

Involve opposition party in building inclusive democracy

US urges Bangladesh

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The US government is working with Bangladesh to strengthen institutions that deter violent extremism and has encouraged Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to engage with the opposition and include them in the decision-making process.

This was stated by US Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs Bureau Robert O Blake while making a statement before the Foreign Affairs Committee of US House of Representatives on Thursday.

In his remarks for the record, Blake said last December, on the heels of a

two-year state of emergency under a caretaker government, Bangladesh held the fairest and most transparent election in its history.

In many ways, he said, this moderate Muslim nation of 150 million people deserves US support as the people and government of Bangladesh are firmly committed to building an inclusive democracy, the economy has grown by more than five percent every year since the early 1990s and extremism finds little popular support.

"This promising backdrop makes it important for the United States to engage Bangladesh as it confronts daunting

challenges, including chronic political partisanship, widespread poverty, civil-military tensions, porous borders and corruption," the assistant secretary added.

"We are working with Bangladesh to strengthen institutions that deter violent extremism, and have encouraged Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to engage with the opposition and include them in the decision-making process."

"There are many pockets of excellence and positive momentum in Bangladesh that we hope to assist, including women's literacy and employment programmes", he further said.

Drug addict beaten to death by family members

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A drug addict was beaten to death by his father and other family members at Dakkhin Khan in the city on Thursday night.

The police recovered the body of Monjur-e-Elahi, 28, yesterday morning and arrested his father Abdul Malek, manager of Star Cement Factory.

Family sources said Manjur tried to take away his father's mobile phone on Thursday night but failed. Then he got furious and took out a Boti, a curved knife, from the kitchen and attacked his father, brother, mother and sisters and injured them.

After the incident, all the family members caught hold of him and gave him a beating, leaving him dead.

On receiving information, the police rushed to the spot and sent the body to Dhaka Medical College Hospital for autopsy.

The police said Abdul Malek sent his son Manjur to India for higher studies. Manjur came back home eight years later and the family members found that he became a drug addict.

Science Academy AGM held

METRO DESK

The annual general meeting (AGM) 2008 of the Bangladesh Academy of Sciences was held at conference room of the academy at Agargaon in the city yesterday, says a press release.

Prof Dr M Shamsheer Ali, president of the academy, chaired the meeting.

Prof Dr Naiyuum Choudhury, secretary of the academy, presented the activities and successes of the academy during last year while Prof Dr Syed M Humayun Kabir, treasurer of the academy, presented the financial report at the meeting.

The revised budget of the year 2008 and the proposed budget for 2009 were also approved in the meeting.

Workshop on info literacy held

METRO DESK

The closing ceremony of the five-day international workshop on information literacy was held in the city on Thursday, says a press release.

University Grants Commission (UGC) Chairman Prof Nazrul Islam attended the ceremony as the chief guest.

Thirty delegates from Tanzania, Philippines, Nepal, Indonesia, India and Bangladesh participated at the workshop and received certificate from the UGC chairman.

Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB) with assistance of the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA), the highest body on library affairs of the world, organised the workshop.

Eminent information literacy experts Prof Gary Gorman and Dr Dan Dorner, both from School of Information Management, Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand, conducted the workshop.

Prof Nazrul at the ceremony highlighted the UGC's plan for sponsoring electronic journals subscriptions for ensuring high quality research in the country.



Prof Kabir Chowdhury hands over Jahanara Imam Memorial Award to Bangladesh Aabriti Samannay Parishad President Asaduzzaman Noor MP at a programme marking the 15th death anniversary of Shaheed Janani Jahanara Imam at WVA auditorium in the city yesterday.

'Bring sedition charges against those who deny Proclamation of Independence'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Proclamation of Independence forms the legal basis of the country's independence and those who deny the Proclamation deny the very existence of the country and that sedition charges should be brought against them, said Shahriar Kabir, acting president of the Forum for Secular Bangladesh, yesterday.

"The Proclamation is the genesis of the constitution. The constitution can be amended, but the genesis cannot be changed," he told reporters after a discussion programme marking the 15th death anniversary of Shaheed Janani Jahanara Imam.

Those who deny the Proclamation have no right to be a citizen of this country, he said and called for cancellation of their citizenship.

Shahriar also urged the government to start the trial of war criminals immediately by amending the International Crimes (Tribunal) Act 1973 in the current session of parliament.

The Forum for Secular Bangladesh organised the discussion and Jahanara Imam Memorial Award giving ceremony at WVA auditorium in the city.

At the discussion, the

speakers demanded that April 10 be observed as 'Proclamation of Independence Day' and November 4 as 'Constitution Day' at the national level.

Barrister M Amir-Ul Islam delivered a memorial speech on 'Proclamation of Independence and the Constitution of 1972'.

He said the Proclamation is the legal basis of the entire activities of the government formed during the Liberation War.

Awami League lawmaker Asaduzzaman Noor said the government is committed to the trial of war criminals and that the trial process would be transparent.

Suranjit Sengupta called for steps to inscribe the Proclamation of Independence on the premises of every Shaheed Minar across the country.

Presided over by Prof Kabir Chowdhury, the discussion was also addressed by Dr Shirin Sharmin Chowdhury MP.

Later, the Forum handed over the Jahanara Imam Memorial Award to Lt Col (ret'd) Abu Osman Chowdhury and Bangladesh Aabriti Samannay Parishad in recognition of their contribution to upholding the spirit of the movement spearheaded by Jahanara Imam.

8 stolen cars recovered, seven arrested

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Detective Branch (DB) of police recovered eight stolen cars and arrested seven members of a gang of car lifters from across the country during a weeklong drive.

A team led by Deputy Commissioner (DC) of DB (South) conducted drives in Dhaka, Comilla, Chandpur, Kishoreganj and Narayanganj and arrested car mechanic Mohammed Arif, 22, from Tejgaon on June 19 with a stolen car.

Acting on the confessional statement of Arif, the DB recovered two more cars from Mohammadpur.

Later, the detectives arrested group leader of taxicab lifters Kamal Hossain, 24, and his accomplice Badruzzaman Niaz, 19. A taxicab was recovered from Kishoreganj town.

The detectives also arrested Sheikh Naser, 38, Mohammad Elias, 28, Mohammad Jahangir, 34, and Mujibar Rahman from Jatrabari and Uttarkhan in Dhaka and from Narayanganj. Later, they recovered four stolen taxicabs from Badda and Baridhara in Dhaka and Gouripur of Comilla.

Shahin, Anup CJFD president, general secretary

UNB, Dhaka

Shahinul Islam Chowdhury and Anup Kumar Khastagir were elected unopposed president and general secretary of Chittagong Journalists Forum-Dhaka (CJFD) for 2009-2010.

The new committee was elected at the annual general meeting of CJFD held at Chittagong Bhaban in the city yesterday.

Director of Foreign Ministry M Nasiruddin acted as chief election commissioner.

Earlier, CJFD General Secretary Saif Islam Dillal and Finance Secretary Anup Kumar Khastagir presented their annual reports at the meeting with its President Shilabrata Barua in the chair.

Other office-bearers are Vice-President: M Saim Tipu, Joint Secretary: Hossain Zakir, Finance Secretary: AFM Borhan, Office and Publicity Secretary: Kafi Kamal, Sports, Cultural and Social Welfare Secretary: Mashrur Shakil.

Executive committee members are Md Mustafa Kamal, Santosh Sharma, Shilabrata Barua and Saif Islam Dillal.

Burglars loot valuables worth Tk 20 lakh from city house

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A gang of burglars took away gold ornaments, diamond rings and other valuables worth about Tk 20 lakh from a house at Dhanmondi in the city.

The break-in took place sometime between 9:00pm on June 24 and 11:00am on June 26 when the family members have been out, said Dhanmondi police.

The family members went to Faridpur to visit their relatives.

Sub-inspector Sazzad Hossain, who is the investigation officer of the case, said the burglars entered the flat of Shaheed Ahmed at House No. 60 of Road No. 9/A after cutting the grille of a window and took away 70 tolas of gold ornaments, five diamond rings, a pair of diamond earrings and other valuables.

The police also said they detained Habib, a security guard of the apartment, for questioning.

BSF kills cattle trader

A CORRESPONDENT, Benapole

Indian Border Security Force (BSF) beat a Bangladeshi cattle trader to death at Ghiba boarder at Benapole yesterday.

The victim was identified as Ali Hossain, 24, of Ghiba village.

Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) and villagers said the BSF members captured him while he was returning home from Indian border area.

He was taken to Bashghatha camp and beaten to death. Then the BSF threw the body into Bangladesh territory.

Symposium on Thai edn begins today

UNB, Dhaka

A two-day symposium on pre-university education of Thailand begins at Lake Shore Hotel in the city today.

Campaign for Popular Education, Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies and Institute of Education Development of BRAC University jointly organised the symposium titled 'Learning from Neighbours: the Trajectory of Educational Progress'.

DHAKA TODAY

Conference

The National Tuberculosis Conference of the NATAB will be held. Venue: LGED conference room. Time: 10:00am.

Media award

UNFPA organises the prize giving ceremony of the Media Award and Poster Contest. Venue: Sheraton Hotel. Time: 5:00pm.

Roundtable

Odhakar organises a roundtable marking the United Nations International Day in Support of Victims of Torture. Venue: Cirdap auditorium. Time: 2:00pm.

Rabindra Sangeet

Indian High Commission in association with 'Shadhona' will organise a Rabindra Sangeet evening. Venue: Cultural Centre of Indian HC. Venue: 7:00pm.

Roundtable

Association of Private Universities of Bangladesh organises a roundtable on proposed private universities act 2009. Venue: National Press Club. Time: 11:00am.

Seminar

One World One Health and Institute for Epidemiology and Disease Control and Research (IEDCR) jointly organise a seminar on 'Pandemic influenza: Challenge and response'. Venue: IEDCR auditorium, Mohakhali. Time: 10:00am.

Roundtable

Bangladesh Organisation for Disabled Advancement organises a roundtable on employment and social status of people with disabilities. Venues: National Press Club. Time: 3:00pm.

Exhibition

The inaugural ceremony of an art exhibition will be held. Venue: Gallery Chitrag. Time: 6:30pm. The exhibition will remain open till July 7 everyday from 11:00am to 9:00pm.



Police intercept a BNP procession when they were going to submit a memorandum to the UN Dhaka Office in the city yesterday demanding international probe into torture on political leaders and businessmen during the tenure of the previous caretaker government. (Story on Page 1)

Proposed budget more gender sensitive

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Terming the proposed budget for 2009-10 as more prone to gender sensitivity speakers at a discussion yesterday said the country is moving forward to gender budgeting though very slowly.

At the discussion organised by Bangladesh Economic Association at its auditorium the speakers highlighted the main features related to gender budgeting and placed some recommendations in this regard.

The speakers said that economic empowerment is important for women's development and if the budget is not gender sensitive, it cannot play effective role in women's empowerment.

While presenting the keynote paper Dr Pratima Pal Majumder of Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS) said if the national budget lacks gender sensitivity, it could not be used as a tool of women empowerment.

Salma Khan, former chairperson of Cedaw committee, said the proposed budget did not specify any agriculture based project for women though a huge number of women contributing there and remain unrecognised.

She also pointed out that it

"All the targets in the budget are gender sensitive and the strategies taken to achieve the targets are also gender sensitive," said Pratima following a review of the proposed budget.

The most influencing factor in the proposed budget is incorporating 20 ministries in the Medium Term Budgetary Framework as it focuses analysing the after-effects of different projects on poverty, she said.

But soon it would be clear that how much the priority sectors -- agriculture, rural development, social capital, industry and electricity -- are gender sensitive and the government's next steps will prove how helpful this budget would be for women empowerment, she added.

Salma Khan, former chairperson of Cedaw committee, said the proposed budget did not specify any agriculture based project for women though a huge number of women contributing there and remain unrecognised.

She also pointed out that it

is not clear how Tk 10000 crore, proposed for agricultural loan, would be distributed among the women.

As female members of household are increasing day by day, the government should have a policy to address feminisation of poverty, said Bangladesh Mahila Parishad President Ayesha Khanam.

The speakers also stressed the need to restore the National Women Development Policy 1997 and its proper implementation as was said in the proposed budget speech.

Criticising the micro credit system for women Rokeya Kabir, executive director of Nari Progati Sangha, said the formal banking system should be developed for the marginal poor women, as men in the micro credit system tend to use women to serve their interest.

Economist Dr Qazi Kholiquzzaman Ahmad presided over the discussion while Dr Farashuddin, among others, spoke.

Green economy a must to tackle multiple crises

Say UN agencies

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Nearly two dozen agencies of the United Nations system have banded together to issue an urgent call for nations to 'green' their economies to address the multiple crises that are dampening progress towards reaching development targets.

In a statement on Thursday to the high-level UN Conference on the World Financial and Economic Crisis and its Impact on Development, currently underway in New York, 21 agencies joined forces to underscore the need for a shift to a green economy that can spur job creation and curb a multitude of threats ranging from current crises related to food, water and climate change.

"The solidarity of the international community is being tested," said the statement.

"Let this economic recovery be the turning point for an ambitious and effective international response to the multiple crises facing humanity," it added.

The ultimate test, the agencies pointed out, will come in December when nations are expected to wrap up negotiations in the Danish capital on a new climate change pact that will replace the Kyoto Protocol, whose first commitment period expires in 2012.

"Let Copenhagen be the turning point for ushering in a global green economy," they said, according to a UN News Centre report received here yesterday.

The statement underscored the need for fiscal reforms which can encourage green investment, as well as phasing out 'perverse' subsidies which result in the excessive use of fossil fuels in agriculture and fisheries.

"The revenues saved by phasing out such subsidies could be reallocated towards the development of green job skills, the provision of clean, affordable energy alternatives for the poor, and support to other green sectors with broad economic benefits," it noted.

The agencies also highlighted the importance of reviving trade to boost development and the transfer of environmentally-friendly technologies to make clean energy affordable to poorer

nations and support climate change mitigation and adaptation.

"Early conclusion of the Doha Round trade negotiations can facilitate a green recovery, in particular the negotiations on environmental goods and services, fisheries subsidies, and reforming agriculture rules that would be conducive to fostering food security for all."

Further, the joint statement underlined the need for education to pave the way for sustainable development through training for new job skills and for newly-required health systems.

"Delivering a transition to a low-carbon, resource-efficient Green Economy cannot occur without the creativity, vision, actions and support of a broad cross-section of society," said Achim Steiner, executive director of the UN Environment Programme (UNEP).

"This rapid harmonisation of perspectives from so many agencies reflects their determination to be agents of change towards a sustainable 21st century," said Steiner, who presented the statement on behalf of all 21 agencies.

Taxes on mobile, SIM should go

FROM PAGE 16

Once the rich only could avail themselves of mobile phones, he said, adding that if the prices of mobile phone sets go high now, the technology will again go beyond the reach of the poor.

He said mobile sets valued between Tk 3,000 and Tk 5,000 should be out of the taxnet.

Debaripya noted that the Tk 800 tax on SIM cards would also create similar problems.

Information technology expert Mustafa Jabbar in his keynote paper proposed keeping mobile phone sets priced up to \$100 out of the tax net and withdrawing VAT on Internet use.

Mobile phone operators said imposing more taxes would increase illegal import of mobile phone sets and smuggling of money.

Economists at the seminar

cautioned the government of a digital divide in case of flawed policies.

Regulatory Reforms Commission Chairman Dr Akbar Ali Khan said e-governance is the most vital thing that the government should concentrate on.

Only providing computers is not enough, he said, adding, "It is the legal and bureaucratic procedures that need change. Human resources development is a must for it."

Former finance adviser to caretaker government Mirza Azizul Islam said, "We have to think how to take digital facilities to the 40 percent people living under poverty line."

The whole issue should be looked at from the economic perspective, he said. "We must think how we can provide incentives for schools in rural

areas for computer literacy and bring the 40 percent people out of poverty."

Bangladesh Economic Association President Prof QK Ahmad put emphasis on providing schools with computers and training of teachers.

The finance minister said 4 crore people in Bangladesh now use mobile phones while cyber cafes operate even in remote rural areas. "It is not important that all own mobile sets or computers with Internet connection, but we should ensure that they have easy access to such facilities," he said.

Muhiht said the government is framing a policy in this regard. All government officials of the deputy secretary rank will be trained in computer usage by this year.

WEATHER TODAY

Rain likely

UNB, Dhaka

Light to moderate rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty or squally wind is likely to occur at a few places over Khulna, Barisal, Chittagong and Sylhet divisions and at one or two places over Rajshahi and Dhaka 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 7:50pm today and rises at 6:14am tomorrow.

Country's highest temperature 36.0 degrees Celsius was recorded yesterday at Rajshahi and Ishwardi and lowest 24.7 degrees Celsius at Rangamati.

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	34.6	27.8	73	66
Chittagong	31.8	26.8	76	73
Rajshahi	36.0	26.8	71	67
Khulna	34.6	27.0	74	70
Barisal	33.0	27.5	75	87
Sylhet	30.8	26.3	76	78
Cox's Bazar	34.0	25.8	68	71