



Forum for Secular Bangladesh accorded a reception to 38 lawmakers, who defeated war criminals in the election, at Supreme Court Bar Association auditorium in the city yesterday. From right are Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid, Labour and Employment Minister Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain, Foreign Minister Dipu Moni, Prof Kabir Chowdhury and Justice Golam Rabbani.

Form special tribunal to try war criminals

Demand lawmakers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The lawmakers who defeated anti-liberation forces in the December 29 parliamentary elections yesterday called for forming a special tribunal immediately to try war criminals.

During the election, the entire nation got united in the demand for trial of war criminals, said lawmaker Shamsul Haque Tuku, who defeated Jamaat-e-Islami Ameer Motiur Rahman Nizami in the election.

"I was not aware of such a campaign against war criminals in my constituency in Pabna. Students and teachers of universities and cultural activists spearheaded the campaign urging the people to boycott war criminals in the election," he said at a reception ceremony.

Forum for Secular Bangladesh accorded a reception to 38 lawmakers, who defeated the anti-liberation forces in the election, at Supreme Court Bar Association auditorium in the city.

Five ministers, including Foreign Minister Dipu Moni and Home Minister Sahara Khatun, who attended the programme, assured them that the trial of war criminals must be held in the soil of Bangladesh without delay.

Speakers at the programme said the government should not waste any time trying to involve the UN in the process, as the trial can be held under the existing laws.

"The trial of war criminals,

Polytechnic students block road

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Several hundred students of Dhaka Polytechnic Institute put up a barricade on Tongi Diversion Road in the city's Tejaon Industrial area for an hour demanding deferment of their examination scheduled for February 11.

The demonstration caused a huge traffic congestion in the area.

On information, police rushed to the spot and held a meeting with the students and college authorities.

After they were assured that the exams will be deferred, the students went back to the campus, much to the relief of the commuters.

Death anniversary

CU CORRESPONDENT

Today is the 7th death anniversary of engineer SMA Bari, father of Chittagong Union of Journalists' (CUJ) General Secretary Nazimuddin Shyamal.

On the occasion, a milad mahfil and Quaranahwani will be held at his residence at Patenga in the port city.

Bari, a Language Movement veteran and organiser of country's War of Liberation, played a vital role in constructing Chittagong Shah Amanat International Airport, GEM Plant, Chittagong Steel Mill, Zia Fertiliser Factory and Shipping Corporation Headquarters as an engineer.

Mamta Ahmed Dulali

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Today is the first death anniversary of Mamta Ahmed Dulali, sister of writer Shamsuddin Abul Kalam, says a press release.

On the occasion, a milad mahfil will be held at his residence at 39/3 Jatrabari in the city after Asr prayers on January 30.

Relatives, friends and well-wishers are requested to attend the programme to pray for the salvation of the departed soul.

Historic Mass Upsurge Day observed

DU CORRESPONDENT

The nation observed the 40th historic Mass Upsurge Day yesterday commemorating the deaths of valiant sons of the soil who sacrificed their lives during the mass upsurge in 1969 that culminated in the country's independence.

On this day in 1969, students and people waged a strong movement against the then Pakistani autocratic regime of Ayub Khan. The movement turned into a mass upsurge following the martyrdom of Motiur Rahman, a student of class IX of Nabakumar Institute in the city.

Different social-political organisations chalked out separate programmes in the city to mark the day with due respect.

Bangabandhu Sangskritik Jote placed a wreath at the portrait of martyred Motiur on the institute premises at 8:00am. It also organised a discussion at its Gulshan office.

Nabakumar Institute and Dr Shahidullah College laid a wreath at Motiur's portrait and arranged a doa mahfil and discussion on the day.

Bangladesh Chhatra Union leaders also placed wreaths at portrait of the martyred, while Jatya Gonatantrik League and Bangladesh Nari Mukti Andolon organised separate discussions in the city.

Besides, people from all walks of life paid their rich tributes to Motiur placing wreaths at his portrait.

Justice Amirul visits Ranglai at hospital

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

National Human Rights Commission Chairman Justice Amirul Kabir Chowdhury yesterday visited indigenous leader Ranglai Mro at the National Institute of Cardio Vascular Diseases (NICVD) in the city.

Justice Amirul enquired about his health and discussed with the authorities about his release.

Joint Forces arrested Ranglai Mro, a human rights activist, on February 24, 2007. He was elected chairman of Sualok union in Bandarban three times.

Solar eclipse tomorrow

UNB, Dhaka

An annular eclipse of the sun will occur tomorrow.

It will start at 10 hours 56 minutes 36 seconds BST and will end at 17 hours 00 minutes 42 seconds BST, said an ISPR press release.

The central eclipse will start at 12 hours 05 minutes 48 seconds BST and will end at 15 hours 51 minutes 36 seconds BST. The greatest eclipse will occur at 13 hours 58 minutes 36 seconds BST.

The magnitude of the greatest eclipse will be 0.929 and duration of the annular phase will be 7 minutes 51 seconds.

The eclipse will start at 05 hours 29 minutes 30 seconds LMT at the south-west of Namibian sea coast in the South Atlantic Ocean. It will end at 17 hours 59 minutes 42 seconds LMT at the south-western coast of Vietnam of Asia.

The central eclipse will start at 05 hours 18 minutes 44 seconds LMT at the north of Tristan da Comba island of Britain in the South Atlantic Ocean.

It will end at 18 hours 07 minutes 34 seconds LMT of the southwest of the Philippines of Asia in the Celebes sea.

Nat'l Poetry Festival begins Feb 18

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The 23rd National Poetry Festival will begin on the Dhaka University Library premises on February 18.

A festival committee has already been formed with poet Rabiul Hussain as the convener and poet Tariq Sujat as joint convener.

The registration and other activities for the three-day festival will begin on February 1 at the festival office at TSC, says a press release.

Foundation Day of IUBAT

METRO DESK

The 19th Foundation Day of International University of Business Agriculture and Technology (IUBAT) was celebrated yesterday.

The 50th orientation programme of the university was also held, says a press release.

IUBAT authorities on the occasion pledged to pursue multiculturalism and prioritise English learning amongst the students.

They also emphasised human resource development to engage students as a productive force for socio-economic development.

IUBAT Vice Chancellor Prof M Alimullah Miyan called upon the freshmen to follow the rules of the university.

Prof Alex Berland of University of British Columbia asked the students to concentrate on their studies.

Prof Ghulam Kibria, a Fulbright senior specialist from Delaware State University in the USA, wished IUBAT all success in a message.

BNP to resist transit facilities to India

Says Delwar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Secretary General Khandaker Delwar Hossain yesterday said they will resist any government initiative giving transit facilities to India.

Speaking at a discussion meeting at the party's central office at Nayapaltan he said the country's sovereignty and independence are now at stake.

The discussion was organised by Jatayabadi Krishok Dal to mark the 73rd birth anniversary of late president Ziaur Rahman.

"People will not tolerate if the government takes any

initiative to give India transit facilities ignoring the country's interest," Delwar said.

He urged the government not to give transit facilities to India and hold open discussion on the issue.

Pointing to India, Delwar alleged that Awami League showed loyalty to a particular country after the independence, and they have started again to do so after assuming the power.

Presided over by Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir, the meeting was also addressed by Sohrab Uddin and Shirin Sultana.

Criminals take out anti-crime procession!

OUR CORRESPONDENT, N'ganj

Some identified criminals took out an anti-crime procession with deadly weapons in their hands at Chitashal in Fatullah on Friday.

Panic gripped locals during the procession. At one stage, criminals stabbed Juba Dal activist Ismail and Raja and snatched Tk 8000 from the latter.

Raja has filed a case with Fatullah Police Station following the incident, but the officer-in-charge said that he had heard nothing about it.

Obituary

METRO DESK

Capt (Retd) MI Chowdhury passed away at United Hospital in the city yesterday.

He served the 2nd East Bengal Regiment from 1952-58. He was a course mate of former president HM Ershad. He also served Meghna Petroleum Co in Chittagong, says a press release.

He was survived by his wife Rezia Chowdhury and only son Alam Mansur.

His namaz-e-janaza will be held at Gulshan Azad Mosque after Zohr prayers today.

Khandoker Yousuf Ali

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Khandoker Yousuf Ali, a retired government service holder, breathed his last due to a

cardiac arrest at the Lab Aid Hospital on January 18 at the age of 77, says a press release.

He had been suffering from old age complications.

He left behind four sons, seven daughters and a host of relatives and well-wishers to mourn his death.

The family members request all to pray for his departed soul.

Sheikh Sukur Ali

METRO DESK

Sheikh Sukur Ali, father of Sheikh Ahad Ali, breathed his last at his village home at Harihar Nagar under Tala upazila in Sathkhira district on Friday night, says a press release.

Sukur died of a massive cardiac arrest.

He left behind his mother, two brothers, three sisters and a host of relatives to mourn his death.

Family friends and relatives have been requested to join the Quikhwani on February 13 and pray for his eternal peace in the afterlife.



BNP Chairperson Khaleida Zia pats a child while distributing prizes among the winners of a painting competition for children at her Gulshan office in the city yesterday. The painting competition was organised on the occasion of the 73rd birth anniversary of late president Ziaur Rahman.

The PM is being embarrassed

FROM PAGE 1

join the ruling party of the day and try and wring benefits from that association. If investigated many of them will be found to have been very active members of the former ruling party's student wing as well.

This is not to exonerate BCL members themselves from any blame, many of whom have been waiting for their 'good fortune' to return as they supposedly 'suffered' during the tenure of the BNP-led four-party alliance government. The reprisal, which took extremely cruel and violent form when BNP won in 2001, and which Sheikh Hasina successfully prevented by cancelling the so-called victory celebrations following her massive win, struck a very positive note of maturity among the public. It earned the AL significant goodwill. This has largely been undone by the criminality of the student league members in these initial days.

The latest interference in the upazila elections not only by the local leaders but by a cabinet minister and an MP in spite of warning by the Election Commission, has revealed a serious lack of party discipline and a worrisome absence of regard for rule of law among a section of AL leaders and workers. Such indiscipline and self-serving political culture will act as a serious impediment toward building the "Digital Bangladesh" - essentially meaning a modern, knowledge-based and IT proliferated country - that the PM wants to, and is pledged bound to, build.

It is our view that in addition to all the economic and governance related challenges that Sheikh Hasina faces, a new one must be added to that

list -- that of restoration of idealism, honesty and discipline in the party. Awami League has generally been a better organised and ideologically stable party. It is also the one whose lower tiers have had more elections compared to its arch rival, the BNP.

However better it may look compared to BNP, it remains a fact that AL as a political party has not received the serious attention and involvement of its high level leaders that is necessary to rejuvenate, energise and modernise the party and make it fit to deliver the modernist agenda that the party's election manifesto calls for.

It is well understood that the banning of political activities during the state of emergency, the detention of Sheikh Hasina for over a year and the crisis faced by many of its senior leaders during that time naturally prevented inner party work. This may have led to decline in party discipline. The election that followed was also not the proper time for disciplinary work within the party.

The time, therefore, is now. As have been shown by the two recent incidents, first by the BCL and now by the grassroots workers, the party requires a total revamping and change from within. Under her overall supervision, Sheikh Hasina needs to set up a dedicated group of party leaders whose fulltime job will be to reorganise and modernise the party. The number one requirement is a fulltime party general secretary, who may enjoy the rank of a minister but he/she cannot be expected to perform the duties of a minister.

Our recent practice of making the party secretary the LGRD minister has not served either the AL or the BNP well in

the past. This must be discarded if the PM really wants a modern party. Along with the general secretary there is definitely a need for a number of other office-bearers to run the party on a day-to-day basis. Without a clear-cut distinction between party hierarchy and government ministers, many workers end up frequenting the secretariat for party work, resulting in disrupting the work of both the government and that of the party.

The incumbent acting secretary, Syed Ashrafur Islam, did a creditable job during the trying days of emergency and may be thought of for the future. But in that case he must be relieved from his minister's duties. Otherwise a suitable replacement must be found.

If we look at the reasons for unpopularity of past governments soon after winning elections, the ruling party's failure to control its own members from indulging in corruption had a lot to do with it. The indiscipline, nepotism, mutual distrust, undermining of fellow leaders and backward mindset of party leaders contributed significantly to the failure of those governments.

Sheikh Hasina can ill afford that. So the choice is very clear. For her government to succeed she must clean, reform and modernise her party, and she must start right away as two separate incidents have proved it to her at an undeserving and unnecessary cost to her credibility.

We appreciate the PM's views conveyed by Matia Chowdhury to this paper that the government would not interfere if the EC wants to prosecute the persons involved in the upazila elec-

tion process. We think the EC must follow through on their initial steps and set examples of punitive actions that create more respect for EC rules and fear against violating them in the future. But the government must also set its own standard of discipline and respect for law by dismissing the cabinet minister who brought such shame to the government and the party that gave him the honour of becoming a cabinet minister.

We conclude by urging the PM and AL chief to take tough actions against the culprits of both the BCL and upazila election incidents. She owes very little to such criminals for winning the election. General people gave her the massive victory, not the party or the BCL goons. Her boldness in denying nominations to people with questionable reputation bore fruit in widespread public appreciation for such a move, resulting in the stunning election victory. We must remember that public support corrodes much faster resulting from one or two actions of party members than all the criticisms of the opposition put together.

If, today, the AL chief takes strong disciplinary actions against her own party's delinquents she will be similarly rewarded by public support. Given her majority in the parliament and continued public support she can easily cleanse her party, and all its wings -- students, youth, labour, peasant, etc -- of all such elements who are not willing to embrace the new politics.

A "Digital Bangladesh" cannot come from the old Awami League. Euphemistically speaking, it needs a "Digital Awami League".

DHAKA TODAY

Birth anniversary

Renaissance Sangskritik Parishad organises a programme to mark the 185th birth anniversary of poet Michael Madhusudan Dutt. Venue: National Press Club. Time: 4:00pm.

Human chain

Jago Bangladesh will form a human chain demanding an effective parliament and industrialisation in the rural areas. Venue: Muktangan. Time: 11:15am.

Convention

Association of Private Universities of Bangladesh organises a convention on quality assurance and improvement. Venue: Uttara

campus of International University of Business Agriculture and Technology (IUBAT). Time: 9:30am.

Workshop

Disaster Management Bureau in association with United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) organises a daylong workshop on national consultation on the progress of implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) in Bangladesh. Venue: Hotel Sonargang. Time: 9:30am.

Discussion

Vivekananda Shiksha O Sanskriti Parishad, Dhaka University will hold a discussion. Venue: 25 Aga Sadak Road. Time: 3:00pm.

WEATHER TODAY

Fog 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.

Moderate thick fog may occur over the country during midnight till morning. Met Office said predicting nearly unchanged night temperature over the country.

Highest temperature 27.5 degrees Celsius was recorded yesterday at Cox's Bazar and Rangamati and lowest 11.7 degrees Celsius at Sandwip.

The sun sets in the capital at 5:40pm today and rises at 6:42am 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	23.8	15.0	98	84
Chittagong	25.5	15.2	91	80
Rajshahi	19.4	14.6	100	94
Khulna	25.6	13.8	100	81
Barisal	26.0	14.6	100	90
Sylhet	25.5	13.7	100	87
Cox's Bazar	27.5	15.2	74	81