

BNP to oppose move to ratify unlawful ordns

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

National Standing Committee of BNP last night decided to strongly oppose any moves by the government to ratify the ordinances promulgated by the immediate-past caretaker government 'unlawfully'.

However, it will support only those ordinances which the caretaker government promulgated in line with the article 58(d) of the constitution, BNP Secretary General Khandaker Delwar Hossain told reporters after a meeting of the standing committee.

Party Chairperson Khaleda Zia presided over the meeting at her Gulshan office where MK Anwar, Jamiruddin Sircar and TH Khan also took part on special invitation.

Delwar said his party will not give validity of those ordi-

nances which the interim government promulgated by going beyond its constitutional jurisdiction.

"The caretaker government promulgated 119 ordinances. The present government has started discussion on ordinances in the parliament. We discussed these issues in today's meeting," the BNP leader added.

He also said the last government did many things which were beyond their jurisdiction. That's why, they will oppose from their position any moves to ratify all ordinances.

MK Anwar, also a member of the special committee formed by the parliament to scrutinise the ordinances, said the committee invited a few legal experts and they suggested ratifying those ordi-

nances which were promulgated following the constitution.

BNP Joint Secretary General Nazrul Islam Khan and Office Secretary Rizvi Ahmed were present during the briefing.

Earlier on February 3, the special committee okayed only 44 for ratification out of the 122 ordinances promulgated during the tenure of the caretaker governments.

The parliament on January 28 formed the special committee to scrutinise the ordinances until the standing committees on ministries are formed.

On the inaugural session of the ninth parliament, the law minister placed the ordinances before the parliament for its consideration for the ratification within the next 30 days.

Muggers rob passengers at Jatrabari

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A gang of snatchers mugged passengers at Jatrabari intersection when vehicles got stuck in a traffic signal last night.

Witnesses said around five to seven muggers all of a sudden swooped on the passengers of several rickshaws and CNG-run three wheelers and robbed them of their valuables, including cellphone sets, gold ornaments and wallets, especially from women.

The criminals used sharp knives during the snatchings at around 10:30pm, witnesses said.

Beauty Akter, a rickshaw passenger, said snatchers took away her gold necklace at knife-point, adding that they also snatched another gold necklace from an elderly woman Sabina.

Witnesses said the muggers decamped with a cellphone from a young lady while she was talking over the cellphone sitting in a rickshaw.

The snatchers fled the scene immediately after the crimes, they added.



President Zillur Rahman places a wreath at the grave of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman at Tungipara in Gopalganj yesterday.

MJF protests HR violation by Tex Tech

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF) has protested the violation of human rights by the authorities of Tex Tech Company Ltd, a garment factory at Banani, as they sent out female workers barefoot during the lunch break.

The foundation has sent a protest letter to Bangladesh Garments Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) in this regard, says a press release.

A report on such activities was published in The Daily Star on February 8 under the headline 'Barefoot, they sent out for lunch'.

In the protest letter signed by MJF Executive Director Shaheen Anam, the foundation said major credit for the contribution made by the garments sector to the economy goes to female workers.

She called on the factory owners to put an end to such situation and create a congenial environment in order to ensure the dignity of the workers.



Mother of Priasi Mutsuddi, a student of Chittagong College, wails at her residence in Chittagong yesterday after hearing the news that the body of her daughter, inset, was found under the wreckage of the picnic bus that met an accident in Bandarban two days ago. (Story on Page 16)

Women pay high price for lack of awareness about maternal healthcare

MAHBUBA ZANNAT, back from Cox's Bazar

Humaira, a housewife and seven months pregnant, is yet to go to the health care centre for any medical check-up and even cannot think of her delivery with the health care facilities, though Cox's Bazar Sadar hospital is merely half a kilometre away from her home.

Malnourished, the woman sitting in front of her dark little mud-built house at Mohazepara in the district told The Daily Star that she never knew that she needs to go to the doctors for check-up during this crucial period.

"I feel shy going to the hospitals as most are male doctors there. Furthermore, I see many of the deliveries of my neighbours are taking place at home and without any complications," she said, adding that her day labourer husband also wants their baby will be born at home.

Humaira is not a diverse case at all. Due to social prejudice and ignorance, a significant number of women are still apathetic to go to the health care centres for their ante-natal care (ANC), delivery and post-natal care (PNC) that increase the risks of maternal and child mortality.

Experts said though the country's target is 60 percent for taking ANC four times that means a pregnant woman will go to the health centres four times for facilities before delivery for her check-up, it is only 21 percent.

The government has taken various programmes to reduce maternal mortality ratio (MMR) to 143 per 100,000 live births and infant mortality ratio (IMR) to 31 per 1,000 live births by 2015 and to bring the pregnant mothers under the health facilities in this regard.

The government with the help of Unicef turned seven district and upazila health complexes into women-friendly hospitals in 2007 where the health service providers are more sensitive to women's needs and concerns to make the women more aware of their rights in the health care system.

Furthermore, the government with the help of World Health Organisation also started maternal health voucher (pilot) scheme titled 'Demand Side Financing' in 33 upazilas of 32 districts in 2007-08 fiscal year.

Under the programme, poor mothers will receive Tk 3,000 from the government for coming to the health centres

for check-up and medicine apart from free of cost delivery or caesarean section.

The service providers will also get Tk 3,000 for providing the services properly. The service will be available for the families whose monthly earning is Tk 2,500 or less for the first two children.

But unfortunately very few women are taking the chances due to lack of awareness. That's why, still 85 percent delivery is taking place at home with the help of unskilled or semi-skilled birth attendants.

320 mothers die per 100,000 live births and the neonatal mortality ratio is 37 per thousand live births. This MMR is five times higher than Sri Lanka and Vietnam and ten times higher than Malaysia.

"As people are not much aware, they bring the expectant mothers into the hospitals when the situation gets worse and complicated that poses the risks of both the lives of mother and her child," said Deputy Programme Manager of National Child Health Programme of DGHS Dr Yeasmin Rahman, adding that awareness campaign must be increased to make people know about the services.

Death anniversary

METRO DESK

Today is the 15th death anniversary of renowned journalist Anwarul Islam Bobby, says a press release.

He passed away in Dubai on his way to London for treatment of leukemia in 1994.

He was the founding editor of The Daily Life of Chittagong, The Pulse, a medical journal, and now-defunct The Morning Sun.

He was also one of the founders of now-defunct The Bangladesh Times.

Bobby, who started his journalism career with the then Pakistan Observer, was also the youngest secretary general of All Pakistan Newspaper Society.

Hearing on graft cases against Hasina likely today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Hearings of the High Court (HC) rules on the proceedings of Niko and barge-mounted power plant corruption cases against Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and others are likely to be held today.

The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) filed the cases during the tenure of the immediate past caretaker government.

ACC's counsel advocate Khurshid Alam Khan and Hasina's counsel advocate AFM Mesbahuddin yesterday afternoon told The Daily Star hearings on the rules are due to be held today but they had not received any instruction from their clients.

On January 7, a HC bench of Justice Sheikh Rezwan Ali

and Justice Md Rais Uddin extended the time of its earlier orders for not harassing or arresting Hasina in the cases and fixed February 15 for the hearings.

Upon separate quashment petitions, the HC on July 7 last year stayed all proceedings of the corruption cases and issued the rules asking the government and the ACC to explain why the cases should not be quashed.

The Niko scam case had been awaiting charge hearing and the barge-mounted power plant case was in the phase of cross-examination of the prosecution witnesses by the defence before July 7 last year.

Five cases were filed against Hasina during the tenure of the immediate past

caretaker government.

Of those, three extortion cases were filed by businessmen - Azam J Chowdhury, Noor Ali and Tajul Islam Faruk and the rest two were Niko and Barge Mounted Power Plant corruption cases.

The caretaker government decided to withdraw the Tk 3 crore extortion case filed by Azam J Chowdhury following his application to the home ministry for dropping charges against Hasina.

The HC, earlier, granted bail to Hasina in the case and stayed the case proceedings.

The police have already submitted final reports to the court exonerating Hasina from the charges filed by Noor Ali and Tajul Islam Faruk.

Fire at shoe warehouses

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Shoes and other valuables worth around Tk 11 lakh in warehouses of three shoe stores on the 4th floor of ANEXCO Tower were gutted by a fire in the city's Bangabazar area yesterday.

Originated from an electric short circuit, the fire at the warehouse of Monnaf Shoes also engulfed those of Shohel Shoes, Rupashi Shoes and an office on the 4th floor at around 8:25pm.

Five special firefighting vehicles rushed to the spot and extinguished the blaze at around 9:15pm.

Fire brigade sources said two officials - Assistant Director (admin) Samarendra Nath Biswas and Deputy Assistant Director Masudur Rahman - sustained injuries while they were dousing the fire.

Panic-stricken traders in the area started shifting their goods from the shop at that moment, market sources said.

Galaxy holds medical seminars

METRO DESK

Galaxy Healthcare Service and SingHealth jointly held several medical seminars in Dhaka yesterday, says a press release.

Dr Tan Kian Hian, consultant, pain management of Singapore General Hospital, Dr Edmund Wong, vitreo retinal surgeon from Singapore National Eye Centre, Dr Lim Soo Teik, cardiologist, National Heart Centre, and Dr Franchis Chin, radiation oncologist, National Cancer Centre, Singapore, took part in the seminars.

Similar seminars will also be held today.

Form special tribunal to try war criminals

Speakers ask govt

UNB, Dhaka

Speakers at a discussion yesterday urged the government to form a special tribunal for trial of the war criminals as they said it was a special crime.

"The war criminals cannot be tried in general courts as the war crime is a special crime," the meeting was told.

The speakers also said that

if necessary, the war crime act has to be made stronger to ensure the trial of war crime this time around.

Bangladesh Muktijoddha Samannoy Parishad (BMSP) organised the discussion on 'People's expectation: Trial of war criminals and right to law' at the National Press Club.

HT Imam, adviser to prime minister, said the trial of war crimes, or any political assassinations for that matter, could not be completed as "the state machinery always pushed the investigation of the crimes into wrong way".

He observed the trial of war crimes and all political assassinations is needed to ensure right to law.

"The government is committed to opening the trial of war crimes and all political

assassinations," Imam told the function.

Barrister Amirul Islam said the trial of war criminals is possible through the International Crimes (Tribunal) Act 1973 which is well protected by the constitution.

He said the past government could not complete the war crime trial as the policy is not right.

Amir urged the government to form a tribunal committed for direction of proper investigation.

BMSM President Abir Ahad said the speakers also said Bangladesh does not need to seek help from the United Nations or any other international organisation as the trial of crimes is possible as per existing law.

Sgt Zahurul Haque

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Today is the 40th death anniversary of martyred Sergeant Zahurul Haque, says a press release.

On this day in 1969, he was killed by the Pakistani army when he was detained in the Dhaka Cantonment in connection with the Agartala conspiracy case.

The anti-Ayub movement geared up at the death of Zahurul.

The students of Dhaka University renamed Iqbal Hall after Sergeant Zahurul Haque.

Chittagong base of Bangladesh Air Force was also renamed after him.

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Obituary

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prof Mohammad Alfaraz Rahman passed away due to a cardiac arrest at LabAid Hospital on Friday at the age of 70, says a press release.

He was a former chairman of the department of political science of Jagannath University and former principal of Kumudini Mohila College in Tangail.

He left behind his wife, a daughter and a host of relatives and admirers.

His quikhwani will be held on February 16 after Maghrib prayers at his Hatkhola residence.

AKM Azizul Haq

UNB, Dhaka

Lion AKM Azizul Haq, a businessman and freedom fighter, died at Mount Elizabeth Hospital in Singapore on Thursday. He was 70.

He left behind his wife, two daughters and a host of relatives and well-wishers to mourn his death.

His quikhwani will be held at his residence at Dhanmondi on Monday.

Coast Guard to be modernised

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Home Minister Sahara Khatun has expressed her satisfaction over the arrest of two alleged collaborators of Pakistani occupation forces in Rajshahi on Friday and assured that war criminals of the liberation war in 1971 will be tried in the country.

She made the comment after addressing a function that marked the 14th founding anniversary of Bangladesh Coast Guard (BCG) at its headquarters in Agargaon of the capital yesterday.

Speaking as chief guest the home minister said steps will be taken to modernise the BCG so that it can cope with pirates and other criminals in the sea and coastal areas.

She said piracy and other criminal acts have already decreased remarkably due to vigilance of the BCG.

Due to scarcity of resources, the country will have to explore resources in the vast sea, Sahara said, adding, the BCG will have to strengthen vigilance in Bangladesh's territorial water in the Bay of Bengal which is rich in minerals.

She said the BCG launched its first rescue operation in the coastal areas after Sidr hit the area.

The speakers said the BCG rescued over 400 women and children who were being trafficked to other countries and seized goods worth over Tk482 crore so far.

They said the BCG keeps constant vigil in coastal areas stretching over 710 kilometres including sea and ports.

The speakers said 85 percent of export and import business of the country is carried through the sea and the BCG has to guard all the ships-foreign and local.

They said the BCG, a paramilitary force assigned to

enforce law and order in the sea, is playing a significant role in checking smuggling of drugs and arms through the sea routes in the country.

Home Secretary Abdul Karim and BCG Director General Komsul Kadir also spoke on the occasion.

Later the home minister inaugurated the BCG Headquarters Building at Agargaon.

WEATHER TODAY

No change in temperature

UNB, Dhaka

Weather is likely to remain dry over the country in the next 24 hours as of 6:00pm today.

Light fog may occur over the river basins of the country during late night till morning, Met Office said, adding that night temperature may remain nearly unchanged over the country.

Yesterday's highest temperature of 31.0 degree Celsius was recorded at Sylhet and the lowest of 10.4 degrees at Srirangal.

The sun sets in the capital at 5:54pm today and rises at 6:31am tomorrow.

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

City/Town	Temperature in Celsius	Humidity in percentage
Dhaka	28.5	59
Chittagong	28.5	76
Rajshahi	28.5	89
Khulna	28.5	83
Barisal	28.4	79
Sylhet	31.0	63
Cox's Bazar	30.8	59

DHAKA TODAY

Roundtable

Nagorik Forum organises a roundtable on war crime and independent judicial system. Venue: National Press Club. Time: 3:30pm.

Rhyme book launching

The launching ceremony of a rhyme book in Braille for the blind children will be held. Venue: Shilpakala academy. Time: 4:15pm.

Seminar

BPKA and NADPO jointly organise the fifth leadership-training seminar on self-initiatives of people with disability in development. Venue: Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre. Time: 4:00pm.

Mobile library inauguration

The inaugural ceremony of mobile library of Bangladesh Sangskriti Kendra will be held. Venue: National Press Club. Time: 10:00am.

Book launching

The launching ceremony of the book 'Kabita Jiboner Katha Bale' by poet Harun Chowdhury will be held. Venue: Nazrul Mancha, Bangla Academy. Time: 5:30pm.



Kishoreganj Zila Samity executives

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Shah Md Mansurul Huq and AKM Kamal Uddin were elected president and general secretary of the executive committee of Kishoreganj Zila Samity in Dhaka for the term 2009-10, says a press release.

The election was held at TMC building at New Eskaton in the city on Wednesday.

Other office bearers are: senior vice-president - Abu Ahmed Munnafi; vice-presidents - Advocate Nuruzzaman Nani, Principal Mujibur Rahman Bhuiyan, Sheikh Kabir Ahmed, Md Abdur Rahim, Md Kafil Uddin Khan, Abdul Kahar Akand, Md Mozammel Huq Golap, and Nurunnaher Hena; joint secretaries - Adv Ranjit Barman, Shah Mashukur Rahman, Adv Md Abdur Rahim, Md Nasir Uddin Bhuiyan, Borhan Uddin Bhuiyan, Md Aktaruzzaman Khoka, Khalilur Rahman, and Gulshan Ara.

Domestic help dies in rooftop fall

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A domestic help died after falling from the rooftop of a five-storey building at Banani in the city yesterday.

The dead was identified as Asma, 16, daughter of Abu Taher of Netrokona.

The victim had been serving as a domestic help at the house of Awami League lawmaker Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim.

Hospital sources said family members of the lawmaker rushed Asma to Dhaka Medical College and Hospital where the doctors declared her dead.

Quoting family members, Officer-in-Charge of Gulshan Police Station Mir Rejaul Hossain said Asma alone was washing cloths on the rooftop at around 12:00 noon, but how she fell to the ground could not

be known.

The roof was surrounded by grills, he said, adding the victim joined the house three months ago.

Two PBCP workers held

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Police arrested two people, including a female member, of underground outfit Purbo Banglar Communist Party (PBCP) M-L Red Flag faction at Baghmara upazila yesterday.

Police said Rehana Akhtar, 42, and her associate Hossain Ali of Haragram in Rajshahi city are active members of PBCP's intelligence wing.