

NEWS IN *brief*

'Stop torture, free Mishu'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Some women leaders yesterday strongly condemned the incident of taking garment workers' leader Moshrefa Mishu on remand and demanded her immediate release.

A statement signed by eleven women leaders said Mishu has fallen extremely sick due to torture during remand. It is a sheer violation of human rights and insulting attitude towards women leadership, reads the statement.

The signatories are Prof Latifa Akand, Dr Hamida Hossain, Khushi Kabir, Shirin Haque, Salma Ali, Farida Akhter, Nibedita Das Purkayasto, Sultana Akhter Rubi, Rawshan Ara Ruso, Shima Das Shimu, and Shahinur Begum.

Garment Sramik Oikya Parishad President Moshrefa Mishu was remanded twice in a case filed with Kafur Police Station for vandalism and arson during garment unrest.

Two extortionists arrested

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Angry locals beat up two youths and handed them over to police for exploding bombs in an attempt to extort money from the owner of a workshop at city's Rothkhola in Sutrapur yesterday.

The wounded youths were identified as Mohammad Hafizul, 18, son of Abdul Mannan of Uttar Basanchar, and Mohammad Milon, 19, son of Koratitola at Sayedabad.

Haji Abdul Aziz, owner of the workshop Mecca Engineering Works, filed a case with Sutrapur Police Station.

Aziz said the criminals were demanding money for the last few days. As he denied complying, they hurled two bombs in front of his workshop around 10:00am to create panic, he said.

US mission closed Jan 16

BSS, Dhaka

The American Embassy, including the consular section and the American center with the Archer K Blood American Center Library and the student advising center, will remain closed on January 16 on the occasion of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s birthday, an American holiday.

Emergency services for American citizens will be available. They are requested to call at 885-5500 and ask for the duty officer, said a press release yesterday.

Cabinet approves president's speech

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A special cabinet meeting yesterday approved a speech to be delivered by President Zillur Rahman at the new year session starting on January 25.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina chaired the meeting attended by ministers, state ministers, her advisers, and secretaries at her office.

The cabinet also approved a policy to compensate Tk 3 lakh for each of those who will die for saving forest wealth and Tk 1.5 lakh for every injured person.

The cabinet on January 3 formed a five-member committee headed by PM's Adviser HT Imam to finalise the speech.

The committee also includes the PM's another adviser Dr Mashur Rahman, principal secretary to the PMO, and the education and finance secretaries.

At the previous meeting, the premier instructed the committee to make a summary of the speech between 2,000 and 2,500 words so that the president could read it within 20 to 25 minutes. The entire speech would be tabled in the Jatiya Sangsad.

DEFAMATION CASE
Prothom Alo editor gets bail

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday granted bail to editor of the daily Prothom Alo and a reporter in connection with a defamation case filed by Awami League lawmaker Kamal Ahmed Majumder.

Metropolitan Magistrate Abdullah Al Mamun passed the order after Prothom Alo Editor Matiuur Rahman and reporter Arup Dutt along with their lawyers appeared before it and sought bail in the case.

Kamal was not present during the hearing.

On October 27 last year, Kamal filed the case with Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court of Dhaka for publishing 'defamatory news' in the daily on October 25.

Advocates Syed Ahmed Gazi, Anwarul Kabir, Mahubul Haque, Chaitanya Chandra Halder, Moniruzzaman Howlader, Abul Kalam Azad and Proshanta Karmakar appeared for the defendants.

Dr Mihir made RDC secretary

UNB, Dhaka

Dr Mihir Kanti Majumder, secretary to the environment and forests ministry, has been made secretary of Rural Development and Cooperatives (RDC) Division of the LGRD ministry.

Acting Member of Privatisation Commission, Mesbah-ul-Alam, has been posted as the environment and forests secretary, says a PID handout yesterday.

Meanwhile, Acting Secretary of RDC Division Mohammad Golam Quddus has been made Actings Member of Privatisation Commission.

Obituary

METRO DESK



Hasina Rahman, an ex-lawmaker, president of Dinajpur Mahila Samity and wife of late Advocate Aminur Rahman (Mantu), passed away in the city on December 27 in 2010, says a press release.

M Habibur Rahman

UNB, Dhaka

M Habibur Rahman, assistant director of Bangladesh Standards and Testing Institution (BSTI), passed away yesterday at the age of 52, says a press release.

Doa mahfil

METRO DESK



A do a mahfil for Kafiluddin Mahmood, a former finance secretary and adviser to a caretaker government, will be held at his residence at Dhanmondi after maghrib prayers today, says a press release.

Qulkhwani

METRO DESK



Qulkhwani of Rashed Mowdud Khan, president of Bangladesh Ceramic Ware Manufacturers' Association (BCWMA) and chairman of Bengal Fine Ceramics Ltd, will be held at his residence at 43 Agamasi Lane in the city after Maghrib prayers today, says press release.

Mowdud Khan passed away at Apollo Hospitals in the city on January 9 at the age of 72.



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina inaugurates a 50-MW rental power plant at Pagla in Narayanganj yesterday, implemented by DPA Power Generation International Ltd under the supervision of Bangladesh Army. (Story on Page 20)

PHOTO: PMO

CORPORAL PUNISHMENT IN SCHOOL

HC asks to stop recurrence

National commission to monitor court directives

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Declaring corporal punishment against children in educational institutions illegal and unconstitutional, High Court (HC) yesterday issued the government a set of directives to stop such punishments.

In response to a writ petition, it directed to ensure dissemination of the final guidelines prohibiting corporal punishment, specifying the nature of disciplinary punishments that may be imposed on children.

The HC bench of Justice Md Imman Ali and Justice Sheikh Hasan Arif ordered for defining corporal punishment as 'misconduct' under the Government Servants Discipline and Appeal Rules 1985.

Definitions of 'misconduct' under this law must be specified to include any breach of the prohibition of corporal punishment, it said.

Breaches include actions such as caning, beating, confining or chaining children or otherwise subjecting them to any cruel and degrading and inhuman punishment, it said.

The bench directed that probes into schools and madrasas must cover occurrences of corporal punishment, complaints, investigations, action

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actions taken to address corporal punishment across the country.

The commissioner would also be provided with necessary cooperation, facilities and documents for this purpose, enabling him or her to provide a report to the national committee and the court.

The HC in the verdict observed that such punishment constitutes a clear violation of children's constitutional rights including to life, liberty and freedom from cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment.

It found that the government failed to take appropriate and adequate action to address fourteen separate incidents of corporal punishment, including one involving the suicide of a ten-year old boy.

The HC gave the verdict following the writ petition filed as 'public interest litigation' by two human rights organisations -- Ain O Salish Kendra and Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust.

Barrister Sara Hossain, assisted by Advocate Taufiqul Islam, Advocate Abanteer Nurul, and Advocate Majhabeen Rabbani, appeared for the petitioners while Deputy Attorney General Motahar Hossain Sajju stood for the government.

NEW WORK PERMITS

FM asks Italy to increase quota

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Appreciating Italian government decision to allocate new work permits for Bangladeshi workers, Foreign Minister Dipu Moni yesterday asked Italy to increase Bangladesh's quota in services like nursing.

She made the request when the newly appointed Italian Ambassador Giorgio Guglielmin called on her at the ministry.

Dipu Moni said the Italian Embassy in Dhaka could help the government in setting criteria in nurse training facilities in Bangladesh, enabling the country to send nurses to Italy.

In response, Giorgio mentioned that Bangladesh enjoys a favourable trade balance with Italy.

Dipu Moni told Giorgio that Italian investors could avail the investment opportunities in Bangladesh, especially in the EPZs.



TIB Chairman M Hafizuddin Khan and Executive Director Iftekharuzzaman climb the stairs to the room of the Chief Justice (CJ) to attend a tea party the CJ hosted at his office at the Supreme Court yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

GANG MAIMING A CHILD

Probe committee formed 10 days after HC directive

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Home ministry yesterday formed a three-member committee, ten days after a High Court (HC) directive, to probe into the incident of a gang maiming a child to force him into begging in the city.

The committee was scheduled to be formed within seven days of the directive, issued on January 2.

Home ministry Joint Secretary Shawkat Mostafa was made convener with two members -- Deputy Secretary Alam Ara Begum and Senior Assistant Secretary Sayeed Md Belal Haider.

The committee will investigate the incident, arrest the perpetrators and prepare a report for the HC within 30 days of its inception. It will also recommend the government for steps to prevent such in the future.

On January 2, the HC directed the government after expressing concern over the incident and also ordered the government to implement Dhaka Metropolitan Ordinance 1986 that restricts begging in the capital.

'Dhaka gives importance to attaining MDGs'

BSS, Dhaka

Health and Family Welfare Minister Dr Ruhul Haque yesterday said Bangladesh is giving importance to attaining millennium development goals (MDGs) despite the country's successes in this area and the ultimate recognition by the UN.

He was talking to a four-member delegation of lawmakers from three European countries at his secretariat office, said an official press release.

The minister said maternal mortality rate has declined remarkably in the country as per the latest survey. The results of the survey would be published soon, he added.

He said the government is working to reduce child and maternal mortality rates further.

The health minister said Bangladesh, like many countries of the world, does not have an adequate number of anaesthesiologists and gynecologists.

He said the government is trying to resolve the problem and added that the assistance of foreign agencies is required for training of the concerned people.

He said the government's priority project of community clinics would expedite attaining MDGs in regards to child and maternal health.

The European parliamentary delegation comprised Karl Ollinger and Petro Bayr of Austria, Karim Roth of Germany and Claudia Niessen of Belgium.



- Roundtable**
Bangabandhu Sangskritik Jote will organise a roundtable. Venue: National Press Club, Time: 11:00am.
- Meeting**
Gonotantik Foundation will arrange a meeting. Venue: Photojournalist Association auditorium, Time: 3:30pm.
- Human chain**
Bangladesh Jatiya Hindu Mahajote will form a human chain. Venue: In front of National Press Club, Time: 10:00am.
- Reunion**
Ex-Students Association of Dhanmondi Govt Boys High School will arrange a reunion. Venue: School premises, Time: 2:30pm.
- Cultural programme**
Bangladesh Enterprise for Development and Security Studies will organise a meeting, cultural programme and photo exhibition. Venue: Bangabandhu Memorial Museum, Dhanmondi, Time: 4:00pm.
- Human chain**
Communist Party of Bangladesh will

WEATHER TODAY

Cold wave to persist

UNB, Dhaka

Severe cold wave is sweeping over the regions of Dinajpur, Pabna, Jessore and Kushtia and mild to moderate cold wave is sweeping over Dhaka and Barisal divisions and the rest parts of Rajshahi, Rangpur and Khulna divisions and the regions Comilla, Noakhali, Rangamati and Srimongal and it may continue in next 12 hours till 6:00pm today.

Weather is likely to remain dry over the country. Moderate to thick fog may occur over Rajshahi, Rangpur, Dhaka and Sylhet divisions and the river basins of the country and light to moderate for may occur elsewhere over the country, Met Office said.

Night temperature may remain nearly unchanged over the country.

The sun sets in the capital at 5:32pm today and rises at 6:44am tomorrow.

Country's highest temperature 23.2 degrees Celsius was recorded yesterday at Cox's Bazar and lowest 04.6 degrees Celsius at Jessore.

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	14.2	08.2	90	85
Chittagong	19.6	10.4	85	71
Rajshahi	19.7	04.8	100	83
Rangpur	14.5	06.2	99	95
Khulna	19.6	08.5	95	78
Barisal	19.5	07.0	100	82