

Call to formulate policy to remove discrimination against minorities

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a press conference yesterday called upon the government to formulate policy removing discrimination against the minorities. They also urged the government high-ups to ensure basic and constitutional rights of different ethnic and minority groups.

The press conference was organised by the National Committee for Cultural Diversity Conference and Second Adivasi Drama Festival at the National Press Club in the city. The four-day-long programme

kicks off at Shilpakala Academy auditorium on November 12. Speakers at the press conference said with a view to upholding the culture of different minority communities to policymakers and people, ActionAid with the help of Research and Development

Collective (RDC) will organise the festival. The aim of the festival includes raising awareness about basic rights and constitutional recognition of indigenous people and preservation of culture and tradition of ethnic people.



Justice Golam Rabbani speaks at a press conference at the National Press Club in the city yesterday. On his left is Prof Mezbah Kamal and on his right are Promad Mankin and Rabeya Sultana.

CG to hand over power to elected govt in Dec Hopes London-based EIU

UNB, Dhaka

The London-based Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) has said the caretaker government is expected to hand over power to a new elected government shortly after the parliamentary election on December 18. The EIU in its monthly report however said the caretaker government and the Election Commission (EC) need to overcome a number of obstacles in the weeks, ahead to ensure that the polls are free, fair and credible.

It said the election would be regarded as free if members of all of the country's political parties are able to participate. The recent decision by the caretaker government to grant bail to a number of important politicians, arrested as a result of its anti-corruption drive, has helped to fulfill its promise of a free election.

More importantly, the EIU said Khaleida Zia of BNP and Sheikh Hasina of Awami League, who are both under investigation for corruption, are now in a position to participate. As neither has yet been convicted, they could conceivably contest their seats and one of them could become the next prime minister.

The report said Khaleida and Hasina remain hugely popular figures, but the success of the AL at the elections for city corporations and municipalities in August suggests that it is in a favourable position to win.

The election would be deemed fair if voters are allowed to exercise their democratic rights. There remains uncertainty, however, over whether this condition can be met. The report said severe restrictions have been placed on civil liberties since emergency rule was imposed on January 11, 2007.

Concerns over a possible deterioration in the security situation in the run-up to the polls are likely to prevent a complete lifting of emergency rule, although the government may relax certain restrictions ahead of and during the election.

But political parties will continue to make the full lifting of the state of emergency a primary condition of their participation in the election. It said maintaining emergency rule may jeopardise the credibility of the polls, especially if the European Commission decides not to send a delegation to observe the vote.

The election's integrity could be undermined further if the main political parties decide not to participate, although, given the conciliatory stance adopted by the EC in recent weeks and its ongoing efforts to engage the parties in dialogue, this seems unlikely.

The report said elections to upazila parishad are planned to be held in two phases, on December 24 and 28, but may be delayed until early 2009, in view of ongoing protests by the main parties.

Urs

METRO DESK

The 25th Urs of Hazrat Shah Wazed Ali (R) will be held at Kazirabad in Barguna tomorrow, says a press release.

On the occasion, special prayers will be offered for peace of the Muslim ummah. Chief caliph of the Darbar Sharif Syed Abdullah Shaheed will administer the munajat.

BARAPUKURIA COALMINE CASE Hearing continues on petitions for quashing

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court (HC) yesterday continued hearing on the petitions filed by five former BNP-Jamaat ministers and one former state minister for quashing the proceedings against them in Barapukuria Coalmine Corruption Case filed by the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC).

The HC bench comprising of Justice Md Muzammel Hossain and Justice Afzal Hossain adjourned the hearing till today.

The six petitioners are BNP leader and former finance minister M Saifur Rahman, Jamaat-e-Islami Ameer and former industries minister Motiur Rahman Nizami, former health minister Khondaker Mosharraf Hossain, former commerce minister Altaf Hossain Chowdhury, Jamaat Secretary General and former social welfare minister Ali Ahsan Muhammad Mojahid and former state minister AKM Mosharraf Hossain.

Barrister Rafique-ul Huq, Advocate Habibul Raza Bhuiyan and Barrister Abdur Razzak argued for the petitioners.

Following a petition filed by Mojahid, an HC bench on October 19 ordered him to surrender within two weeks before the trial court that had earlier issued an arrest warrant against him in this case.

IEB to honour pioneering chemical engr

METRO DESK

The award giving ceremony for the pioneering chemical engineers in Bangladesh will be held on Wednesday, says a press release.

Chemical Engineering Division of The Institution of Engineers, Bangladesh (IEB) organises the event at the IEB seminar hall in the city.

Mahbub Jamil, special assistant to the chief adviser, will attend the programme as the chief guest and Prof Dr M Tamim, special assistant to the chief adviser, as special guest. Engr Md Mohsin Ali, PEng, president in-charge of the IEB, will be present as guest of honour.

27TH BCS EXAM Show cause on govt, PSC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court (HC) yesterday issued two separate rules upon the government and Public Service Commission (PSC) to explain why the results of the 27th Bangladesh Civil Service (BCS) examination, published without following the quota rules properly, should not be declared illegal.

After hearing two separate writ petitions filed by 154 BCS candidates including Abu Fajal Mohammad Tarique Hossain Khan and Sohel Rana, an HC bench of Justice Syed Mahmud Hossain and Justice Quamrul Islam Siddiqui issued the rules.

A writ petition filed by 33 candidates, who are the children of freedom fighters, stated that the government in a circular in 1999 said 30 percent of the circulated posts will be reserved for the children of freedom fighters.

3 wounded in gun attack on cellphone shop

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two men sustained bullet injuries as armed extortionists spread bullets indiscriminately on them at a cellphone shop at Ashkona in the city yesterday.

Police said three extortionists entered the Prince Cable Network and Phone-Fax shop at about 12.00 noon and spread bullets instantly, leaving customer Jasim Uddin, 25, and pedestrian Mukta Mia, 65, injured.

Jasim was admitted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital while Mukta to Combined Military Hospital (CMH).

Police said Mukta was in front of the shop when the gang came to the scene by a motorbike and opened fire.

Relatives of Jasim said he came to the capital from Chandpur yesterday morning and was scheduled to fly to Saudi Arabia at 4.00pm on the day.

Abu Taher, a salesman of the shop, told the correspondent at DMCH that the same extortionists shot dead one of the owners of the shop barely three months ago, as their demand of extortion was not met.

Dakhin Khan police said no case was filed in this regard and no one arrested yet.

20 dead, 42 missing in China landslides

AFP, Beijing

Twenty people were confirmed dead and 42 were missing yesterday after mudslides engulfed several villages in southwest China, state press reported.

The mud and rock flows occurred near Chuxiong city in Yunnan province with the exact number of people killed still being counted, Xinhua news agency said, citing local authorities.

According to the local government, up to 300 people live in the area where the slides occurred, the China News Service said.

Xinhua said the landslides began early Sunday morning and flattened or damaged more than 1,000 houses. It was not immediately known what caused the slides, but torrential rain pummelled the region throughout Sunday and was expected to continue for the coming days, China Central Television reported.

Freed Brac staff to fly in tomorrow

FROM PAGE 16

Brac chairperson Fazole Hasan Abed expressed relief and joy at the release of the two men and thanked both the governments of Bangladesh and Afghanistan, security agencies and other officials who worked for their release.

He pledged that Brac would continue to put maximum effort in ensuring the safety of all its staff in Afghanistan as well as in all other countries where it operates.

Foreign Adviser Dr Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury has meanwhile welcomed Akhter and Shahjahan's release and expressed gratitude to all who helped secure their freedom.

"I admire the courage of these two men and many other Bangladeshis who are working against many odds in Afghanistan for the welfare of our Afghan brothers and sisters," he said in a reaction on receiving the news.

Besides writing a letter to Afghan Foreign Minister Rangin Dadfar Spanta requesting help to rescue the two, the foreign secretary had also raised the issue with UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon seeking UN assistance in this regard.



Sea border issue fails

FROM PAGE 1

Foreign ministry sources say that they believe the country is now exposed to a regional oil and gas politics it had never faced before. "This situation might prevail till the maritime boundary is fixed in 2011," said an official.

The Indian press reports that two main basins in the Bay-Krishna-Godavari and Mahanadi-have shown a potential of nearly 18 billion barrels of oil equivalent gas in place. While official sources quote a figure of 100 trillion cubic feet of gas reserves in the region, unofficial estimates peg the reserves at 200 trillion cubic feet of gas.

In such a context, expert delegations of Bangladesh and with India held a three-day meeting after a gap of 28 years to settle unresolved maritime boundary issues. But this talk ended fruitlessly as it hovered around discussing boundary in South Talpatty, an island still in formation, in the south-western part of the country.

Foreign ministry held two rounds of talks in April and September with Myanmar and the discussions yielded "good results" regarding common usage of the Naf river and its estuary, official sources said.

Establish int'l climate research institute in Bangladesh

NFTE urges UN chief

METRO DESK

National Front of Teachers and Employees (NFTE) has urged UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon to initiate establishment of an international climate research institute in Bangladesh under the auspices of the United Nations.

In a press release, the front, a conglomerate of 11 organisations of teachers and education workers numbering half a million, who serve in 29,000 non-government schools, colleges, technical, vocational and specialised educational institutions in Bangladesh, also requested the world leader to draw programmes on popularisation of science, teachers' training, development of curriculum and libraries, prevention of violation of 'teachers' status' adopted by Unesco and ILO, and signed by Bangladesh government.

The NFTE lauded the role of the United Nations for its contribution to peace and security by promoting collaboration among the nations through education, science and

Nasaka kills 4 Bangladeshi woodcutters

UNB, Cox's Bazar

Nasaka, border security force of Myanmar, killed four Bangladeshi woodcutters at Naikhongchhari border.

Confirming this BDR said they have protested the killing of innocent people and demanded immediate return of the bodies.

Family sources and BDR said Nurul Kabir, 32, Ahmed Sharif, 22, Abdul Hakim, 28, and Shamsul Alam, 30, of Daillypara village under Ukhya upazila went to collect woods from Amtali on the border on Friday.

Dozen hurt in Kashmir protests

AFP, Srinagar

Over a dozen people were hurt yesterday when Indian police fired teargas and used batons to disperse hundreds of Kashmiris protesting arrests of separatists, doctors said.

Violent protests continued for the second day running in summer capital Srinagar after three key separatists were sent to jail on Saturday under a tough security law that allows detention for up to two years without trial.

Re-fixation of plane fare for hajj pilgrims demanded

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Tahfij-e-Haramine Parishad Bangladesh yesterday demanded re-fixation of the jet plane fare for the hajj pilgrims at \$1200 as the price of jet fuel has dropped significantly in the international market.

President of the organisation Maulana Sadek Ahmed Siddique said the price of crude oil dropped to \$67 from \$147, adding that many countries have already reduced the plane fare.

He further said this year the house rent in Mecca and Medina increased and other expenses for hajj pilgrims have also increased. So, the plane fare should be reduced in this regard.

Obituary

UNB, Khulna

Shamsur Rahman, founder general secretary of Khulna Press Club, died at his city residence yesterday at the age of 92.

He will be buried at his family graveyard at Mathbaria in Paikgachha upazila today.

Shamsur Rahman was the member of National Assembly of the then East Pakistan and Naye-e-Ameer of Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami.

Death anniversary

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Today is the sixth death anniversary of Nurul Islam, former principal of PTI in Gaibandha, says a press release.

On the occasion, a doa mahfil will be held at his residence (54/4, South Mugda) in the city. Relatives and admirers are requested to attend the programme.

Nurul Islam

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Today is the ninth death anniversary of Begum Habibunnesa, mother of noted gano sangeet singer Fakir Alamgir, says a press release.

On the occasion, a milad mahfil will be held at Khilgaon Chowdhurypara Matir Masque in the city Ar prayers and at her village home in Faridpur. Relatives and admirers are requested to attend the programme.

WEATHER TODAY logo with sun and cloud icons.

Dry weather likely

UNB, Dhaka

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

Night temperature may remain nearly unchanged over the country, Met Office said in a forecast.

Highest temperature 33.0 degrees Celsius was recorded yesterday at Sitakunda and lowest 19.2 degrees Celsius at Jessore.

The sun sets in the capital at 5:18pm today and rises at 6:06am 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.

Appeal for help

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Md Abul Hasnat Chowdhury Huru, a second year student of Rajshahi Medical College, has been suffering from aplastic anaemia, a type of blood cancer, says a press release.

He is now undergoing treatment at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University Hospital. Doctors advised his parents to take him to Singapore immediately for bone marrow transplant, which involves around Tk 80 lakh. But it is not possible for them to manage such a huge amount of money.

So, they have appealed to generous people to extend a helping hand to save their beloved son.

Contributions can be sent to Chowdhury Mohammad Afzal Hossain, A/C No. 002092837, Sonali Bank, Uttara Model Town Branch, Dhaka-1230, or Mohammad Abul Hasnat Chowdhury, A/C No. 11943, Sonali Bank, Rajshahi Medical College Hospital Branch, Rajshahi.

Interested persons can also call at 01199100039 to contact his family.

HC dismisses petitions

FROM PAGE 1

Former BNP state minister MA Mannan, one of the writ petitioners, filed the appeal.

His counsel Nasiruddin Ahmed Asim told reporters that they informed the EC of the appeal through a fax at 5:06pm.

The commission should not announce the election schedule until its hearing that may be held Monday, he added.

Earlier in the day, the commission withdrew its petition with the apex court for vacating the HC stay on its notification of the delineation.

Filed on October 30, the petition was scheduled to be heard yesterday by the full-bench Appellate Division.

the detailed timetable for the ninth parliamentary election. Shaheen Malik, another counsel for the EC, told newsmen that the HC decision bears out that the commission has redrawn the boundaries of parliamentary seats properly and in compliance with rules.

Besides, he added, the petitioners have failed to prove that his client has violated the constitution and laws in this regard.

Petitioner MA Mannan's lawyer TH Khan expressed frustration with the HC judgment.

He said the bench noted that the writ petitions have something to do with politics, whereas no lawyer for the petitioners raised any political issue during the court proceedings.

The HC in its judgment observed that despite some constitutional restrictions on questioning the commission's actions with regard to delimitation, the court could still examine if the EC has delineated the constituency boundaries, going beyond its jurisdiction and with mala fide intention.

However, the bench continued, it does not find the EC to have violated the constitution and laws pertaining to delimitation. Neither has it done anything beyond its jurisdiction.