

Lift emergency to keep democracy on track

Speakers urge govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a book launching ceremony yesterday urged the chief adviser of the caretaker government to withdraw the state of emergency and release Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina immediately to keep democracy on track.

The launching ceremony of the book titled 'Dr Fakhruddin: Please Bait Din' by Abdul Latif Siddique, a freedom fighter and an AL central leader, was held at the National Press Club in the capital.

Speaking on the occasion, Prof AAMS Arefin Siddique, former president of Dhaka University Teachers' Association (Duta), said the book is a real picture of the time, and the writer has narrated the things that are happening in the country.

He said there was no provision for the state of emergency in the constitution of 1972.

"State of emergency is not at all desirable in a democratic country, and if the emergency period is prolonged, it doesn't remain as emergency anymore, he said, alleging, 'The state of emergency is being misused in the country.'

Prof Arefin said emergency is one of the impediments to reforms and it has become impossible for political parties to bring reforms in their parties due to emergency.

"We are moving backwards due to the activities of the then BNP-led four-party alliance government, caretaker government headed by President Iajuddin Ahmed, and the present caretaker government," he said.

"A new type of autocracy has



(From left) Writer Abdul Latif Siddique, Prof Anwar Hossain, Prof AAMS Arefin Siddique and Prof Muntasir Mamun hold the copies of a book titled "Dr Fakhruddin: Please Bait Din" at a publication ceremony at the National Press Club in the city yesterday.

started in the country, but we want democracy and for this we should be allowed to speak," he added.

Prof Anwar Hossain, general secretary of Duta, said the writer in his book has showed the interference of the armed forces in the country's politics and governance.

"In a word, an intelligence agency is now ruling the country, but we did not liberate our country to be ruled by this agency," he added.

Prof Anwar said the country is now on the verge of destruction and there is no alternative to wage movement.

Presiding over the ceremony,

noted historian Prof Muntasir Mamun said the writer has written what the people except the 'approved politician' wanted to say.

It is now clear who is the agent of whom and who is playing for whom, he added.

Prof Muntasir said the country is reeling under various crises which are deepening day by day.

"We cannot let the country plunge into darkness as we achieved independence by sacrificing thousands of lives," he added.

Author Latif Siddique said political parties are responsible for present crises as they failed to meet people's hopes and aspirations.

US envoy calls for protecting intellectual property rights

UNB, Dhaka

US Ambassador James F. Moriarty has said that Bangladesh should care for protecting intellectual property rights (IPR) that are the legal mechanisms to ensure that the products people buy are genuine.

"Why should Bangladesh care about protecting intellectual property rights? Intellectual property rights (IPR) are the legal mechanisms - copyrights, patents and trademarks - that ensure that the products we buy are genuine," Moriarty said in an article made available to press yesterday.

He warned that dangerous and defective counterfeit products, from counterfeit medication, to toothpaste, to auto parts, put the lives of consumers at risk, adding that strong IPR system would ensure that inventors and innovators are rewarded for their ideas.

The envoy pointed out that IPR protections foster an environment in which creative and innovative industries can thrive and contribute to economic development worldwide.

Woman killed by husband over family feud

OUR CORRESPONDENT, N'ganj

A woman was allegedly killed by her husband in Narayanjanj on Sunday night.

It is alleged that Ali Miah, 28, killed his wife Halima Begum, 24, following a family feud and fled away leaving the body of his wife at a hospital at Fatullah.

Halima's elder brother Siddique Rahman filed a case with the Fatullah Police Station in this regard accusing five people.

Officer-in-Charge of Fatullah PS Bhuiyan Mahbub Hasan said at first Ali said that Halima committed suicide.

But since he went into hiding, it is alleged that she was killed, he added.

Japan embassy, JICA team meet BSMRAUVC

A joint delegation of Embassy of Japan and Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) Dhaka office called on the vice-chancellor and other high officials of Bangladesh Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Agricultural University (BSMRAU), Gazipur on Sunday, says a press release.

The delegation discussed with the vice chancellor and the officials on the mutual interest of technical cooperation for higher agricultural education, research and development of the university.

'Nirontor Antore' unveiled

The publication ceremony of the book titled "Nirontor Antore" by late poet Hosne Ara Ahsan was held on the premises of Ahsania Mission Book Distribution House in the city on Saturday, says a press release.

Noted poet Nirmalendu Goon unveiled the cover of the book. Mika Ahsan, daughter of poet Hosne Ara Ahsan, said at the publication ceremony that the proceeds from the sale of the book would be spent for building Ahsania Mission Cancer Hospital and for the treatment of deprived children in the society.

INT'L DAY OF THE MIDWIFE

10,000 more midwives needed to ensure safe motherhood

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a seminar yesterday said the country needs 10,000 more midwifery nurses to ensure safe motherhood and to reduce maternal and infant mortality across the country.

The country observed the International Day of the Midwife as elsewhere across the globe with the theme 'Healthy Families: The Key to the Future.'

Bangladesh Nursing Council organised the seminar in association with UNFPA at the Engineers' Institute auditorium in the city to observe the day.

The speakers said though there are 22,000 midwifery nurses in the country, they are forced to remain busy with multi-services.

It is necessary to provide a six-month extended training of midwifery to the nurses who would be able to perform as fulltime midwives, they added.

Currently the nurses are being providing with midwifery training in the 4th year in their 4-year diploma in nursing course. But these midwifery nurses face various problems in providing special care to mothers including anti-natal care, as they have to concentrate on other activities.

They further said despite government's various programmes to ensure safe motherhood and to reduce infant mortality, we are yet to reach the millennium development goals (MDG).

The MDG is set to increase the rate of skilled birth attendants to 50 percent, whereas the rate is still 18 percent. In every 1.0 lakh live births, some 320 mothers still die in the

country and the rate of infant mortality under one year is 52 per thousand live births, which should be reduced from 143 to 32.

Midwives can play an important role in reducing maternal and infant mortality by ensuring proper services during pregnancy and delivery period and through anti-natal care, they said.

While presenting a keynote paper, Bangladesh Nursing Council Registrar Begum Shamsun Nahar said to ensure safe motherhood, midwifery act is needed for better midwifery service.

World Health Organisation (WHO) Representative Dr Duangvadee Sunkhobol said many of the maternal deaths can be avoided if we can ensure safe delivery.

Midwifery is a cornerstone of safe motherhood. The government should strengthen midwifery education to ensure proper midwifery service, as there is an acute shortage of midwifery nurses in Bangladesh, he added.

Speaking as special guest, Director General of Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) Prof Mohammad Abul Faiz said the rate of maternal and child mortality does not reduce as it was expected despite government's various initiatives.

He suggested to provide performance-based incentives to the healthcare providers in community-level healthcare centres.

Health and Family Welfare Ministry Joint Secretary Quamrun Nahar Khanam spoke as the chief guest while Director of Directorate of Nursing Services Jahanara Begum presided over the seminar.

Director General of Directorate General of Family Planning Quamrun Nessa Khanam and UNFPA Bangladesh Representative Porchi Suchitta also spoke.

Awards were distributed among the midwifery nurses for their outstanding contribution at the seminar.

Dhaka keen to develop closer economic ties with Vienna

UNB, Dhaka

Foreign Adviser Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury said Bangladesh is keen to develop closer and deeper economic relations with Austria as it views the country as a close friend.

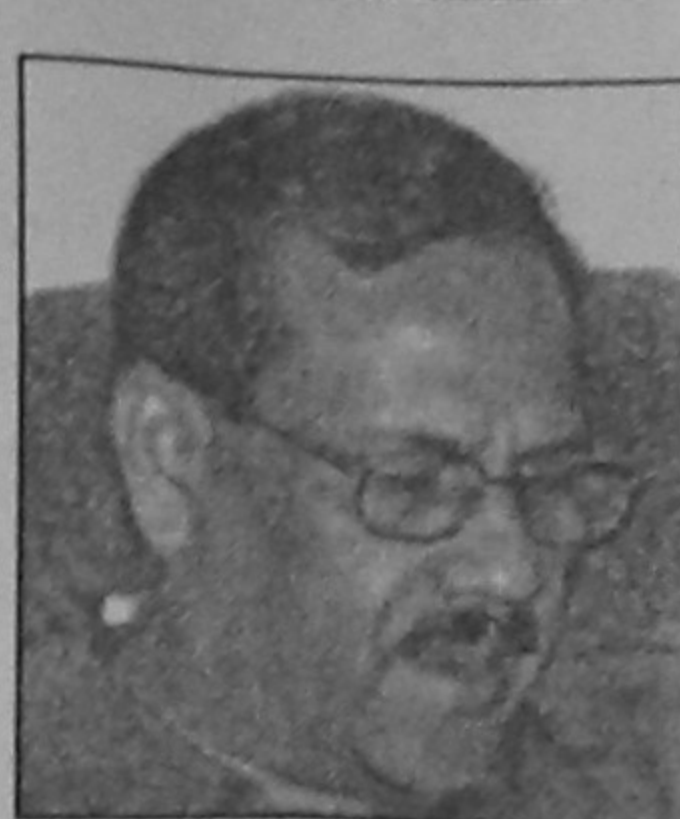
He said this when the visiting Austrian Ambassador Ferdinand Mautaschl, who is based in New Delhi, called on him at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs yesterday.

The ambassador presented his credentials earlier yesterday, says a press release.

The adviser also raised the matter of possible Austrian assistance in teaching German language in Bangladesh.

The Ambassador said it might be possible to provide such support.

Later the adviser told the media that Bangladesh has very close ties with the EU of which Austria is a key member. "We also collaborate at the UN and Vienna host several UN agencies," he added.



Architect Rezaul, wife, daughter laid to rest

Architect Rezaul Karim and his wife and a daughter, who were killed after their car plunged into the Padma at Maowa ferryghat on Friday, were laid to rest at Azimpur Graveyard in the city yesterday.

The bodies were recovered the following day but were kept at Dhaka Combined Military Hospital (CMH) morgue to let their relatives staying abroad pay their last respect.

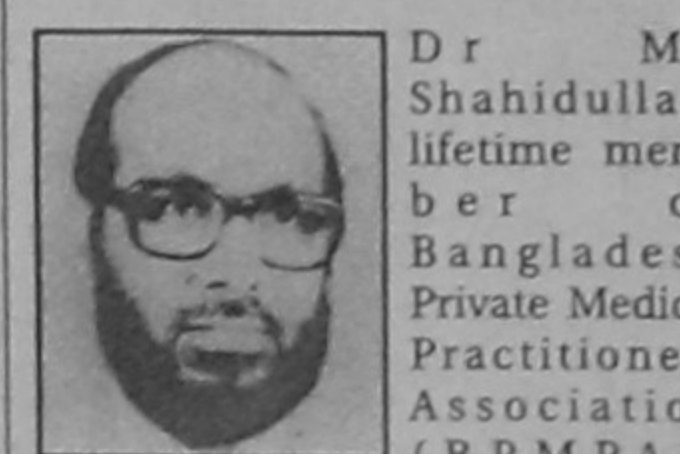
The first namaz-e-janaza was held at Nurjahan Road Mosque on Saturday while the second one was held at Buet Architecture department yesterday.

Rezaul was an ex-student of NGFF School in Sylhet.

NGFF School Alumni Association (NGFFSAA) will organise a condolence meeting at 10:00am at WVA auditorium in the city on Friday.

Relatives, friends and admirers have been requested to attend the meeting and pray for salvation of the departed souls.

Obituary



Dr Md Shahidullah, lifetime member of Bangladesh Private Medical Practitioners Association (BPMMA),

passed away due to a cardiac arrest on Saturday, says a press release.

In a condolence message secretary general of BPMMA expressed shock at the death and prayed for salvation of the departed soul.

Jamila Khatun

Jamila Khatun, mother of Alamgir Kabir, joint secretary of Bangladesh Hockey Federation, passed away due to kidney complications at a city hospital yesterday, says a press release.

Bangladesh Hockey Federation president and executive committee members expressed deep shock at her death and prayed for salvation of the departed soul.

Listed criminal shot dead in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A listed criminal was shot dead at his residence at Banashri under Khilgaon Police Station in the city early hours of yesterday.

The dead was identified as Mostafizur Rahman Mohit, 23, son of Abu Salek of Block at Banashri. Family members of the deceased said Mohit had a CD and VCD business in Savar.

Sheikh Mohammed Abu Zahid, officer-in-charge of Khilgaon Police Station, said Mohit was a listed criminal and wanted in a murder case and two extortion cases. Several general diaries were also filed against him.

Family members told police that Mohit was shot at his residence at 12:30am by a gang of unidentified criminals from outside the house while he was strolling at the balcony.

DU students damage three buses

DU CORRESPONDENT

Residential students of two dormitories of Dhaka University damaged three passenger buses near

DU dev studies deptt admission test May 9

DU CORRESPONDENT

The admission test for Master of Development Studies at Dhaka University (DU) under academic year 2008-09 will be held at 10:00am on May 9, says a press release.

The examination will be held at room no. 5002, 5014, 5020, 5030 and 4001 of Arts Building of the university.

Bangabazar in the city last night after a bus helper pushed a student out of a bus while he was getting down near his hall.

Students of Ekushey Hall and Fazlul Haq Hall went on the rampage at around 10:30pm after the student identified as Liton, a resident student of Ekushey Hall, suffered injuries in his hand.

The agitated students also forced a driver of one of the damaged buses to drive his bus to Ekushey hall premises.

Following the incident vehicular movement on the road from High Court Crossing to Bangabazar remained suspended for an hour.

Later, Ekushey Hall provost, police and leaders of bus owners association resolved the problem at a meeting.

UK hopes for polls without emergency

FROM PAGE 1
is not possible, emergency should be lifted to the maximum extent as soon as possible.

He made the observations while talking to reporters after separate meetings with Awami League's (AL) acting president Zillur Rahman and BNP chairperson-appointed secretary general Khandaker Delwar Hossain.

During discussions with the UK envoy, Zillur said his party would not participate in any election without its president while Delwar said former prime ministers Khaleda Zia and Sheikh Hasina would have to be freed without delay.

Anwar Choudhury said he hopes there would be a free, fair and credible election by this year-end and Bangladesh will make a step towards democracy by forming a meaningful parliament.

He also observed that the Election Commission (EC) and the Anti-Corruption Commission are working in unison towards an acceptable election according to the electoral roadmap.

He declined to comment when asked what if the two major political parties opt not to take part in the election without their heads.

He however said what is important is that there should be a level playing field so all political parties can participate in the election without having to suffer any discrimination or disadvantages. "If there is a level playing field, it is up to players to play."

The UK envoy said he is pleased to see 'good progress being made in some critical areas like preparation of the voter list, which should be finished in July'.

Everyone should strive to take the country towards a middle-income country by 2020, he added. Coming out of Zillur's Gulshan residence, Choudhury told reporters, "It was a farewell call. We've discussed many things--the cur-

rent state of affairs, concerns and hopes, and the forthcoming election."

The AL acting chief said he had talked about his party's demands at the 45-minute meeting that began at 11:00am.

"We've told him that first and foremost we want release of Sheikh Hasina. Our demands include withdrawal of the state of emergency, announcement of the election date and an end to price spiral offensives."

Later, the Bangladesh-born British high commissioner went to meet Delwar at the latter's Nam flat.

Talking about the meeting, the senior BNP leader told reporters, "We again said the two leaders must be freed and allowed to take part in the election to strengthen democracy."

He said people would not accept any stage-managed polls. Besides, he said, the state of emergency must be lifted to restore the rights of political parties.

"The government is filing cases to harass people while human rights violations have become commonplace," Delwar observed, adding that those detained are deprived of the treatment they are entitled to.



No change in temperature likely

UNB, Dhaka

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

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

Highest temperature 38.0 degrees Celsius was recorded yesterday at Rajshahi and lowest 22.2 degrees Celsius at Sayerpur.

The sun sets in the capital at 6:30pm today and rises at 5:20am 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 | 35.0 | 25.4 | 64 | 63 |
| Chittagong | 31.4 | 22.5 | 73 | 78 |
| Rajshahi | 38.0 | 24.8 | 60 | 50 |
| Khulna | 36.5 | 24.7 | 72 | 58 |
| Barisal | 34.5 | 25.8 | 78 | 78 |
| Sylhet | 31.9 | 23.7 | 74 | 62 |
| Cox's Bazar | 30.7 | 24.5 | 53 | 75 |



Seminar

Government of Bangladesh and ICDDR,B jointly organise a seminar on 'Emergency preparedness plan for the management of diarrhoeal disease outbreak'. Venue: Sasakawa auditorium, ICDDR,B. Time: 2:00pm.

Lecture

United Nations Association of Bangladesh (UNAB) will organise the fifth 'Syed Ahmad Hossain Memorial Lecture'. Ambassador Muhammad Zamir will deliver the lecture on investing in the United Nations. Venue: Cirdap Auditorium. Time: 5:30pm.

Roundtable

Unnayan Shamunnay and Manusher Jono Foundation jointly organise a roundtable on food security and budget. Venue: National Press Club. Time: 10:00am.

Talk

Bangladesh Enterprise Institute (BEI) organises a talk on 'Bengal Divided: The Unmaking of a Nation'. Venue: BEI conference room. Time: 10:00am.

Rotary Dhaka

The regular meeting of Rotary Club of Dhaka will be held. Venue: Sonargaon Hotel. Time: 5:30pm.

Death-traps on roads

FROM PAGE 1
number of passengers in a trip, how will I earn my targeted income? I must make over Tk 1,800 a day, or I will have to pay the bus owner from my pocket," says a bus driver.

"Things will automatically improve if we are not asked to achieve a minimum daily target and are paid on salary basis," he observes.

"A salary structure is already in effect for some operators such as Bikalpa Paribahan that runs between Pallabi and Motijheel and United Paribahan that runs on Pallabi-Sadarghat route."

Bikalpa Paribahan pays a driver Tk 150 for every return trip while United Tk 100. These bus services collect passengers only from specified stoppages without stopping elsewhere.

DRIVERS DON'T KNOW RULES
Police and Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA) officials say most of the drivers don't know the necessary traffic rules. "They even don't know the meaning of most of the traffic signs," says a police official.

Police say 54 cases were filed with different stations in connection with road accidents in Dhaka

metropolis in February. The office of Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) commissioner yesterday said they have so far received statements of 45 cases, which show 29 people were killed, 14 received serious injuries and two other sustained minor wounds.

Police officials however admit that the recorded number is much less than the actual accidents as in most cases, except severe, the victims and bus operators settle the matter themselves.

UNFIT BUSES UNCHALLENGED
Badly damaged bodies of many city service buses and taxicabs demonstrate how frequent the vehicles knock each other. Pieces of shattered glass are often found littering the road, exemplifying how frequent accidents are taking place.

A large number of city service buses are unfit, but many of those are running with fitness certificates bribing a section of corrupt BRTA officials. Most of these vehicles even don't have essential indicators and horn in order, but police say those have fitness certificates from BRTA.

These unfit vehicles are running under the nose of traffic cops, but it seems they are tired of taking action.

Asked whether traffic sergeants' ill practice of making quick bucks is reduced, a bus owner wishing anonymity said now they first seize blue books or driving licence and then ask the driver to contact him "later".

Police say they have beefed up their vigilance, but the situation has not improved due to lack of awareness among drivers and pedestrians.

City traffic police chief Jasim Uddin said the number of cases being filed now is more than any other times in the past. They have even filed 2,000 cases on a single day, which is a record, but violations continue, he added.

He claimed filing of such a number of cases suggests police are actively doing their job.

BRTA Chairman Sunil Kant Bose said the drivers and bus owners reserve 30 percent of their day's income for fines every day. So they target 30 percent extra income just to pay for violating rules.

He said the government has taken an initiative to enact the Motor Vehicle Ordinance, 2007 increasing the existing minimum fine of Tk 50 to Tk 500 and the highest fine to Tk 10,000 from Tk 5,000. "Now cases are being filed for

traffic rule violations, but it is not acting as a deterrent to the violations as the fine is minimal," Sunil told The Daily Star.

Police and BRTA officials say reckless driving by truck drivers at night, lack of valid licence, overloading, and poor knowledge of traffic rules are contributing to both road accidents and traffic congestion.

They also suggest that the government set up modern equipment to instantly check fitness to bring the violators to book.

The BRTA statistics until 2006 says 3,669 buses run on 96 routes in the city, while 1,097 other buses on 26 suburban routes. Besides, 1,591 human haulers are also operating on 47 routes in the metropolis.

A latest World Bank study under Air Quality Monitoring Project says Dhaka has a bus, minibus and human hauler fleet of 5,527, which runs in a network of 200km.

With 103 bus-minibus and 38 human hauler routes, the service in this small network is very intensive, the report says. Bus being the only mode of mass transit available in Dhaka carries about 1.9 million passengers every day.