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Security upped in jails 'for fear of militant attack'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Security has been beefed up in jails across the country, fearing attacks on VIP prisoners on the first anniversary of execution of militant top brass including Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) supremo Abdul Rahman and his deputy Bangla Bhai.

The six JMB leaders were hanged between 11:45pm and midnight at four different jails on March 29 last year for killing two Jhalakathi judges.

"There are many VIP prisoners inside the jails. They [militants] might carry out attacks on them or

SEE PAGE 15 COL 5

Violence aims at jeopardising China's stability

Says Chinese embassy

UNB, Dhaka

The Chinese embassy in Dhaka yesterday said the Dalai clique provoked and escalated violent incidents in Tibet to jeopardise China's stability.

"What Dalai has said and done for decades has proved that he has never given up his separatist proposition nor ceased separatist activities," the embassy said in a statement.

It said the violent incidents in Tibet were premeditated, organised and instigated by the Dalai clique,

SEE PAGE 15 COL 8

New group blames some foreign envoys for crisis

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The National Interest Group (NIG), a newly floated organisation, has said that some foreign envoys in the country are to be partially blamed for the present crisis prevailing in the country.

The group, formed to protect national interests, yesterday called on the government to declare as persona non grata those foreign envoys who are breaking the norms of the Vienna Convention in trying to interfere in the internal affairs of the country.

The NIG members were talking at a press conference at the

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

Hasina not fit to appear in court today

Say her lawyers

UNB, Dhaka

Condition of detained Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina, now under treatment at Square hospital in the capital, is not fit to appear in court today, according to her lawyers.

Hasina's top counsel Barrister Shafique Ahmed, who met her yesterday afternoon, said 25 percent of her left eye vision has been damaged due to negligence of the authorities.

Shafique and advocates

SEE PAGE 15 COL 2

Prayer Timing		
March 30		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-45	5-20
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-45	5-00
Maghrib	6-20	6-25
Esha	7-45	8-15

Source: Islamic Foundation

Electoral reforms to cut money, muscle power

CA tells visiting Asian editors

UNB, Dhaka

Chief Adviser (CA) Fakhruddin Ahmed yesterday said the objective of the electoral reforms undertaken by his caretaker government is to curb undue influence of money-muscle and misuse of authority in the forthcoming election.

He told Asian media personalities that primary goal of the caretaker government is to hold a free, fair, transparent and credible election by the end of 2008.

Fakhruddin said his government believes in freedom of press,

as the press builds the bridge between the people and the government.

The head of the caretaker government made the remarks while exchanging views with a delegation of Asia News Network (ANN) at the CA's Office in the afternoon.

Outgoing Chairman of ANN and Editor and Publisher of The Daily Star Mahfuz Anam led the delegation.

According to its outgoing chairman, ANN is a unique structure that brings together the highest circulated and prestigious English language newspapers, some news

agencies and vernacular dailies. The circulation of all the newspapers stands at 150 million.

ANN was formed to create an opportunity for the Asians to hear about Asia through Asian journalism.

Mahfuz Anam gave a brief account of the ANN aims and objectives. The Philippines became new chair of the Asia News Network, he told the function.

Chief Editor of The Jakarta Post (Indonesia) Endy M Bayuni, Assistant Editor of the Yomiuri Shimbun (Japan) Hidenori Sato,

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4



PHOTO: STAR

Sadek Hossain hawking candles on his bike yesterday as demand for candles is high with frequent power cuts in the capital. The photo was taken from Rokeya Sarani.

Arab summit opens amid boycott by many members

AFP, Damascus

Syrian President Bashar al-Assad opened a boycott-hit Arab summit yesterday in the absence of half of the region's leaders, many of whom blame Damascus for the political crisis in Lebanon.

In his opening address Assad denied that Syria interfered in Lebanon's domestic affairs.

"I would like to make a point with regards to Syrian interference in Lebanon. It is the contrary which

is true because pressure has been exerted on Syria for over a year to interfere in Lebanon's affairs but we have refused to do so," he said.

Assad made his opening address to the leaders of Algeria, the Comoros, Kuwait, Libya, Mauritania, the Palestinian Authority, Qatar, Sudan, Tunisia and the United Arab Emirates.

The Saudi, Egyptian and Jordanian leaders stayed away after Washington urged its allies to think twice before attending the summit

of the 22-member Arab League, accusing Syria of blocking the election of a new president in Lebanon.

The seat earmarked for Lebanon itself was left vacant, but Syria trumpeted the absence of US allies as a triumph over Washington's influence.

"They (the United States) did their best to prevent the summit but they failed," Syrian Foreign Minister Walid Muallem told

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7

CIVIL SERVICE RECRUITMENT Akbar Ali calls for 50 percent merit quota

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Regulatory Reforms Commission (RRC) Chairman Dr Akbar Ali Khan yesterday suggested increasing the recruitment in civil services on the basis of merit to 50 percent from 45 percent at present.

Public Service Commission (PSC) Chairman Dr Saadat Hussain however said this suggestion could be implemented from 28th BCS examinations if the government takes a decision to this effect.

The two were speaking at a seminar on the review report on quota system for civil service recruitment held at Sonargaon Hotel in the capital.

Akbar Ali Khan and former secretary Kazi Rakib Uddin Ahmed prepared the review report, which

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

ANCESTRAL PROPERTY Barakat for equal share of women

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government should secure equal share of ancestral inheritance for women and increase allocation of development budget for women, General Secretary of Bangladesh Economic Association (BEA) Prof Abul Barakat said yesterday.

"The government should secure equal rights of women in inheritance of ancestral properties, in accordance with our constitution," he said adding that the government should discuss the matter with women's organisations and their leaders, not with religious leaders.

"A group of representatives of this community can talk about their needs, that is why women should be included in the national committee for formulating the law, not religious experts [ulemas]," he added.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4



Members and officials of the Asia News Network call on Chief Adviser to the Caretaker Government Fakhruddin Ahmed at his office yesterday.

RTI law must protect govt whistle blowers

India's chief information commissioner says

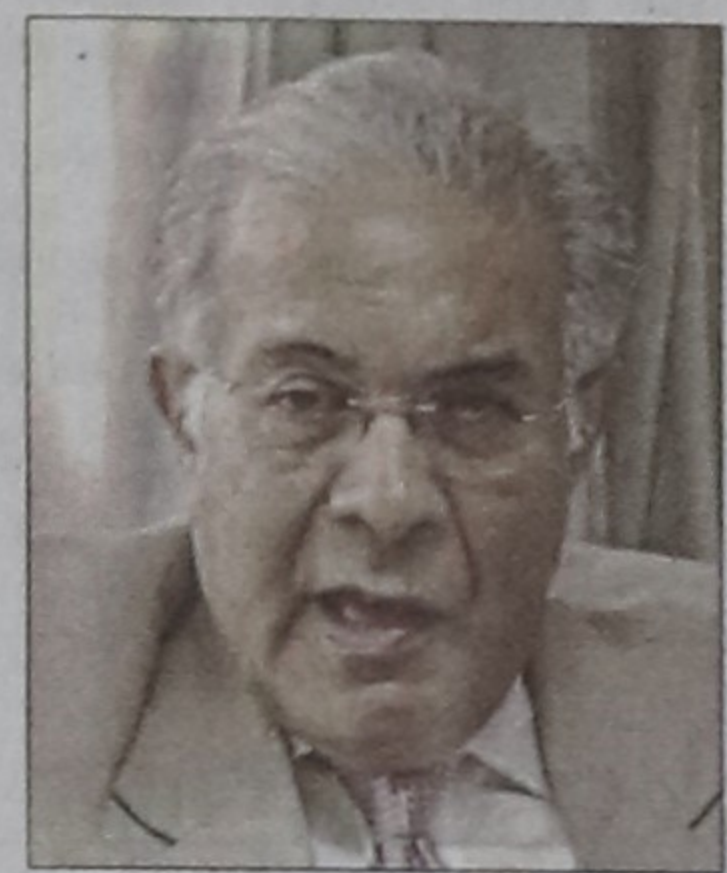
SHAMIM ASHRAF and ASHFAQ WARES KHAN

The proposed Right to Information (RTI) Act must protect government whistle blowers and government officials must change their mindset accommodating the new law in their daily activities in order to make it effective, said India's Chief Information Commissioner (CIC) Wajahat Habibullah.

In an interview with The Daily Star, Habibullah said the government must put in place all institutional mechanisms before the RTI takes effect and raise public awareness to have an effective law from the start.

He said there are no clauses in the Indian RTI to protect government whistle blowers and "we have been using our own influence". "Your law can build on this to help protect whistle blowers," he added.

Habibullah, who left



Wajahat Habibullah

Bangladesh last week, said all procedural rules and laws of government departments would have to be made consistent with the RTI, even if it requires amendment to existing rules and regulations.

He went on to say that the gov-

ernment departments must have information dissemination mechanism, with officials responsible for providing information through the public information officers (PIO).

"If the information is not adequate, it is the government official in charge of that particular document is liable, not the PIO," he added.

Habibullah said government officials are the largest users of the RTI in India, as they can follow up on their pension, promotion and a host of other rules and regulations inside the government.

He also said the law automatically changes the mentality of government officers, as there are significant institutional barriers that the RTI helps break down.

"The government is not transparent within itself. One wing is taking one decision and another

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5

WOMEN POLICY Formation of review body questioned

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The formation of a high-powered committee to review the Women Development Policy 2008 by keeping the women and children affairs ministry in the dark has surprised many quarters, including the government officials.

Law and Religious Affairs Adviser AF Hassan Arif, Home Adviser MA Matin, Communications Adviser Ghulam Quader and LGAD Adviser Md Anwarul Iqbal at a meeting on Thursday formed the committee, tasking it with identifying anything in the policy that may go against Islamic rules.

Rights organisations have questioned the quartet's right to form such a committee once the head of the government formally announced the policy on behalf of the advisory council on March 8.

They plan to hand in a memorandum to the chief adviser in a

couple of days, protesting the formation of the review committee and demanding a clarification of the government position on the long-awaited policy.

"After the policy was announced and we were waiting for the start of its implementation, some advisers have literally bowed to pressure from individuals who have been opposing women and social development over the last 50 years," said Sultana Kamal, executive director of Ain O Salish Kendra.

Rights organisations and women leaders said forming such a committee goes against the government's stated stand on national development, equal rights and the establishment of a corruption-free society.

Key features of the women policy include setting aside one-third of the parliamentary seats for women and arranging direct election to the reserved seats as well as

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1

Terrorism first priority, says new Pak PM

Govt would seek to reinstate judges ousted by Musharraf

AP, AFP, Islamabad

Pakistan will fight terrorism as its top priority but will also negotiate with militant groups "willing to lay down their arms," its new prime minister said yesterday.

Yousaf Raza Gilani, in his first policy speech, also said the government would seek to reinstate judges ousted by President Pervez Musharraf last year a move that could prompt a showdown with the US-backed leader.

"We are confronting many challenges, but we are not afraid of these challenges, and we will face them," Gilani told lawmakers.

Gilani Saturday secured an

unprecedented unanimous vote of confidence from parliament, tightening his grip on power in the nuclear-armed state.

Opposition parties backed Gilani after he called for their support for democracy and stability.

A coalition lawmaker had moved a resolution for the vote of confidence, which Gilani won from all 342 lower house MPs.

"The resolution is passed unanimously," speaker Fawad Mirza told the house.

Parliament elected Gilani on Tuesday, six weeks after opposition parties triumphed in elections that have restored democracy after

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7



We Mourn

Al-Haj Obidul Hoque Khan Director of Aziz & Company Ltd., Son of Late Al-Haj Azizul Hoque Khan died of Cardiac attack on Tuesday 25th March 2008 in Maryland, USA (Inna Lillahe Wa Inna Elaihe Rajeun).

His Namaz-e-Janaza will be held on Monday 31st March 2008 at Banani Graveyard after Johr prayers and kulkhani will be held at his Gulshan residence on Tuesday 1st April-2008 after Asr Prayers.

May Allah bless his soul with eternal peace.

Board of Directors, Officers & Employees
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ILL-GOTTEN WEALTH ACC charge sheet against Tarique likely today

UNB, Dhaka

The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) is likely to press charges against BNP Senior Joint Secretary General Tarique Rahman today in a case filed against him for acquiring wealth beyond his known sources of income and concealing information.

Taufiqul Islam, ACC assistant director, will submit the charge sheet to the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court under sections 26(2) and 27(1) of the

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7



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