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Strong information commission sought

Govt vows to implement RTI law

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government is committed to implementing the Right to Information (RTI) law, however challenging the task may be, ministers said in response to advice from members of civil society and NGOs at a conference yesterday.

The civil society members and NGO officials also emphasised the need for a strong information commission.

"Undoubtedly, implementing any law is more challenging than enacting it, but we will implement the Right to Information law effectively considering its importance," Agriculture Minister Matia Chowdhury said at the inaugural session of the conference as the chief guest.

Free flow of information is important for achieving the goals of "Vision 2021"

announced by the government, Matia said. "I think organising of such conference during the early stage of implementation period is very crucial," she added.

The Right to Information Forum and Manusher Jonno Foundation jointly organised the conference titled "Right to Information: Law, Institution and Citizens" at Dhaka Sheraton Hotel. The conference kicked off with the presentation of traditional pot song portraying the importance of RTI in curbing corruption, improving service delivery, ensuring transparency and reducing poverty.

Addressing the conference as special guest, Information Minister Abul Kalam Azad said an information commission would be constituted within a few days to execute implementation of the RTI law from July 1.

He said a three-member body headed by an Appellate Division judge is working to form the commission. "The government has taken initiatives to pass it in parliament in a short time," he said. He also admitted that implementation of the law would be a great challenge for the government.

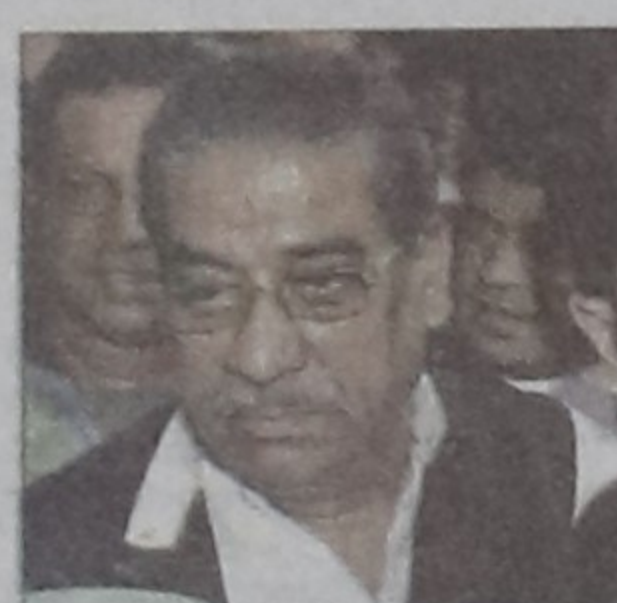
Former advisers to caretaker government, lawmakers, officials of different ministries, journalists, human rights activists from home and abroad, right to information activists from India, Pakistan, Mexico, the USA, Australia and the UK, and representatives of donors and development partners attended the conference. Former adviser to caretaker government Syed Manzur Elahi chaired the inaugural ceremony.

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CLASS OF 2009: Pakistan captain Younus Khan (C) and his teammates celebrate with the ICC World Twenty20 trophy at Lord's yesterday after beating Sri Lanka in the final by eight wickets.

PHOTO: INTERNET



Hasnat lands in jail

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday sent Awami League leader Abu Hasnat Abdullah to jail after he surrendered before the

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10 killed in Iran protests

Tehran on a knife-edge as opposition defies Islamic rulers

AGENCIES, Tehran

At least 10 people were killed in the latest unrest to shake Tehran, state television said yesterday, as the opposition kept up its defiance of Iran's Islamic rulers over the disputed election.

Opposition leader Mir Hossein Mousavi fired off an unprecedented criticism of supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei after police clashed with thousands of protesters on Saturday in the capital, swept up in the worst unrest since the Islamic revolution 30 years ago.

State television said 10 people were

killed and more than 100 wounded in riots and clashes in Tehran on Saturday, blaming "terrorists" armed with firearms and explosives.

Iran's deputy police chief Ahmad Reza Radan blamed "thugs" from the exiled opposition group the People's Mujahideen of Iran (PMOI) for the violence.

The official reports, which cannot be confirmed, accuse "rioters" of setting two petrol stations and a mosque ablaze in protest at a disputed poll result.

State media also say five family members of one of Iran's most powerful fig-

ures, Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, were arrested during the protests.

Meanwhile Iran has ordered the BBC's Jon Leyne out of the country.

"With regret, we can confirm that Jon Leyne, the BBC's permanent correspondent in Tehran has been asked to leave by the Iranian authorities. The BBC office remains open," a BBC statement said.

The protests were sparked by Iran's disputed presidential elections, but have since escalated into a political crisis.

Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has demanded an end to protest.

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Twenty20 glory Pakistan's

AFP, London

Pakistan stunned Sri Lanka by eight wickets in the ICC World Twenty20 final at a sell-out Lord's yesterday to be crowned world champions after 17 years.

Pakistan last won an official multi-nation tournament in 1992 when Imran Khan's team lifted the World Cup by beating England in the final at the Melbourne cricket ground in Australia.

Runners-up to India in the final of the inaugural World Twenty20 in South Africa two years ago, Pakistan ended Sri Lanka's unbeaten run in the tournament with style.

Yesterday's win by Younus Khan's team gave Pakistanis back home reason to cheer as the cricket-mad nation has been deprived of international tours due to security concerns in the volatile nation.

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CTG ARMS HAUL Court orders for TI parade

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A Chittagong court gave the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) the go-ahead for a test-identification (TI) parade to confirm that former National Security Intelligence (NSI) deputy director major (ret'd) Liakat Hossain was involved in the offloading of arms.

The Court of Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Helal Uddin of Chittagong gave the

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Beef up drive to free rivers

JS body also asks for quick case disposal

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A parliamentary body yesterday asked the authorities concerned to strengthen the ongoing drive to free the rivers across the country from grabbers by September and take steps for quick disposal of the pending cases to demolish the illegal establishments.

The parliamentary standing committee on land ministry also asked the ministries of industries, and environment and forest to prevent industries from dumping wastes into the rivers.

"We asked the Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA) to continue the drive against illegal establishments built on river banks. We want the authority to complete the task by September," AKM Mozammel Huq, chairman of the parliamentary standing committee on the ministry of land, told reporters after the meeting at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban.

The committee chief said the owners of illegal establishments obtain court's order against the eviction drive.

The committee asked the office of the attorney general to initiate measures for quick disposal of pending cases, as the BIWTA cannot demolish the illegal establishments due to the cases, he said.

Senior officials of the ministries of industries and environment at the meeting said the industries do not abide by the law

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PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Dhaka Wasa yesterday demolished illegal structures constructed on the Kalyanpur Cha Khal at Shyamoli in the capital.

Eviction lost in confusion

TAWFIQUE ALI and FAISAL PARAG, N'ganj

The tenth day of the ongoing eviction drive against the encroachers of river Shitalakhyia went almost wasted yesterday because of confusion and dubious survey by the authorities and their contradictory stance.

Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA) and Narayanganj district administration started the anti-encroachment drive at 11:00am but they faced difficulty in demolishing structures along the river.

Meanwhile, Dhaka Water Supply and Sewerage Authority (Wasa) yesterday in a drive demolished 62 structures constructed illegally on Kalyanpur 'Cha' canal at Shyamoli in the city.

In Narayanganj, the joint eviction team led by executive magistrate Farida Khanam approached Alpana Dyeing

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JS body to probe DCC corruption

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A parliamentary sub-committee was formed yesterday to investigate alleged corruption of Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) Mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka and others of the local government body.

The parliamentary standing committee on LGRD ministry formed the four-member probe body to enquire into the allegations it received against the incumbent mayor and other senior officials of the corporation.

Awami League (AL) lawmaker Monowar Hossain will lead the probe body that also includes ruling alliance lawmakers Ashraf Ali Khan Khasru, AKM Mostafizur Rahman and BNP lawmaker Abul Khair Bhuiyan.

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JMB took part in Kansat movement

A member tells The Daily Star

HASIBUR RAHMAN BILU, Bogra

In a sensational revelation, a member of Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) has said the militant group took part in the Kansat movement in April 2006 because they felt betrayed by the then BNP-led coalition government.

The JMB part-timer or gayeri ehsar, interviewed by The Daily Star, also said the militant group has opened two new offices in greater Rajshahi and greater Bogra alongside taking up new strategies to recruit members.

JMB became involved in the second round of the four-point Kansat movement in Shibganj upazila of Chapainawabganj on April 21, 2006. A leader of the movement who had prior contacts with the militant group used 500 local JMB full-time and part-time members to destroy government property and set alight several government cars.

The JMB members then left the Kansat movement.

The part-time JMB member also said the outfit decided to take part in the movement to unsettle the then BNP government as the BNP went back on the pledge to protect the organisation and annihilate the Sarbaharas. The pledge was given to executed JMB chief Shaikh Abdur Rahman and his deputy Siddiqui Islam alias Bangla Bhai before the organisation was deployed under the banner of Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh (JMJB).

This sense of betrayal led JMB members to single out government property and vehicles for attacks in Kansat.

The Kansat movement started on January 2006 after locals brought allegation of irregularities against the local Rural Electricity Board officials and irregular power supply.

JMB's CURRENT STATUS
The part-time JMB member told The Daily Star that despite being weakened by the government crackdown, the outfit is still using

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Govt to drop 46 more cases

All cases deemed 'politically motivated', filed against AL leaders

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government yesterday decided to withdraw 46 more 'politically motivated' cases filed against Awami League (AL) leaders including two against Deputy Leader of the Parliament Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury and three against Agriculture Minister Matia Chowdhury.

The decision came at the second meeting of the government's central committee on withdrawal of politically motivated cases filed for harassing political leaders during the BNP-Jamaat coalition government and immediate past caretaker government.

Earlier on June 10, the committee headed by State Minister for Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Quamrul Islam decided to withdraw 62 cases including 12 against Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

Briefing newsmen after the meeting at the home ministry yesterday Quamrul said, "We have reviewed 58 more cases today [yesterday] and decided to withdraw 46 filed to harass political leaders."

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OnlinePoll

The first case of swine flu infection has been detected in the country. Do you think Bangladesh is capable enough to tackle the swine flu threat?

Yes (36.3%)
No (61.9%)
No Comments (1.7%)

Total votes: 636

TODAY'S POLL

Do you agree with finance minister that a substantial investment will be created through the provision for whitening black money?

Please cast your vote at www.thedailystar.net

Prayer Timing

	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5:05	5:40
Zohr	1:45	2:15
Asr	6:00	6:15
Maghrib	7:52	7:55
Esha	9:17	9:45

Source: Islamic Foundation