law enforcement agencies have taken adequate security measures to avert any untoward situation.

About 1000 freedom fighters from six divisions are likely to join

the convention, SCF sources said. A number of expatriate freedom fighters will also attend it.

Besides, about 1500 invited guests, including political leaders, civil society members, intellectuals, teachers, students, human rights activists and lawyers, are expected to attend the convention.

Freedom fighters and leaders of the Sector Commanders Forum will address the second session.

Earlier, the convention was scheduled for March 15, but it was postponed at the eleventh hour as the government refused permission for the gathering.

Tele-medicine centre opens in city

BSS, Dhaka

After examining the medical reports of a Bangladeshi patient with heart blocks, renowned cardiologist Dr Devi Shetty of India advised him to continue taking medicines for six more months as prescribed by a local heart specialist.

The decision about whether the patient would need a surgery will be taken after six months on the basis of his condition, said Dr Shetty, sitting at his chamber at Narayan Health City (Narayan Hrudayalaya Institute of Medical Sciences) at Bangalore, while the patient was in Dhaka. The medical reports were sent to the institute earlier.

A newly established tele-medicine centre made it possible for the patient to receive advice from a world-renowned heart specialist through a videoconference at Dhanmondi on Wednesday morning after its inauguration.

Child specialist Dr MR Khan inaugurated the centre as the chief guest and Dr Jafarullah Chowdhury of Gonoshasthaya Kendra chaired the inaugural function.

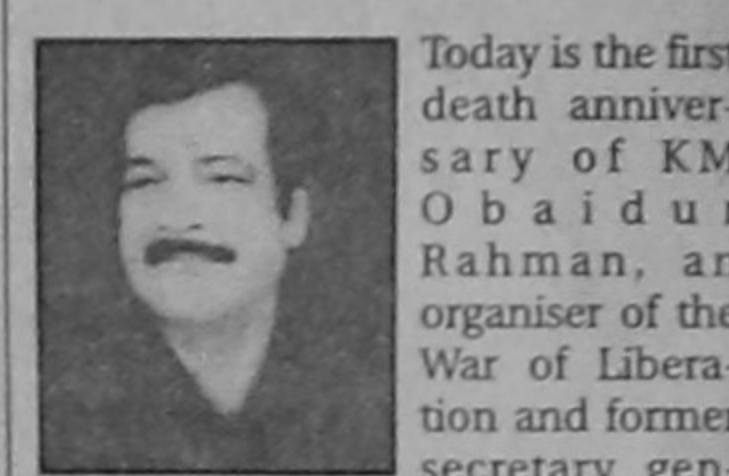
Replying to a question, Dr Shetty told reporters that he will give consultation to Bangladeshi patients free of cost over videoconference once a month initially.

"We are not giving treatment to the patients over teleconferencing but providing them with suggestions whether they should continue medication or they need surgery," he replied to another question.

The patients having cardiac complication would be selected for videoconferencing and the doctors at the tele-medicine center will make the selection, he added.

"Besides giving consultation on heart diseases, the Narayan Hrudayalaya Institute of Medical Sciences will also provide similar service to cancer patients and others having liver and kidneys problems," Dr Shetty said.

Obaidur Rahman's death anniversary today



Today is the first death anniversary of KM Obaidur Rahman, an organiser of the War of Liberation and former secretary general of Bangladesh Nationalist Party, says a press release.

Obaidur Rahman Sriruti Sangsad and KM Obaidur Rahman Foundation have chalked out various programmes to observe the day.

On the occasion, wreaths will be placed, fataha will be offered and Quran khawani will be held at his mazar today.

Nurul Momen Khan Mihir



Today is the 16th death anniversary of Nurul Momen Khan Mihir, a freedom fighter and former secretary, says a press release.

On the occasion, doa mahfils will be held at a local mosque and orphanages at his village Sholohgar under Srinagar in Munsheganj.

GOLF COURSE HC orders govt to maintain status quo

UNB, Dhaka

The High Court yesterday ordered the government to maintain status quo at the allocated 25 acres of land of Suhrawardy Udyan to Dhaka Club for golf course.

A division bench comprising Justice Syed Mahmud Hossain and Justice Farid Ahmed passed the interim order, after hearing both sides.

On March 9, the High Court, responding to a writ petition, issued rules upon the government and others to explain why the allocation/transfer of 25 acres of land of Suhrawardy Udyan to Dhaka Club for golf course should not be declared to have been made without lawful authority.

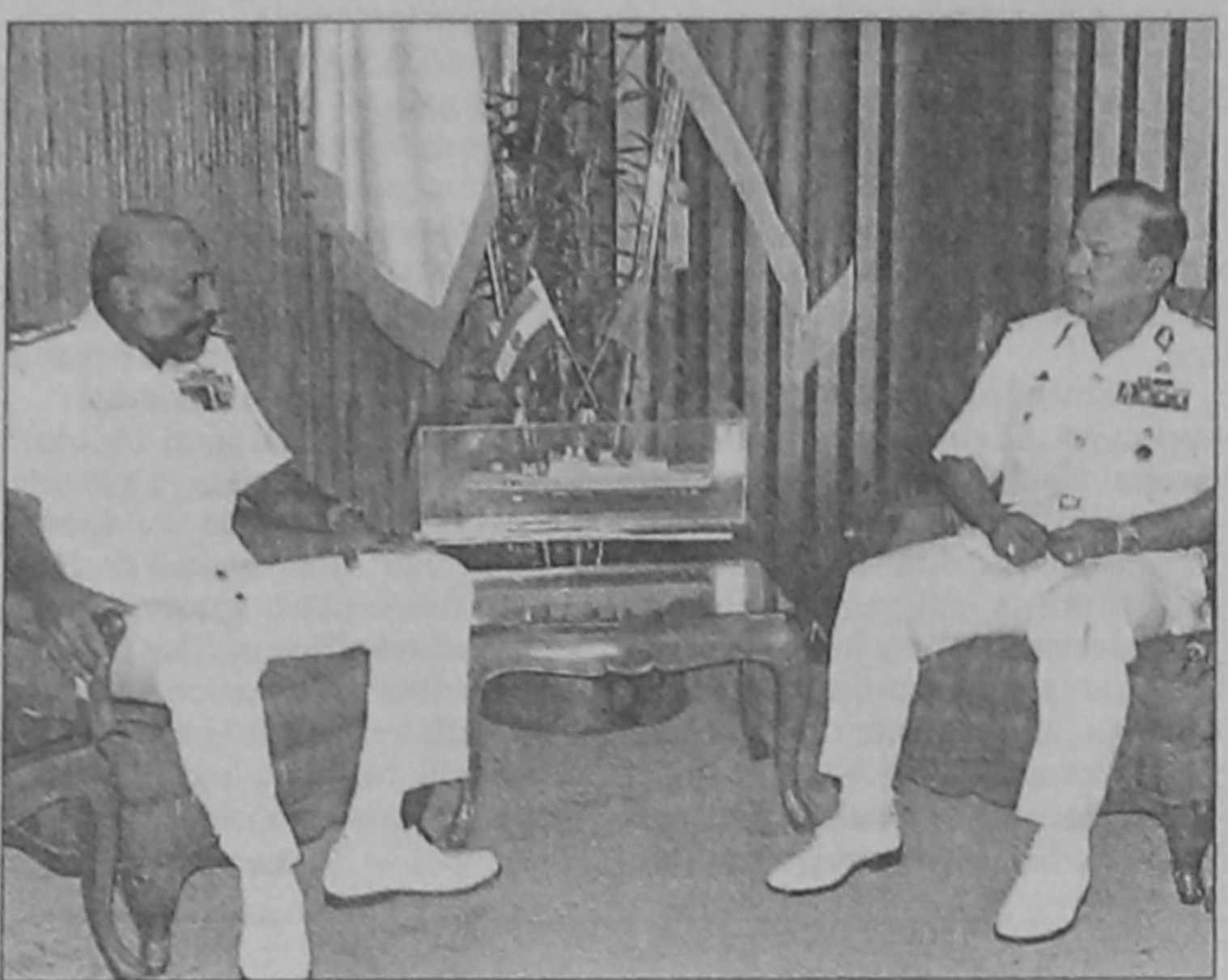
The court had also asked the respondents to show cause as to why they should not be directed to protect and maintain the Udyan for use by public as open space.

The writ petition was filed jointly by the Bangladesh Environment Lawyers Association (BELA) and Ain-O-Salish Kendro (ASK), human rights watchdog.

Mayor of Dhaka City Corporation, secretaries Housing and Public Works Ministry and Environment and Forest Ministry, Rajdhani Unnayan Kartripakkha (Rajuk) and president of Dhaka Club were made respondents in the case.

On June 18 last year, the PWD chief engineer signed an agreement with the president of Dhaka Club Ltd allowing the latter to use 25 acres of land of Suhrawardy Udyan - from the Engineers Institution gate to the memorial of three national leaders as golf course.

Adv M Enayetur Rahim appeared for BELA and ASK.



Indian Deputy Navy Chief Vice Admiral Raman P Suthan pays a courtesy call on Chief of Naval Staff Vice Admiral Sarwar Jahan Nizam at Naval Headquarters at Banani in the city yesterday.



Rain likely

UNB, Dhaka

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

Weather may remain mainly dry with temporary partly cloudy sky elsewhere over the country, Met Office said, predicting nearly unchanged day temperature over the country.

Highest temperature 35.5 degrees Celsius was recorded yesterday at Jessore and lowest 19.8 degrees Celsius at Teknaf.

The sun sets in the capital at 6:10pm today and rises at 6:00am tomorrow.

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

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

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