

SECURITY OF VIPS

Cabinet body nods PMO to buy 3 frequency jammers

UNB, Dhaka

Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs yesterday approved a proposal moved by the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) to procure three vehicle mounted frequency jammers (VMEF) for security purpose of the VIPS.

Initially, one VMEF will be procured and then two others will be purchased in phases. The Special Security Force (SSF) will use the equipment for the VIPS.

Cabinet Secretary M Abdul Aziz, who briefed reporters about the outcome of the committee's meeting, however, gave no details of the proposal.

It could not be ascertained how much money will be required to purchase the highly sophisticated equipment, which will be used to create restrictions in the mobile phone frequency during the movement of

VIPS in specific areas.

The cabinet economic affairs committee has given waiver to the proposal so that the PMO can procure the equipment without complying with the Public Procurement Act 2006.

It means the PMO will not need to invite any tender for this purchase and can buy the equipment from any country or company through negotiation.

The proposal received the cabinet committee nod at a time when the security issue of the VIPS is being widely discussed at different levels.

The cabinet committee meeting, with Finance Minister AMA Muhith in the chair, approved another proposal of the food ministry to procure 32,400 pieces of wooden planks from Bangladesh Forest Industries Development Corporation (BFIDC) for using those in food storage.

A waiver was given to the food ministry for which it will not need to pay any security deposit to BFIDC.

The cabinet committee decided to form a committee to review and examine a foreign ministry proposal to procure an apartment in New York for Bangladesh Permanent Mission there.

The shipping ministry placed before the cabinet meeting a report on Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA). The report was prepared on the basis of an audit report on BIWTA.

Responding to another proposal of the expatriate welfare and overseas employment ministry, the cabinet committee asked the authorities concerned to make coordination among the youth training centres for creating skilled manpower to increase opportunities of overseas employment.



Representatives from four development organisations, TIB Chairman Prof Muzaffer Ahmad and trustees Prof Khan Sarwar Murshid and Prof Abdullah Abu Sayeed pose for photograph after signing an MoU at TIB office in the city yesterday.

4 donors sign MoU with TIB to support new initiative

METRO DESK

Four leading bilateral development organisations -- DFID of the UK, SIDA of Sweden, SDC of Switzerland and Danish embassy -- yesterday signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) to support its new initiative, says a press release.

Consistent with the poverty reduction strategy paper (PRSP) and implemented with the approval of the government, the project titled 'Paribartan -- Driving Change' aims at achieving positive changes in policies and practices conducive to accountable and transparent governance in the country.

The objectives of the project include strengthening national integrity system, reducing costs of corruption and improving citizens' access to entitlements through a strengthened and sustained social movement against corruption.

Working through an intensified national level, advocacy and an up-scaled local-level citizens' engagement, the project will strive to achieve better enforcement of policies, laws and rules at both national and local levels.

The total budget of the project is \$19.6 million (Tk 135 crores) which will cover programmatic and operational expenses of the anti-graft watchdog and its 45 local offices across the country called 'Committee of Concerned Citizens' for five years from April 2009 to March 2014.

DFID Country Representative Chris Austin, Swedish Ambassador Britt Hagstrom, Danish Ambassador Einar Heibogaard Jensen, Swiss Ambassador Dora Rapold and TIB Executive Director Dr Iftekharuzzaman signed the MoU at TIB office in the city.

TIB Chairman Prof Muzaffer Ahmad and two trustees Prof Khan Sarwar Murshid and Prof Abdullah Abu Sayeed and head of mission of SDC were present at the signing ceremony.

The representatives from donor agencies expressed their continued commitment to support the anti-corruption movement in Bangladesh through TIB.

Razzaq gets anticipatory bail from HC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court (HC) yesterday granted six months' anticipatory bail to Jamaat-e-Islami leader barrister Abdur Razzaq in connection with the BDR mutiny case.

After hearing a petition by Razzaq, the HC bench of Justice MA Wahhab Miah and Justice Marzi-ul-Haq also issued a rule upon the government to show cause within six weeks why the petitioner should not be granted regular bail.

Meanwhile, another HC bench yesterday fixed April 6 (today) for passing order on Razzaq's contempt petition against government.

He filed the contempt petition for obstructing him from going to Malaysia and Singapore on March 19 despite having an HC order to visit the countries.

Asked whether the government will appeal with the Supreme Court (SC) against the HC order, Attorney General Mahbubey Alam told The Daily Star that he did not receive such instructions from the government till yesterday afternoon.

During the hearing of the petition yesterday, Razzaq's lawyer Rafiqul Islam Mia argued before the court that his client had no association with the Pikhana carnage.

The Criminal Investigation Department (CID) notice for interrogation was to serve political purpose to harass Razzaq, he said.

Earlier, the HC vacation bench, upon two separate petitions filed by Razzaq, granted him anticipatory bail on March 29 and directed the government not to harass or arrest him in this case till yesterday.

As the tenure of the order expired, Razzaq yesterday filed a fresh petition with the HC seeking bail in this case.

The CID authorities issued a notice on March 28 asking Razzaq to appear with his passport for an interrogation on the Pikhana carnage case at its Malibagh office on March 30.

Razzaq filed a writ petition with the HC on March 29 challenging the legitimacy of the CID letter. He prayed to the court to stay the CID notice.

The HC, however, did not stay the notice, but directed the government to consider him as a witness, not an accused, in the case during the interrogation and return his passport.

Following the HC order, Abdur Razzaq appeared at the CID office duly.

Obituary

STAFF CORRESPONDENT



Rustam Ali Sarkar, a war-maimed freedom fighter, passed away due to a cardiac arrest at a city hospital on Friday at the age of 70, says a press release.

He was buried with state honour at his family graveyard at his village in Brahmanbaria on Saturday.

BACKLOG OF PENDING CASES

Steps soon to appoint new HC judges

Says law minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Law Minister Shafique Ahmed yesterday said the government would take steps soon to appoint some competent, honest and neutral judges to the High Court (HC) in order to relieve the litigants of their woes through speedy disposal of the pending cases.

There is a huge backlog of pending cases at the HC causing sufferings to the litigants, but those cannot be disposed quickly of due to shortage of judges, he said, adding that the government will provide logistic supports for the lower court judges to implement separation of the judiciary.

The minister was presiding over a meeting at the handover ceremony of the charge of Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) to its newly elected office bearers at its auditorium in the city.

Shafique Ahmed was the outgoing president of the SCBA. The minister said the government has a plan to make compulsory the alternative dispute resolution (ADR) system to dispose the cases outside the courts in the mediation of the lawyers.

The commercial cases and family disputes can be settled easily and at minimum cost within a very short time through the ADR system, he said, adding that the number of the pending cases will also be reduced gradually.

Shafique further said that as a lawyer, he is aware of the problems of the judges and lawyers of the country and will try his best to solve the problems.

Newly elected President and Secretary of SCBA AFM Mesbahuddin and SM Rezaul Karim and outgoing secretary

lawmaker Nurul Islam Sujan addressed the meeting.

The ruling Awami League-backed Sammilita Ainjibi Shamannay Parishad led by Mesbahuddin and Rezaul won the landslide victory in the polls on March 25.

SSKOP token strike on Apr 12

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Sangbadik Sramik Karmachari Oikya Parishad (SSKOP) will hold a token strike on April 12 demanding implementation of the 7th Wage Board Award in all the newspaper houses and formation of a national newspaper industry policy.

The leaders of the Parishad said though implementation of the wage board is obligatory for every newspaper house, most of the newspapers and news agencies have not implemented the wage board yet.

They demanded the government take proper steps to solve the problems of different national dailies, including the Ittefaq, The Bangladesh Observer, the Janakantha and the Dinkal.

The Oikya Parishad leaders announced to hold the strike at a rally at the National Press Club to realise their demands.

They also sought the government intervention in taking legal action against the owners of newspapers and news agencies who are not implementing the wage board.

Co-convenor of the Oikya Parishad Iqbal Sobhan Chowdhury presided over the rally.



Thundershowers likely

UNB, Dhaka

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

Day temperature may remain nearly unchanged over the country, Met office said.

The sun sets in the capital at 6:17pm today and rises at 5:44am tomorrow.

Country's highest temperature 37.0 degrees Celsius was recorded yesterday at Mongla and lowest 19.7 degrees Celsius at Dinajpur.

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	34.3	25.6	77	63
Chittagong	31.0	24.2	69	77
Rajshahi	34.5	24.0	87	73
Khulna	34.6	26.3	76	66
Barisal	33.6	25.5	83	69
Sylhet	31.8	22.0	78	67
Cox's Bazar	33.0	24.8	69	76



Pakistan High Commissioner Alamgir Mohammad Babar pays a courtesy call on BNP Chairperson and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Khaleida Zia at her Gulshan office in the city yesterday.

25m people at risk of arsenic contamination Speakers tell conference

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

About 20-25 million people of the country are at risk of exposure to arsenic contamination, speakers said yesterday at the inaugural ceremony of an international conference.

They also said there are more than 8,000 villages in the country which are at the risk of arsenic contamination.

Department of Public Health and Engineering (DPHE) and United Nations Children's Fund (Unicef) jointly organised the five-day conference at a city hotel where around 53 experts and government delegates from 12 Asian countries including Bangladesh are taking part.

Sheikh Kurshed Alam, secretary of Local Government Division (LGD), inaugurated the conference.

Speaking as the chief guest Kurshed Alam said the country has long been suffering from arsenic problem. "We have to ensure safe water for all," he said adding that regional support is imperative to face the crisis.

Unicef Representative Carel de Rooy said around 60 million people in the world are at risk of exposure to high levels of arsenic contamination and more than 80 percent of these people live in Asia. Around two-third of this people live in two countries -- India and Bangladesh, he added.

"Bangladesh has accomplished a lot in terms of arsenic mitigation during the last decade," he said adding

Prof Tofail made NU pro-VC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government yesterday appointed new pro-vice chancellor and treasurer of National University (NU).

It also appointed new treasurer of Bangladesh Open University (BOU). Prof Tofail Ahmed Chowdhury of chemistry department of Dhaka University has been appointed pro-vice chancellor and Prof Quazi Farruque Ahmed, former principal of Sheikh Borhanuddin Post-Graduate College and chief coordinator of National Front of Teachers and Employees, has been appointed treasurer of the National University.

Prof Shanti Narayan Gosh of Accounting and Information System department of Dhaka University has been appointed treasurer of Bangladesh Open University.

Rajshahi has potential of 125MW power plant PDB survey team briefs RCC Mayor

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Rajshahi has potential for setting up of a 125-megawatt (MW) coal-fired power plant at Katakhal within three years, a PDB survey team informed RCC Mayor AHM Khairuzzaman Laton yesterday.

The four-member team led by Latifur Rahman, chief engineer of Rajshahi Power Distribution Centre, met the mayor at his office after completing a two-day survey at the site at Katakhal on the outskirts of the city.

The survey team was

that because of the mitigation efforts by the government with the support of several development partners 14 percent of the people living in arsenic-affected area of the country have already switched to safe drinking water.

"But millions more remain exposed to arsenic," he said urging the government, civil society, private sector and communities to complement

each other to ensure access to safe water.

Mustafizur Rahman, chief engineer of the DPHE, presided over the conference which was also addressed by Shahjahan Ali Mollah, joint secretary of LGD, Hans Spruijt, water, environment and sanitation (WES) chief of the Unicef, and Mark Henderson, Unicef East Asia and Pacific Regional Adviser.

2 shop employees shot

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two shop employees were shot during a gunfight between two groups of criminals in the city's Basabo under Sabubagh Police

Swiss help for economic development sought

UNB, Dhaka

State Minister for Environment and Forest Advocate Mostafizur Rahman yesterday sought more assistance from Switzerland for the economic development of the country.

The state minister made the request when Swiss Ambassador Dr Dora Rapold called on him at his office.

During the meeting, they discussed matter relating to the bilateral issues and mutual interests, particularly climate change of Bangladesh and environment related Switzerland-based projects.

Terming Bangladesh one of the most climate vulnerable countries in the world, Mostafiz sought all out support and cooperation from Switzerland to mitigate the bad impacts of climate change.

Head of operation of Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation Joseph Guntern was present.



Justice Gholam Rabbani speaks at a press conference organised by Governance Advocacy Forum at the Dhaka Reporters' Unity auditorium in the city yesterday. On his right are Mohsin Ali and Taleya Rahman and on his left is Harun-or-Rashid. (Story on Page 16)

AL lawmaker Latif misbehaves with govt official yet again

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, City

Awami League lawmaker from Chittagong-10 (Bandar and Patenga) constituency MA Latif once again misbehaved with a government official yesterday.

After being criticised for his behaviour with an additional inspector general of police on board a flight few months ago, MA Latif yesterday reminded the member (engineering) of Chittagong Port Authority (CPA) of his position and power as a member of parliament (MP).

The unpleasant incident took place when the six-member Public Undertaking Committee - Parliamentary Committee on Government Organisations - was visiting different jetties inside Chittagong port.

While accompanying them as the local MP, Latif provided the committee members with some information on New Mooring Container Terminal (NCT) that the official concerned of CPA couldn't agree with.

He once again put up some complaints regarding NCT activities to the committee while visiting jetty no 4. At this point, CPA Member (Engineering) Captain Zubaer Ahmed tried to refute the allegation when Latif challenged the CPA member to prove him wrong.

As Zubaer was about to explain his position, MA Latif rushed towards him raising his finger.

"I am a member of parliament," he reminded the CPA official.

"You are not allowed to talk until I ask you," he shouted. The CPA official stepped back immediately to see the situation does not turn worse.

The incident created an embarrassing situation for the CPA officials as well as for the visiting committee members.

Latif, also the president of Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCCI), also misbehaved with customs officials at a meeting with NBR chairman at CCCI conference room on Saturday.

Maintain status quo

HC asks Ittefaq

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court (HC) yesterday directed the authorities concerned to maintain status quo for three months in respect of management and publication of the daily Ittefaq by the Ittefaq Group of Publications Limited.

After hearing a writ petition, an HC bench of Justice Syed Mahmud Hossain and Justice Quamrul Islam Siddique issued a rule upon the authorities to explain why the letter issued by the Additional District Magistrate of Dhaka declaring Anwar Hossain Manju as printer and publisher of the Ittefaq should not be declared illegal.

A lawyer concerned told The Daily Star that following the HC order the name of Sajju Hossain, one of the directors of the Ittefaq Group of Publications Limited, will be published as printer and publisher of the Ittefaq.

The Information Secretary, District Magistrate and Additional District Magistrate of Dhaka, the Ittefaq Group of Publications Limited, Sajju Hossain and Anwar Hossain Manju have been asked to reply to the HC rule.

Additional District Magistrate of Dhaka, on March 25, issued the letter to Sajju Hossain, declaring Anwar Hossain as printer and publisher of the Ittefaq.

Sajju Hossain, wife of company's executive director-1, earlier applied to the district magistrate of Dhaka to declare her as permanent printer and publisher of the newspaper.

On October 17, 2007, the district magistrate permitted Sajju Hossain to discharge as printer and publisher of the Ittefaq for a temporary period.

Moinul Hossain yesterday filed a writ petition with the HC challenging the legality of March 25 letter of the additional district magistrate. Deputy Attorney General Razak-Al-Jalil was present for the state.

Death anniversary

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Today is the first death anniversary of Gulshan Akhter, a journalist, writer, poet and former assistant editor of the Daily Jangor, says a press release.

She passed away due to cancer on this day last year.

She was the treasurer of Dhaka Union of Journalist (DUJ), vice president of Bangladesh Women Journalists' Forum, senior vice-president of Bangladesh Music Journalists' Association and vice-president of Bangabandhu Jubo Parishad.

Relatives, admirers and colleagues have been requested to pray for salvation of her departed soul.