

SEDITION CASE Charges framed against two lawyers

COURT CORRESPONDENT A Dhaka court yesterday framed charges against two Supreme Court (SC) lawyers in connection with a seditious case filed in December 2006.

The lawyers are Subrata Chowdhury and Sheikh Awsafur Rahman, who are now on bail. Judge ANM Bashir Ullah of the Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court, Dhaka framed the charges and set January 21 and 24 for trial of the case.

Meanwhile, the two lawyers yesterday pleaded not guilty and demanded justice before the court after the charges were read out to them.

Rafiqul Islam, the SC court keeper, filed the case with Shahbagh police station accusing 200 people, including noted jurists Dr Kamal Hossain, Barrister Amir-Ul Islam, Barrister Rokonuddin Mahmud, Barrister Tania Amir, Subrata Chowdhury and Sheikh Awsafur Rahman of the vandalism and tearing off of the national flag on December 5, 2006.

But, the investigation officer of this case submitted charge sheet to the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Court, Dhaka, against only Subrata Chowdhury and Sheikh Awsafur Rahman on January 6 last year and dropped names of others from the charge sheet.

Fruitful border talks with Myanmar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT A Bangladeshi delegation during its five-day visit to Myanmar held a series of meetings with different authorities on nine specific issues, including cross-border crime, deployment of military forces and smuggling.

BDR officials sources said six delegates, led by Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) Director General Maj Gen Md Mainul Islam, held several fruitful meetings. The official talks were held from January 10 to 14.

Other delegation members include BDR Chittagong Range Commander Col Habibur Rahman, BDR HQ Staff Officer Lt Col Nasimul Alam, Deputy Secretary Afroza Parveen, Senior Assistant Secretary AS Wahiduzzaman and ADC to BDR DG Capt Adnan Kabir. The team held separate meetings with the high-ups of Myanmar police, border force Nasaka, immigration, home ministry and foreign ministry.

Indian air chief places wreath at Shikha Anirban

UNB, Dhaka Chief of Indian Air Force Air Chief Marshal PV Naik paid tributes to the memory of the members of the armed forces martyred during the War of Liberation in 1971 by placing wreaths at the 'Shikha Anirban' at Dhaka Cantonment yesterday.

He also signed the visitors' book there. Later, the Indian air chief called on Chief of Air Staff Air Marshal SM Ziaur Rahman at the Air Headquarters in Dhaka Cantonment. They discussed matters of professional interest.

Earlier, a smartly turned-out BAF contingent presented Air Chief Marshal PV Naik a guard of honour on his arrival at the Air Headquarters. He took salute and inspected the guard. The Indian air chief also planted a sapling on the Air Headquarters premises.

Air Chief Marshal PV Naik also visited the National Defence College (NDC) at Mirpur Cantonment and called on NDC Commandant Maj Gen AKM Muzahid Uddin. He also visited Defence Services Command and Staff College (DSCSC) at Mirpur Cantonment and called on DSCSC Commandant Maj Gen Mohammad Ashab Uddin.

Air Chief Marshal PV Naik arrived in Dhaka on Saturday on a six-day visit.

Change in judiciary

STAFF CORRESPONDENT The government transferred offices of three judicial officials equivalent to additional district judge as per the advice of the Supreme Court, said an official handout yesterday.

Chief Justice Magistrate of Noakhali Abdul Hye Mian was transferred to the office of additional district judge of Brahmanbaria while Additional District Judge of Laxmipur Md Rostam Ali was attached to the ministry of law, justice and parliamentary affairs. Additional District Judge of Sylhet Md Humayun Kabir was transferred to the post of chief judicial magistrate of Noakhali.

Remain alert to safeguard independence

PM urges military

UNB, Jessore Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday urged the armed forces to remain ever-prepared to safeguard the motherland's hard-earned independence and sovereignty.

"You will have to remain always ready. The motherland's hard-earned sovereignty and independence will have to be safeguarded at any cost," she said while addressing a darbar held on the occasion of joint winter exercises of the army's 55 Infantry Division of Jessore Area.

A total of 5,000 members of the 55 Infantry Division attended the exercises that started on December 13, 2009 and will end on January 21 in Bukbhara Haor area. Hasina said she is happy to see that after a long lapse of three years, soldiers are taking part in such a winter exercise. "Such exercises will enhance your confidence and skill."

She appreciated the formulation of a flawless voter list by the Election Commission in coordination with Bangladesh Army ahead of the last polls, saying that the army had succeeded in identifying some 1.23 crore fake voters prior to the December 29, 2008 general election, which her party-led grand alliance won.



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina witnesses the joint winter exercises of the army's 55 Infantry Division of Jessore Area yesterday.

"And people had got a flawless voter list to exercise the democratic right of voting and elect their own democratic government," she told the military meet. She also thanked the armed forces for their outstanding and courageous role during natural disasters, including Sidr, Aila, and the 1998 floods.

The prime minister urged the armed forces' members to expedite the government's endeavor towards development to reach the fruits of independence to the doorstep of the mass people. Hasina reminded that Bangladesh armed forces were born through the 1971 liberation war under the leadership of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. "Aim of my politics is only to ensure people's welfare. I want to sacrifice my life for people's development, peace and prosperity," she said.

The Prime Minister, who also holds the defence portfolio, said her government, like in the past, would continue its sincere endeavor to modernise the army making it time-befitting and capable. The people are the power of the nation and army is part of the people. The army formed through the War of Liberation has now been established as a modern, sophisticated and professional force in course of time, she said.

She said after taking office the present government has been implementing several programmes for welfare of the army and their families. Earlier, on her arrival at the venue, Chief of Army Staff General Md Abdul Mubeen and GOC of 55 Infantry Division Major General Matiuur Rahman received the prime minister. Adviser to the prime minister Maj Gen (Retd) Tarique Ahmed Siddique, Principal Secretary to the PM MA Karim and Press Secretary to the Prime Minister Abul Kalam Azad were present. The prime minister witnessed the brigade-level smart training activities involving soldiers of different levels of the Jessore Area. How soldiers launch attacks on the enemy from all corners of a battlefield was displayed through a mock war in the collective training. Commander of 105 Infantry Brigade Brigadier General Md Nasim Akter led the training programme while the GOC of 55 Infantry Division acted as Chief Coordinating Officer. After her speech at the darbar, the PM wanted to know about the feelings and condition of the soldiers direct from them. As the soldiers raised some problems they are facing, she directed the authorities concerned to take immediate action to improve all facilities, including medical and time scale, for the armed forces' members of all levels. Hasina was presented a crest by the Infantry Division for her presence in the exercise ceremony and she also reciprocated by giving a crest to the area commander for their outstanding performances and hard training. The Prime Minister also donated Tk 5 lakh for post-exercise refreshments of the soldiers who took part in the exercises.

AL to counter Khaleda's remarks today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT The ruling Awami League will hold a press conference today to counter the opposition leader Khaleda Zia's remarks on the outcome of the prime minister's visit to India.

The press conference will be held at the AL president and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's political office at Dhanmondi, the party's deputy office secretary Mirza Kanti Das told The Daily Star last night. The party insiders said AL believes that Khaleda, also the chairperson of BNP, has resorted to lies while making remarks on the prime minister's visit at a press conference yesterday.

One beaten to death in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT Unidentified criminals beat a youth to death in the city's Jatrabari area on Saturday night.

A gang of three criminals took Mohammad Zahir, 28, a day-labourer, to a nearby isolated place while he was playing carom at a shop in the area at about 10:00pm and severely beat him up, Hena Begum, elder sister of Zahir, said quoting witnesses. Hearing his groans, locals rushed to the spot and took Zahir to Dhaka Medical College Hospital where he succumbed to his injuries at around 1:30am yesterday.

Police said Zahir had a scuffle with another youth over playing carom just an hour before he was beaten up. Jyoti Basu's death condoled

STAFF CORRESPONDENT Different political parties and socio-cultural organisations yesterday condoled the death of veteran Indian politician and former chief minister of West Bengal Jyoti Basu.

In separate statements, they paid tribute to Jyoti Basu, saying that he was a legendary leader in this part of the world. The left democratic and progressive politics has suffered an irreparable loss in his death, they added. Expressing deep shock at the death of the veteran Marxist politician, Jatiya Party chairman HM Ershad said Bangladesh has lost a true friend in the death of Jyoti Basu.

In a statement, CPB president Manjurul Ahsan Khan and general secretary Mujahidul Islam Selim said Jyoti Basu has always fought for the poor and the working class. Gono Forum, Workers' Party, Democratic Left Alliance, Bangladesh Samajtantrik Dal, Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal, Bangladesh Chhatra Union, Samajtantrik Chhatra Front, Bangabandhu Sangskritik Jote, Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal, Bangladesh Juba Union, Jamaat-e-Islami, Sammilito Samajik Andolan, Sammilito Sangskritik Jote, Bangladesh Udichi Shilpi Goshti, National Awami Party, Bangladesh Chhatra Maitree, Jatiya Sramik League and Bangladesh Chhatra Federation also expressed deep shock at the death of Jyoti Basu.

Tea workers protest ouster of elected union leaders

STAFF CORRESPONDENT About three thousand tea plantation workers from various tea gardens across the country gathered at the Central Shaheed Minar in the city yesterday protesting the ouster of their elected union leaders from the office.

Makhanlal Karmakar and Rambhajan Koiri were elected president and general secretary in the first ever secret-ballot election of the union in November 2008, but they were ousted by their rival group in November 2009, the workers said. They also protested the recent order of the Directorate of Labour to hold a fresh election within four months under an ad hoc committee led by the same group that lost the union election.

Since the inception of the Bangladesh Tea Workers Union in 1948, this was the first ever secret-ballot election of the union committee. The previous committee, comprising several members of one family, had been at the helm of the union since 1970. The workers alleged that a group of labour leaders led by previous chairperson Bijoy Bunarji and general secretary Sitaram Almik forced out the elected union officials and occupied the union office, known as the Labour House, in Srimangol.

They also alleged that the occupants are backed by some ruling party leaders, including Chief Whip Abdus Shaheed. The workers also alleged that the Bunarji group and his associates misappropriated union funds when they were in the office. They demanded removal of the chief whip as the chairperson of the National Tea Company. The government owns majority share (51 percent) of this company. They also demanded immediate reinstatement of the union leaders and punishment to illegal occupants.

Union General Secretary Rambhajan Koiri said, "We urge the government to uphold democracy. We also urge the administration to remain neutral." Koiri also said the police intercepted 12 buses full of workers in Srimangol and Moulviabazar on Saturday night, as they were coming to Dhaka to join the protest meeting. There are about 150,000 tea workers in the country working at 163 tea gardens. About 90,000 workers are member of the tea workers union.

Expressing solidarity with their demand, Prof Muzaffer Ahmad, chairperson of Sujan, said, "Only the election of 300 parliament members is not enough to uphold democracy. It is absolutely essential to establish the rights of the workers. Ensuring rights of the marginalised can only give true meaning to democracy."

Prof Mesbah Kamal, general secretary of Bangladesh Adivasi Adhikar and Research and Development Collective, Pankaj Bhattacharya of Gono Forum, Manjurul Ahsan Khan of CPB, Noab Ali Abbas Khan MP, Sanjeeb Drong, general secretary of Bangladesh Adivasi Forum, Philip Gain, general secretary, Society for Environment and Human Development (SEHD), and Dr Wazedul Islam Khan, general secretary of Bangladesh Trade Union Kendro, also expressed solidarity.

Record keeping system vital for implementing RTI law

Speakers tell discussion

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi a keynote paper at the event where Rajshahi Deputy Commissioner Shefaul Karim was present as the chief guest.

Florin Geraedts, historian and archivist of the Netherlands, Muhammad Lutful Haque, general secretary of Campaign for RTI, Prof Moshir Rahman and Dr M Anisur Rahman of Rajshahi University, Sayeed Ahmed Kabir, Sarwar-e Kamal and Mustafijur Rahman Khan Alam also spoke. MMC Executive Director Kamrul Hasan Manju moderated the discussion. Florin Geraedts, also a member of Bangladesh Achieves and Record Management, stressed the need for building a good record keeping system and said, "If institutions have no good record management system, they cannot give information properly."

Lutful said files of documents are preserved in different offices in a way which might be automatically destroyed. He demanded providing additional manpower and budget for record keeping sector. "If keeping records are not made mandatory, the authorities will get chances of avoiding answering questions on plea of lack of information." Citing an example, he said due to lack of any record preservation law, Rajshahi City Corporation destroyed its century-old documents several months ago. Shameem said the RTI law would not reap any benefit unless it is properly implemented through creating awareness among mass people of their right of access to information. The speakers said lack of political will, culture of secrecy and lack of knowledge about RTI among general public are the major obstacles to implementing the law.

Record keeping system vital for implementing RTI law

Speakers tell discussion

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi a keynote paper at the event where Rajshahi Deputy Commissioner Shefaul Karim was present as the chief guest. Florin Geraedts, historian and archivist of the Netherlands, Muhammad Lutful Haque, general secretary of Campaign for RTI, Prof Moshir Rahman and Dr M Anisur Rahman of Rajshahi University, Sayeed Ahmed Kabir, Sarwar-e Kamal and Mustafijur Rahman Khan Alam also spoke. MMC Executive Director Kamrul Hasan Manju moderated the discussion. Florin Geraedts, also a member of Bangladesh Achieves and Record Management, stressed the need for building a good record keeping system and said, "If institutions have no good record management system, they cannot give information properly."



Tea workers stage a demonstration at the Central Shaheed Minar in the city yesterday to protest ouster of their union leaders from the office.

WEATHER TODAY Dry weather likely

UNB, Dhaka Weather is likely to remain dry with partly cloudy sky over the country in the next 12 hours as of 6:00pm today. Moderate to thick fog may occur over the country, Met Office said.

Night temperature may remain nearly unchanged over the country. The sun sets in the capital at 5:35pm today and rises at 6:43am tomorrow. Country's highest temperature 26.8 degrees Celsius was recorded yesterday at Sylhet and lowest 10.0 degrees Celsius at Srimongal.

Highest and lowest temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

Table with 5 columns: City/Town, Temperature Celsius, Humidity percentage, Morning, Evening. Rows include Dhaka, Chittagong, Rajshahi, Khulna, Barisal, Sylhet, Cox's Bazar.

DHAKA TODAY Dialogue

Bangladesh government and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific will jointly organise a dialogue on the Brussels programme of action for the least development countries. Venue: Hotel Sonargaon. Time: 9:30am.

Seminar Alliance for Women Workers Rights organises a seminar on sexual harassment of women at workplace. Venue: National Press Club. Time: 9:30am.

Seminar Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI) and Saarc Chamber of Commerce and Industry will jointly organise a seminar titled 'Regional cooperation in South Asia: Potential sector for joint ventures and investment'. Venue: Hotel Sonargaon. Time: 11:00am.

Fake notes seized, three arrested in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT A team of Rapid Action Battalion seized fake notes worth around Tk 9,500 and arrested three gang members of the network from a house at Daspara in the city's Sabujbagh yesterday.

The arrestees -- Mohammad Farid, 25, Mohammad Kamal Hossain, 32, and Kalpana Akter, 33 -- were the residents of the same area. Rab-2 made the arrests of the trio after the arrest of another gang member Al-Amin, 32, who was held at Adabor on Saturday night.

Senior Assistant Superintendent of Police (ASP) Ehsan Sattar said on information, Rab under the guise of buyers nabbed the trio when they came up with seven fake notes of Tk 1,000 and five fake ones of Tk 500 at Daspara at 12:15am. In the preliminary interrogation, the trio informed Rab that they used to collect the fake notes from Mirpur through a network and used to buy goods with the notes after mixing with the real notes. They are trying to nab the other members of the network, he added.

Obituary

STAFF CORRESPONDENT Lakjan Begum, mother of Nurul Islam Bhuiyan, president Kendua Papazila Society in Dhaka, passed away at her village home at Silimpur on Friday night, says a press release.

She left behind her three sons, two daughters and a host of relatives to mourn her death. Death anniversary METRO DESK Today is the 8th death anniversary of Mohammed Hanif Bhuiyan, founder chairman of Abedin Group of Industries, says a press release. Relatives, friends and well-wishers are requested to pray for the eternal peace of the departed soul.

Death anniversary

Witnesses said three muggers intercepted Siraj when he was going to his business house at Mondalpara in the town by a rickshaw from his residence in Deobhog area around 11:00am. The gang fired at the businessman and took away the bag full of money. He received three bullets injuries to his thigh and rib. He was taken to Narayanganj General Hospital and then shifted to DMCH. Jibon Kanti Sarker, officer-in-charge of Fatullah Model Police Station, said they are trying to detect the snatchers.

AL to counter Khaleda's remarks today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT The ruling Awami League will hold a press conference today to counter the opposition leader Khaleda Zia's remarks on the outcome of the prime minister's visit to India.

The press conference will be held at the AL president and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's political office at Dhanmondi, the party's deputy office secretary Mirza Kanti Das told The Daily Star last night. The party insiders said AL believes that Khaleda, also the chairperson of BNP, has resorted to lies while making remarks on the prime minister's visit at a press conference yesterday.

One beaten to death in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT Unidentified criminals beat a youth to death in the city's Jatrabari area on Saturday night.

A gang of three criminals took Mohammad Zahir, 28, a day-labourer, to a nearby isolated place while he was playing carom at a shop in the area at about 10:00pm and severely beat him up, Hena Begum, elder sister of Zahir, said quoting witnesses. Hearing his groans, locals rushed to the spot and took Zahir to Dhaka Medical College Hospital where he succumbed to his injuries at around 1:30am yesterday.

Police said Zahir had a scuffle with another youth over playing carom just an hour before he was beaten up. Jyoti Basu's death condoled

STAFF CORRESPONDENT Different political parties and socio-cultural organisations yesterday condoled the death of veteran Indian politician and former chief minister of West Bengal Jyoti Basu.

In separate statements, they paid tribute to Jyoti Basu, saying that he was a legendary leader in this part of the world. The left democratic and progressive politics has suffered an irreparable loss in his death, they added. Expressing deep shock at the death of the veteran Marxist politician, Jatiya Party chairman HM Ershad said Bangladesh has lost a true friend in the death of Jyoti Basu.

In a statement, CPB president Manjurul Ahsan Khan and general secretary Mujahidul Islam Selim said Jyoti Basu has always fought for the poor and the working class. Gono Forum, Workers' Party, Democratic Left Alliance, Bangladesh Samajtantrik Dal, Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal, Bangladesh Chhatra Union, Samajtantrik Chhatra Front, Bangabandhu Sangskritik Jote, Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal, Bangladesh Juba Union, Jamaat-e-Islami, Sammilito Samajik Andolan, Sammilito Sangskritik Jote, Bangladesh Udichi Shilpi Goshti, National Awami Party, Bangladesh Chhatra Maitree, Jatiya Sramik League and Bangladesh Chhatra Federation also expressed deep shock at the death of Jyoti Basu.