

Nat'l HR Commission begins journey to ensure justice

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) formally began its journey yesterday...

"The authorities should work without fear or favour to ensure justice for all," NHRC Chairman Justice Amrul Kabir Chowdhury said...

The people cannot live a meaningful life if they fail to enjoy their rights as a human being, he said...

The law ministry in association with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) organised the discussion at Spectra Convention Centre...

Earlier, NHRC Chairman Justice Amrul Kabir Chowdhury and Commissioners Munira Khan and Prof Niru Kumar Chakma signed the appointment letters together at the commission office at Hare Road in the morning.

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"We held the first official meeting today (Monday) and discussed the issue of manpower required for the commission. We also talked about transport and a permanent office for the commission," Prof Chakma told The Daily Star.

Anybody subject to human rights violations anywhere in the country can report to the commission, he said. "So far, only the NGOs have been working on this issue. Now that there is an independent public commission, it will look into human rights abuses."

The media can play an important role in this regard, Prof Chakma said, adding that they are hopeful that the commission would be able to upgrade the human rights status in the country.

Speaking as the chair at the discussion, Law Adviser AF Hassan Arif said the state policy recognises the full human dignity of each and every citizen of the country.

Bangladesh is also a party to most international human rights declarations, he said, adding that "We are confident that the commission will accomplish our mission of establishing human rights and

justice for all."

"Today is a historic day for Bangladesh, as the commissioners start their office," said UNDP Resident Representative Renata Lok Dessallien. "There are a lot of disturbances of human rights in Bangladesh and so, the task of the commission will be extremely challenging."

"We live in a democratic country where the government, NGOs and individuals pledge to protect human rights," said NHRC Commissioner Munira Khan. The citizens, however, have been deprived of their due rights for long, she added.

"We have started our journey to put an end to human rights violations and to promote justice and political rights. We seek cooperation of all," Munira Khan said.

National Human Rights Commission Ordinance-2007 came into effect on September 1 to establish the commission, which will investigate reports or complaints about human rights abuses and maintain the standards of prisons or correction facilities. It will also mediate between disputing parties, if necessary.

HC asks govt to inform whereabouts of Liakat in 72 hrs

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court (HC) yesterday directed the government to inform it within 72 hours the whereabouts of Liakat Hossain, a former Jubo League leader and one of the 23 listed top criminals, said to have been held recently.

Upon a habeas corpus writ petition filed by Farzana Hossain, wife of Liakat, the HC also issued a rule asking the government to explain within two weeks why it should not be directed to produce Liakat before the court so that it may satisfy itself that he is not being held in custody without lawful authority or in an unlawful manner.

An HC bench comprised of Nazmun Ara Sultana and Justice Md Rezaul Haque issued the rule.

Respondents to the rule include the home secretary, deputy commissioner of police, deputy commissioner of Dhaka, commissioner of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, assistant commissioner of Dhaka city special branch of police, chief metropolitan magistrate of Dhaka, officers-in-charge of Mohammadpur and Ramna police stations, Jailer of Dhaka Central Jail and Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) headquarters.

The petitioner alleged that in a predawn raid on November 26, six to seven plainclothes armed Rab personnel got into their Dhanmondi house in the capital and took her husband away.

She later contacted the Rab headquarters and different other authorities to get information about her husband but failed, she said.

The petition stated that as per provisions of the constitution, any detainee has to be produced before a court within 24 hours of detention, but Liakat was yet to be produced before a court.

Earlier on December 25 in 2001, the government announced a bounty of Tk one lakh for information leading to his arrest.

Advocate Abdul Baset Majumder, assisted by Sayed Ahmed Raja, appeared for the petitioner.



Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed speaks at a view exchange meeting with the government officials in Khulna division at the Deputy Commissioner's conference room in Khulna yesterday. (Story on Page 1)

HC stays order against dismantling of oil tanker

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court (HC) Sunday issued a stay order against the dismantling of oil tanker MT Enterprise which Greenpeace blacklisted for containing hazardous substances.

An HC bench comprised of Justice Iman Ali and Justice Md Ashfaqul Islam passed the order directing the people concerned not to continue any work on the ship till December 15, said a press release.

The order came after Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers' Association (BELA) filed a writ petition challenging the No-Objection-Certificate given by the Department of Shipping to the importer of the ship.

The court also issued a rule upon the Department of Environment (DoE) to show cause as to why it should not be directed to take measures against the ship breaking yards that are operating in

Newspaper holiday on Eid

UNB, Dhaka

The offices of all newspapers and news agencies will remain closed on December 8, 9 and 10 on account of Eid-ul-Azha.

Therefore, no newspaper will be published on December 9, 10 and 11, says a press release of Newspapers Owners' Association of Bangladesh (NOAB).

WEATHER TODAY Dry weather likely

UNB, Dhaka

Weather is likely to remain mainly dry with partly cloudy sky over the country having chances of light rain or drizzle at one or two places over Rajshahi division in the next 12 hours until 6:00pm today.

Night temperature may remain nearly unchanged over the country, Met Office said. Highest temperature 30.5 degrees Celsius was recorded yesterday at Sandwip and lowest 14.2 degrees Celsius at Srimangol.

The sun sets in the capital at 5:11pm today and rises at 6:26am tomorrow.

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

Table with 4 columns: City/Town, Temperature in Celsius (Max, Min), Humidity in percentage (Morning, Evening)

Moudud freed on HC bail

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

After over 19-month imprisonment, former law minister Barrister Moudud Ahmed was released yesterday from Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU) prison cell on a High Court (HC) bail.

Meanwhile, the jail authorities suspended the division status of another detained former BNP state minister Lutfozzaman Babar for using mobile phone inside the BSMMU cabin violating the jail code.

Jail sources said Moudud was freed from the BSMMU prison cell at about 5:15pm.

After emerging from the prison cell, the former law minister said, "Fake cases were filed against me and I was arrested only to be harassed."

He demanded immediate lifting of emergency and cancellation of the section 91 (2) of the Representation of People Order (RPO).

At the time of release, several hundred party men thronged the BSMMU to welcome him.

Moudud has been facing five graft cases, including one on Niko. The High Court granted him bail in all the cases.

On April 13 last year, the army-led joint forces arrested him from his Gulshan residence and seized 16 bottles of foreign liquors and 32 cans of beer along with 220 pieces of saree allegedly from government relief fund.

Inspector General of Prisons Brig Gen Zakir Hassan told The Daily Star that the division status of Lutfozzaman Babar was cancelled for seven days from yesterday for violating the jail code.

The jail authorities caught Babar while talking on a cell phone at BSMMU cabin and seized the phone.

Later, he was moved to a prison cell at around 8:00pm on Sunday as punishment.

Earlier, he was caught with mobile phone for two times. Arrested on April 28 of last year, Babar was awarded 17 years' imprisonment in an arms case.

TWO CASES HC stays proceedings against Huda

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court (HC) yesterday stayed for six months the proceedings against former communications minister Nazmul Huda in two cases filed on charges of extortion and money embezzlement.

After hearing two separate writ petitions, an HC bench comprising Justice Tariq ul Hakim and Justice Farah Mahubub also issued separate rules upon the government to explain within four weeks why the initiation and continuation of the proceedings of the cases against Nazmul Huda should not be declared illegal.

The court also directed the jail authorities to submit his medical report before this court by December 4.

The extortion case was filed with Dhanmondi Police Station on July 5 while another case with Paltan Police Station on July 25. The two cases were placed under the Emergency Power Rules (EPR).

Huda's daughter Antara Huda filed two separate writ petitions with the High Court recently on behalf of her father challenging the legality of the initiation and continuation of the proceedings of the cases.

Advocate Adilur Rahman Khan appeared for the petitioner.



Leaders of Sector Commanders' Forum and other organisations sing national anthem at a programme marking the Freedom Fighters' Day at the Central Shaheed Minar in the city yesterday. (Story on Page 16)

Youths most vulnerable to AIDS

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

With a view to strengthening the campaign to combat HIV/AIDS and to create mass awareness, the World AIDS Day was observed in the country yesterday as elsewhere across the globe.

National AIDS/STD Programme (NASP), Directorate General of Health Services, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare observed the day in a befitting manner with the theme 'Lead-Empower-Deliver'.

A rally began from the east end of Manik Mia Avenue in front of the National Parliament and ended at Bangladesh China Friendship Conference Centre (BCFCC). Stakeholders from government, non-government, national, international organisations and donor agencies participated at the rally.

At the inaugural ceremony of the programmes at the BCFCC, Dr Ferdous Alam Shibib, programme manager of NASP, delivered the welcome speech while Dr Mohammad Ishaque Khan, line director of NASP, presented the keynote paper.

Director General of DGHS Prof MA Faiz, Director General of DGFP Quomaran Nessa Khanam, Country Director of Save the Children USA Kelland Stevenson and WHO representative to Bangladesh Dr Duangvadee Sungkhobol were present as special guests.

Speaking as the chief guest, Secretary to the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare AMM Nasir Uddin said that the youths are more vulnerable to HIV/AIDS and STIs and to disseminate information on HIV/AIDS and STI among the youth and adolescent people, the role of media is very important.

He urged the journalists and different stakeholders, including professional bodies, association leaders, religious leaders, policymakers and development partners to come forward in

preventing HIV infection in Bangladesh.

"The HIV infected new cases during this year was found 288 while new AIDS cases was 111 and total death case was 42," he said adding that the overall infection and AIDS cases is low this year compared to that of last year.

Highlighting different steps of the government in combatting HIV/AIDS, Mohammad Abul Kalam Azad, additional secretary and chairperson of the World AIDS Day 2008 programme, said, "We are working together to eliminate stigma and discrimination against people living with HIV and AIDS."

The Life Skills Education Workplace Policy on HIV/AIDS for Garment Workers was also launched at a city hotel yesterday.

BGMEA President Anwar-Ul-Alam Chowdhury presided over the programme that was also attended by Secretary to the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare AMM Nasir Uddin as the chief guest.

Bangladesh Development Partnership Centre (BDPC), Media Initiative for Public Policy (MIPP) and Bangladesh National Commission for UNESCO also held different programmes, including rally, seminar and discussion to mark the day.

MIPP organised a dialogue styled 'Youth and HIV/AIDS' between the media and the young people at National Press Club.

Speakers at a dialogue underscored the need for creating consciousness among the youths of the country about HIV to help prevent the deadly disease.

UNFPA Representative in Bangladesh Arthur Erken, Dr Noot Mohammad, national programme officer, UNFPA and Farid Hossain, bureau chief, AP, and president of MIPP, also spoke.

The students and the faculty members of State University of Bangladesh (SUB) formed a human chain to mark the day.



Visitors admire paintings put on display at an exhibition titled 'The 13th Berger Young Painters' Exhibition' at the Zainul Gallery of Fine Art Institute on Dhaka University campus yesterday.

'Understanding media vital for PR managers'

METRO DESK

To bring the ethnic agenda into wider media coverage, and for optimum utilisation of media in focusing the programmes of an organisation, the official concerned should have proper understanding of media and its operational process, said the speakers at the closing session of a training programme on media relations in the city yesterday.

The three-day programme to enhance media understanding and bridging gap between media and NGOs working for ethnic rights/issues was organised by Management and Resources

Development Initiative (MRDI) under a project titled 'Bridging Media and Ethnicity' with the support of The Delegation of the European Commission to Bangladesh, says a press release.

A total of 14 representatives of NGOs working for ethnic rights took part in the training where they had acquired better understanding about media relations techniques, preparing media contents like press releases and information materials for the press, organising press conference successfully, handling electronic media and developing media strategy for the organisation.

Certificates were distributed among the participants at the concluding session of the training.

Hasibur Rahman, executive director of MRDI, in his concluding remarks called upon the participants to establish a cordial and professional relation with media for better reflection of their organisation and programmes over media.

Brazil to open embassy in Dhaka

UNB, Dhaka

Foreign Adviser Iftakhar Ahmed Chowdhury yesterday said the decision of Brazil to open its Embassy in Dhaka would lead to enormous mutual benefits.

"Brazil is an emerging economy on the global scene and is a country with which our trade has doubled last year. This decision would certainly expand bilateral cooperation. We should also be thinking of reciprocating," he said welcoming the news that Brazil would open a resident Embassy in Dhaka.

This offer has been made in a note to foreign ministry by the government of Brazil, said a handout.



McCain likely to arrive today

UNB, Dhaka

Senator John McCain, who was the Republican nominee for this year's US presidential election, is likely to arrive in Dhaka today.

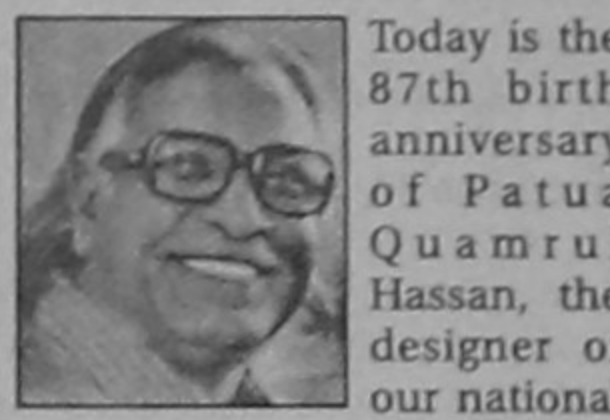
But there is also indication that the trip might be cancelled for reasons unknown.

"Previous schedule is still on...Arrival time may be changed but we can confirm it only tomorrow," official sources said.

Senator McCain will be accompanied by Senator Joseph Lieberman and Senator Lindsey Graham. All three Senators are members of the Senate Armed Services Committee.

Patua Quamrul Hassan's birth anniversary today

METRO DESK



Today is the 87th birth anniversary of Patua Quamrul Hassan, the designer of our national flag.

On the occasion, Patua Quamrul Hassan Art School will celebrate the diversified contribution of the noted artist to the nation.

The school will also place wreath at his grave.

EARTHQUAKE HC asks Fire Service DG to submit rescue equipment list

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court (HC) yesterday issued a rule upon the government to show cause as to why its inaction in arranging sufficient rescue equipment in case of earthquake disaster should not be declared illegal.

Upon a writ petition filed by Human Rights and Peace for Bangladesh (HRPB), an HC bench comprised of Justice Syed Mahmud Hossain and Quamrul Islam Siddiqui issued the rule.

The court also asked the government to show cause as to why it should not be directed to arrange sufficient rescue equipment in order to save the lives of citizens in case of earthquake disaster.

It also asked the director general of Fire Service and Civil Defence to submit a list of present rescue equipment to the court through the Supreme Court registrar within two months.

The home, finance and disaster management secretaries, the director general of Fire Service and Civil Defence and the director (operations and maintenance) of Fire Service and Civil Defence have been asked to reply the rule within four weeks.

Counsel for the petitioner Advocate Manzill Murshid told the court that there is high possibility of a large-scale earthquake in the country in future according to newspaper reports but proper rescue arrangements are not available in the country.

He also said if any earthquake of high intensity hits the country thousands of people might lose their lives and become disabled in the absence of proper rescue equipment.

Obituary

STAFF CORRESPONDENT



Begum Fatema Anowar, mother of agriculturist Javed Iqbal, passed away due to old-age complications at a city hospital on Sunday, says a press release.

She left behind her two sons, four daughters and a host of relatives to mourn her death.

DHAKA TODAY Symposium Seminar Public Admin Society Roundtable Lecture Rotary Dhaka