

Govt forms committee to probe WTCC incident

BSS, Dhaka

Ministry of Home Affairs yesterday constituted a three-member committee headed by Additional Secretary of the ministry Md Golam Hossain to probe into the Friday's incident at the office of the Water Transport Co-ordination Cell (WTCC) in Chittagong.

The other members of the committee are -- Deputy Inspector General DIG (Finance) of Police Headquarters Mainur Rahman Chowdhury and Deputy Secretary of the Home Ministry Md Zakir Hossain, sources said.

The committee will investigate all incidents that took place at the WTCC office on Friday.

The government has asked the committee to submit its report to the home ministry within seven days.

US asst secy Blake arrives; meets Khaleda

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

US Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs Robert O Blake arrived in the city yesterday on a two-day visit to Bangladesh.

He met Leader of the Opposition and BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia at her Gulshan office last night and discussed issues of bilateral interests.

"They had talks on wide ranges of issues to further strengthening the bilateral ties. The BNP chairperson told Blake that her party is committed to strengthening the relations between two countries," said chairperson's adviser Shamsheer Mobin Chowdhury after the meeting.

He quoted Khaleda as saying that the party prefers sustained development of the bilateral relations between Bangladesh and the United States as the US plays significant role in development of the country and expected it would be continued in future.

In his brief remarks, Blake told reporters that it was his first visit to Bangladesh and the meeting with the opposition leader was "very productive." "We discussed how to strengthen the relations between the two countries."

During their one-hour meeting, BNP Secretary General Khandaker Delwar Hossain, former state minister Reaz Rahman and chairperson's adviser Shamsheer Mobin Chowdhury accompanied Khaleda Zia, while Ambassador James F Moriarty was with the US assistant secretary.

Robert O Blake is scheduled to meet with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, Foreign Minister Dipu Moni and Home Minister Sahara Khatun today and hold a press conference on the outcomes of all meetings.

According to sources in American Centre, Blake landed at the Zia International Airport around 4.50pm.

"He will discuss a number of bilateral issues between the US and Bangladesh," said a statement of the US embassy.

Death anniversary

METRO DESK



Today is the 10th death anniversary of film director and cameraman QM Zaman, says a press release.

He was the first chief cameraman of Film Development Corporation.

He received many awards at home and abroad for his contribution to film.

To mark his death anniversary, foods will be distributed among the destitute and a milad mahfil will be held at his ancestral home at 'Shaheb Bari' in Hajiganj after Asr prayers.

Mohiuddin Ahmed

METRO DESK



Today is the 10th death anniversary of Chowdhury Mohiuddin Ahmed (Tara Mia), a former police officer and sportsman, says a press release.

On the occasion, a milad mahfil will be held at Dattapara Jam-e-Masjid in Madaripur after Asr prayers.

Relatives and well-wishers are requested to attend the milad mahfil and pray for the salvation of the departed soul.

Collect war crimes-related info from foreign countries to facilitate trial

Speakers urge govt

DU CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a discussion yesterday said war crimes-related information, including written documents and films those are preserved in libraries and other institutions in overseas countries, should be collected to facilitate the trial of war criminals.

They also said the government along with expatriate Bangladeshis should take the initiative seriously so that the documents can be used in the trial process, if necessary.

Ekkattor Ghatak Dalal Nirmul Committee, a forum for secular Bangladesh and trial of war criminals of 1971, organised the discussion on 'Involvement of expatriates in

the process of trial of war criminals' at Bilia auditorium in the city.

Dr Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir, chairman of the parliamentary standing committee on public undertakings, said, "Those who took position against the liberation war and took the path of massacre and repression have to stand trial on this land."

The government primarily allocated Tk 10 crore in the proposed budget and would provide Tk 100 crore, if necessary, to hold the trial, he added.

Sector commander Maj Gen (ret'd) KM Shafiullah said those who do not believe with liberation war of 1971 and term it a civil war are accused

in crimes on sedition charges.

Shahriar Kabir, acting president of the organisation, said official recognition of different international institutions and communities are needed to protect 'Pakistani propaganda' to try war criminals.

War crimes-related information preserved in overseas countries should be collected and placed before international communities to create global public opinion as well as be placed before special tribunal, he added.

Dr ABM Nasir, Prof Mahfuza Khanam and Dr Mohammad Mohsin Ali also spoke at the programme with National Prof Kabir Chowdhury in the chair.



BNP leader Major (ret'd) M Hafizuddin Ahmed speaks at a press conference at the National Press Club in the city yesterday demanding steps to halt the Tipaimukh Dam project of the Indian government. On his left is BNP Secretary General Khandaker Delwar Hossain. (Story on Page 16)

BNP may start reorganisation of associate bodies soon

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The National Standing Committee of BNP held a meeting to discuss various issues, including joining parliament and ongoing reorganisation process of the party, last night.

The meeting was going on till filing of this report at 10:00pm, with Chairperson Khaleda Zia in the chair at her Gulshan office in the city.

Party leaders told reporters that the standing committee may initiate the reorganisation process of the party's associate bodies through announcing convening committees for Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) after dissolving its present committee

soon.

They said after announcing JCD committee, the party chairperson will also form convening committees for Jubo Dal and Mahila Dal in a bid to reorganise associate bodies from grassroots level.

Earlier in the last week, the party had dissolved 71 organisational district committees and announced convening committees in a bid to reorganise the party.

Asked about the standing committee meeting, some leaders said the meeting might decide on joining the parliament to raise important issues, including fallout from India's controversial Tipaimukh dam project and the "deteriorating law and

order situation" in the country.

Party leaders said BNP high command thinks they will be able to create opinion through taking part in budget discussion in parliament against the government as they think the ruling party is not playing any role against Indian plan to build Tipaimukh dam.

The main opposition BNP has been boycotting the parliament over an ongoing dispute on seating arrangement in the House.

The last meeting of the standing committee on May 18 decided to dissolve 71 out of 75 district-level units to convene them anew as part of a 'grassroots-up' shake-up after the party's disastrous showing in the December general elections.

Sahara visits Gulshan house, asks residents not to be worried

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Home Minister Sahara Khatun last night visited the residents of a Gulshan Avenue house who had claimed that a gang of people allegedly of the ATN Bangla chairman tried to evict them from their house early Wednesday.

The minister had a meeting with house owner Abdul Quayyum and other family members for over an hour.

After coming out of the house around 10:20pm, she told reporters that the family members said they are now living with a sense of insecurity.

Sahara asked them not to be worried, saying that nothing undemocratic will take place under the democratic government. "We are with the truth," she added.

Earlier when contacted, ATN Bangla Chairman Mahfuzur Rahman had said people of the former owner of the house, from whom he had bought the land and the house in March, were sent there to evict the residents and let him have possession of the house.

Mafia don Daud's 3 aides sent to jail

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Detective police are trying to find out whether the detained accomplices of Mafia don Daud Ibrahim have any links with militancy or arms and drug trafficking or have been involved in criminal activities in the country.

The Detective Branch of Police said this in a report placed before a Dhaka court yesterday.

The DB police submitted the report while producing the two accomplices -- Indian nationals Abdul Rauf Daud Merchant and Zahid Sheikh -- and their Bangladeshi host Mohammad Kamal before the court of Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Tania Kamal at the end of six-day remand.

The court sent the three to jail.

However, the three did not have any defence lawyers, court sources said.

In the report, DB Inspector Md Ashraf Hossain, who is the investigation officer (IO) of the case, said that the three have already given some important information and that they need to be grilled further for the sake of investigation.

The detectives are now verifying the information extracted from the criminals and also arrested another Indian Arif Hossain from Mohammadpur following their information, he said.

He said if the criminals get released on bail, they might flee to India.

'Change mindset to ensure women's rights'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a publication ceremony yesterday urged all to change their mindset for establishing women's rights and taking the country forward.

They also stressed the need for incorporating the indigenous thoughts into the development theory for true development of the country.

With the help of Canadian International Development Agency, (CIDA) Faria Lara Foundation organised the ceremony at Public Library auditorium in the city.

The book titled 'Gender Unnayan Kosh' edited by writer Selina Hossain and published by Faria Lara Foundation includes write-ups on gender, development, health, human rights and third sex issued and issues related to minority communities, development theory, different laws of ethnic community and their problems.

A total of 158 established and emerging writers contributed to the book that portrays a complete picture of the society, making the book a really informative one, said the speakers.

Many of us are still in the dark about people like the Dalits and the indigenous people and their problems, said Prof Anisuzzaman while addressing the ceremony as the chief guest, adding that this book will really come handy since it contains information on such issues.

Referring to the theme of Beijing platform, former adviser and Executive Director of Ain O Salish Kendra Advocate Sultana Kamal said, "See the world through a woman's eyes where there would be equality, peace and independence."



PHOTO STAR

Artists perform 'Gamvira' (folk song and dance) on a colourfully decorated truck in front of the National Press Club in the city yesterday as part of awareness programme on the eve of fortnight-long fruit-bearing tree plantation programme.

JS body opens talks to stop detention without trial

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A parliamentary body yesterday opened talks on how to stop detention without trial and torture inflicted by law enforcement and intelligence agencies, violating human rights and the fundamental rights guaranteed by the constitutions.

While scrutinising the proposed bill on national human rights commission, the parliamentary standing committee on law, justice and parliamentary affairs ministry began the discussion and decided to sit again, meeting sources said.

"We discussed the issues of unlawful detention and alleged torture and harassment by the law enforcement agencies. We will discuss more to propose inclusion of any provision in the bill to prevent those," Abdul Matin Khasru, a member of the committee, told The Daily Star after the meeting.

Matin Khasru, also former law minister, said they are also discussing the power, jurisdiction and formation of national human rights commission to make it more effective. He said the bill will be passed in the current session of the parliament.

Talking to The Daily Star, another member of the committee, Advocate Rahmat Ali, said they are pondering over ways to protect human rights.

"If we can make a legal provision, no law enforcement agencies can torture people by taking them under their custody," Rahmat Ali said after the meeting held at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhavan.

Three reports were also placed at the committee meeting on the status of legal framework on protecting human rights in Germany, France and the UK. The members of the parliamentary body prepared the reports after their visit to the countries.

In the wake of longstanding demand for setting up a national human rights commission to take action against violation of human rights, the immediate past caretaker

government set up a national human rights commission after promulgation of an ordinance to this effect.

But the ordinance ceased to have effect on February 25 making the national human rights commission dysfunctional, as the ordinance was not ratified in the parliament within the specific timeframe.

Later, the AL-led government, however, placed a bill in the parliament on the contents of the defunct ordinance with a view to enacting a law for continuation of the human rights commission.

Earlier, a sub-committee headed by Matin Khasru placed its report recommending increased salaries, allowances and benefits for the judges of Supreme Court and the lower courts.

It suggested increasing the retirement age of judges of lower judiciary to 60 from 57. The sub-committee recommended enacting a law to amend the constitution to determine the eligibility of the Supreme Court judges for appointment.

PAC plays vital role in ensuring financial transparency

Speakers says at workshop

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a workshop yesterday said Public Accounts Committee (PAC) of parliament plays a vital role in ensuring financial transparency and accountability of the government and public servants.

Titled 'Briefing and information sharing: PAC practice', the daylong workshop was organised by Strengthening Public Account Committee Project of Bangladesh Parliament Secretariat and the World Bank Dhaka office.

Addressing as the chief guest, Speaker Abdul Hamid Advocate said transparency and accountability is needed in public sector for sustainable economic development.

"We promised in the party's election manifesto that we'd take every step to ensure transparency and accountability in the public sector," Hamid said.

He also said that PAC is the most important committee of any parliamentary system, adding "PAC is one of the only two standing committees named in our constitution."

Giving a statistics, Hamid said as many as 98 audit reports with 1742 audit complaints are pending in the House since 2000 which involves Tk 14,848.19 crore.

He said the government is trying to develop the country's image in the international forums by way of sustainable progress in economic sector and ensuring transparency and accountability in all spheres.

Tahseen Sayed, acting country director of World Bank, said improving overall public sector governance would be incomplete unless there is a strong oversight over governance system.

"The legislature, who have been entrusted by the people to ensure accountability at all levels, must hold the govern-

ment accountable for administering public purse," he added.

BNP Vice Chairman MK Anwar told reporters that PAC ensures transparency and accountability of the government.

He admitted that there might be some irregularities in spending public money during the last BNP-led alliance government.

The opposition lawmaker also commented that it would be better if the chairman of PAC was nominated from the opposition.

Ashfaq Hamid, secretary of Bangladesh Parliament Secretariat, said PAC plays a pivotal role in ensuring financial accountability of the government.

The World Bank-funded three-year project will expire on December 2011. It remained inactive in the last two years as the parliament was inoperative.

Body formed to formulate MPO policy

UNB, Dhaka

The government has formed a ten-member committee headed by Prime Minister's Education, Social Development and Political Affairs Adviser Dr Alaaddin Ahmed to formulate a concrete policy for MPO allocation and enlistment of new educational institutions.

According to an official announcement yesterday, the committee would review the existing policy for providing Monthly Payment Order (MPO) to private educational institutions and formulate a draft policy for the inclusion of new educational institutions in the MPO list.

The other members of the committee are chairman of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Education Ministry Rashed Khan

Menon, its Member Principal Shah Alam, directors-general of the Secondary and Higher Secondary Education Directorate and Technical Education Directorate, the chairman of Bangladesh Madrasah Education Board, joint secretary (college) of Education Ministry, Principal Kazi Faruk and Abdul Awal Siddiqui of teachers associations and Director of Bangladesh Bureau of Education Information and Statistics.

"The committee will also recommend formulating a performance-based policy by reviewing structure of non-government educational institutions and recommending MPO enlistment of new private educational institutions within next two weeks," the announcement said.



Thundershowers likely

UNB, Dhaka

Rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty or squally wind is likely to occur at one or two places over all six divisions in the next 12 hours as of 6:00pm today.

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

The sun sets in the capital at 6:47pm today and rises at 5:11am tomorrow.

Yesterday's highest temperature of 35.6 degree Celsius was recorded at Ishwardi and the lowest of 22.6 degree at Chandpur and Dhaka.

The 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	34.7	22.6	74	63
Chittagong	32.8	23.0	81	80
Rajshahi	35.5	25.8	93	68
Khulna	34.6	27.8	75	68
Barisal	34.2	26.0	71	70
Sylhet	31.4	24.5	98	74
Cox's Bazar	33.5	27.0	77	77



Workshop

Bangladesh Association for Social Advancement organises a workshop on 'Ecological sanitation: Issues and prospect in Bangladesh'. Venue: DPHE auditorium. Time: 10:30am.

Saarc Seminar

The inaugural ceremony of the two-day tri-topic Saarc seminar on 'Current good manufacturing practices in pharmaceutical sector', 'Radiation processing' and 'Insects resistant crop variety for sustainable agriculture' will be held. Venue: Sheraton Hotel. Time: 9:00am.

Seminar

Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran organises a seminar on 'Woman in the mirror of divine beauty and divine glory' on the occasion of birthday of Hazrat Fatema Zahra (AS). Venue: TSC auditorium, DU. Time: 3:00pm.