

Most political parties hail verdict

BNP says people's Zia belief not to be erased

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Most political parties yesterday hailed the High Court's verdict that declared that Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, not Ziaur Rahman, proclaimed the independence of Bangladesh in 1971.

The main opposition BNP, however, said the belief of millions of people that Zia had declared the country's independence could not be erased by a judgment of any court.

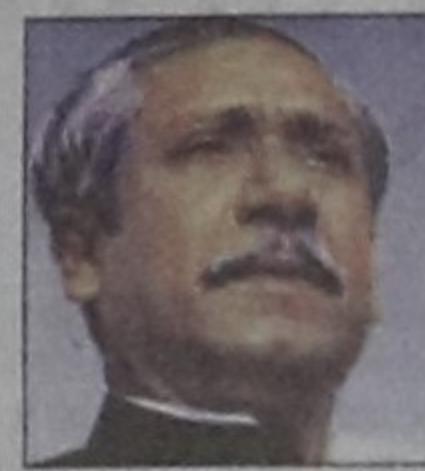
Talking to The Daily Star, ruling Awami League (AL) Presidium member and Agriculture Minister Matia Chowdhury said, "If you tell a lie ten times to establish it as a truth, it never becomes a truth."

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1

It's Bangabandhu, not Zia

HC rules Sheikh Mujib declared independence

JULFIKAR ALI MANIK and
ASHUTOSH SARKAR



HC observes...

- * Mujib's proclamation made on March 26, 1971
- * Circulated through Kalurghat Betar next day
- * Protected by the constitution

HC orders...

- * Confiscate books describing Zia as proclaimer
- * Take steps against history distorters
- * Publish real accounts of independence struggle

Bangabandhu.

The HC bench comprised of Justice ABM Khairul Haque and Justice Mamtauddin Ahmed yesterday dismissed that claim, which had befuddled many over the Liberation War history.

It also ordered cancellation of second edition of the third installment of 15-volume war documents that portray Zia as the declarer of independence.

The Liberation War affairs ministry brought out the publications during the BNP-Jamaat-led alliance government in June 2004.

The court said the government could take actions against those who sought to rewrite history.

In the judgment containing several rulings and observations, it also directed the administration to confiscate the books presenting Zia as proclaimer of independence.

Besides, it ordered to ensure that textbooks at all levels and for all mediums have the facts about the independence struggle.

The HC gave its verdict after reviewing all relevant documents, books, newspapers published at home and abroad in March 1971, and arguments of the lawyers.

It directed the Attorney General's Office and the petitioner to send a copy of the judgment to the education ministry.

ministry.

The debate had the nation deeply split for nearly three decades, much to success of those relentlessly trying to warp the young minds.

The most damaging was inclusion of distorted history in the textbooks.

The judgment, first of its kind, came in response to a writ petition filed by freedom fighter MA Salam.

Salam filed the petition as public interest litigation (PIL) on April 19, seeking court directives to stop distortion of history.

Later, Wing Commander (retd) Hamidullah Khan, a freedom fighter and BNP leader, became party to the case, opposing the petition.

Former chief of army staff Lt Gen (retd) Harun-ar-Rashid endorsed the petition and became involved in the case, opposing the petition.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

JS trio gets letter, won't turn up before probe body

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Former speaker Jamiruddin Sircar, his deputy Akhtar Hamid Siddiqui and former chief whip Khandaaker Delwar Hossain will not appear before the all party parliamentary probe body though it yesterday asked them through letters to appear before it on June 27 to defend themselves against graft charges.

BNP sources said, the three leaders will not respond to the parliamentary probe body as they think the move to summon the trio is politically motivated.

Directed by the committee, the parliament secretariat delivered separate letters to

SEE PAGE 15 COL 5

Withdraw amnesty to whiten money

Major chamber, business leaders ask govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Expressing concern over allowing whitening of black money in the proposed budget for the fiscal year 2009-10, major chambers and trade body leaders in a joint statement yesterday urged the government to withdraw the provision to encourage the genuine taxpayers.

"It is to be considered at all, it should be only for those who have legally earned profit in business but did not declare in the past, and such declared earnings may be allowed on payment of normal tax plus a token penalty for default," the statement said.

It also said, the businessmen are very much concerned about

SEE PAGE 15 COL 8

SEE PAGE 15 COL 8

Mayhem over illegal toll at Buriganga Bridge-2

50 hurt as CNG drivers, cadres clash for 6 hours

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Several hundred CNG-run auto-rickshaw drivers and hired cadres of the leaseholder of Buriganga Bridge-2 engaged in a series of clashes for six hours over collecting toll, injuring at least 50 people.

Transport movement to the south and southwestern districts of the country was suspended during the period, as the bridge remained blocked from 2:00pm due to the clash.

Police fired rubber bullets and charged baton to disperse the drivers who retaliated by throwing brickbats.

Witnesses said the supporters of the auto-rickshaw drivers also fired gunshots and exploded crackers. Keraniganj Upazila Chairman Shahin

SEE PAGE 12 COL 1

Cross digital divide to reach digital Bangladesh

Mobile operators told at The Daily Star roundtable

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The mobile industry in Bangladesh, which is still lagging at the bottom rung of tele-density in the region, is at the crossroads of growth where the huge untapped rural market beckons it. But the challenge is strong enough as the cost of owning a mobile set and connection is too prohibitive, making the vision of a Digital Bangladesh a pipe dream, a roundtable organised by The Daily Star was told yesterday.

The options to overcome the odds to bring about a revolutionary change in rural lifestyle in terms of internet use, telemedicine help and e-education are quite a few and some of them could be addressed through budgetary measures.

Mobile operators said the Tk 800 tax on SIM card is a big hindrance for a poor person to buy a mobile connection and this single reason pulled down the mobile industry growth from a high 6 percent in

January 2008 to a minus 3.5 percent in October 2008. This extra tax along with a 25 percent duty on mobile sets makes it prohibitive for the commoners to use mobile.

Since the mobile technology debuted in the country in 1993, six operators have added 46.41 million customers to their networks as of May this year. And of this customer base, maximum mobile penetration has been taking place in urban areas.

Bangladesh's tele-penetration is about 34 percent with the industry having generated more than 6.75 lakh direct and indirect employments so far, they said at the roundtable styled "Mobile sector growth prospects".

Operators blamed the tax on SIM card as the major digital divide between the rural and urban areas. They said such tax is one of the major barriers to expanding their costly networks to the rural areas as these areas may not give a healthy return in terms of revenue like in urban areas.

They said one option to close this divide could be withdrawal of the tax, which would ultimately increase the government's revenue collection through high sales and use of mobile connections.

A monthly surcharge--a minimum fixed rent per connection--could be another option from which the government will receive more revenues than it now receives from the tax on SIM card, they said.

Mobile phone operators are willing to introduce cheaper SIM cards for rural areas if the government removes the existing tax. A special tariff package along with the connection could be offered to rural people under this cheap connectivity initiative.

Mahfuz Anam, publisher and editor of The Daily Star, said, "Our next growth lies in the rural areas. So, any rationale for any cost-cutting to penetrate into rural areas

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

FULL ROUNDTABLE TEXT ON B4

2 'muggers' bullet-hit in 'shootout' with Rab

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two suspected muggers suffered bullet injuries in a "shootout" between their accomplices and members of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) last night in the city's Sutrapur area.

Rab sources said a patrol team of Rab-10 came under fire by a group of snatchers near Dayaganj bridge around 9:00pm, prompting them to fire back that ensued a gun battle between the Rab team and the criminals.

After the shootout, the Rab team found the two criminals--Russel, 20, and Johnny, 22, of South Jatrabari--with bullet injuries in their legs.

The injured were taken to Dhaka Medical College Hospital where they were undergoing treatment.

The Rab said the criminals were preparing for a crime.

MPs assured of pay, benefit hike

92 lawmakers get offices

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speaker Abdul Hamid yesterday said lawmakers would see a rise in their remuneration and allowances, as they are not drawing much.

"We are considering hiking remuneration and allowances of members of parliament (MPs)," the speaker said at a function at the

Jatiya Sangsad Media Centre while handing over keys to the offices of MPs.

The parliament secretariat yesterday handed over offices to 92 MPs in the first phase of allocating offices to lawmakers at the old MPs' hostel on the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban premises.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3



An identified criminal is seen with a firearm during a clash between the men of the toll collection authority of Buriganga Bridge-2 and general people yesterday centring an increase of tolls.

PHOTO: FOCUS BANGLA

India 'consulted' Tipai construction

Claims Pinak Ranjan at seminar; says no int'l river treaty exists; Dipu Moni feels need for greater connectivity

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Indian High Commissioner Pinak Ranjan Chakravarty yesterday said India has "consulted" construction of Tipaimukh dam with Bangladesh after having the matter examined by their experts.

"The perception that India has not consulted Bangladesh about building of the Tipaimukh dam is wrong and out of line," said Pinak Ranjan at a seminar. "The proposal of the project has been provided for Bangladesh," he added.

"Feasibility and design of the dam has been examined by Indian experts," he told the seminar titled "South Asian Connectivity: Bangladesh Perspective," organised by Bangladesh-India Friendship Society at Hotel Sonargaon.

He however said informing Bangladesh about the dam was delayed as examination about it required much time. But he did not mention exactly when India consulted with Bangladesh in this regard.

"Fear of earthquake or environmental hazard are hypothetical and never been substantiated by any scientific data. There is no scientific data," he added.

"There is a perception and speculation that India is breaking international treaty. There is no international treaty in this regard. There is a UN convention in which at least 35 countries

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

FROM 1ST JUNE 2009
OUR LAND LINE NUMBERS
HAVE CHANGED

Phone | Appointment: (02)-8401661

Master Health Check: (02)-8401600

Fax | (02)- 8401679

Emergency Hotline and Other Cell Numbers will Remain Unchanged

www.apollodhaka.com info@apollodhaka.com

sts group

Apollo Hospitals

Touching Lives

DHAKA