



## RAIN PARALYSES TWO CITIES

(Clockwise from top left) Rain-drenched crows yesterday perched on a bamboo bar at Suhrawardy Udyan in the city while incessant rain continued for the last few days; vehicles move slowly across knee-deep water in city's Shantinagar; commuters on a rickshaw van crossing the pool of rainwater at Mouchak; an unlucky rickshaw passenger finds himself soaking as a wheel of the vehicle got caught in a manhole, flipping it on its side at Mouchak; cars wade through a flooded Mouchak road; an elderly carries on buying vegetables at semi-sunken Shantinagar bazar; life at the port city of Chittagong also slowed due to heavy downpour as men pull a goods-laden cart through a swamped Khatunganj road; and a sinking rickshaw van over Firingibazaar Ferryghat road.

PHOTO: SHAWKAT JAMIL, AMRAN HOSSAIN, RASHED SHUMON, ANURUP KANTI DAS, PALASH KHAN



**Mahtab, Anwar Rajshahi Metro Press Club president, secy**

RU CORRESPONDENT

Journalist Mahtab Uddin, a freedom fighter, and Anwar Ali, staff correspondent of The Daily Star, were elected president and general secretary respectively of Rajshahi Metropolitan Press Club yesterday.

Mahtab secured six votes more than his nearest contestant Bulbul Chowdhury while Anwar won over Kazi Shahed by two votes. Out of 39, total 38 votes were casted.

Other elected office-bearers are Vice president: Jabid Apu, Joint secretary: Mamunur Rashid and Abdullah Iqbal, Treasurer: Azizul Islam (uncontested), Office secretary: Ziaul Haque (uncontested). Members are Abul Kalam Azad, Rashed Ripon, and Mamun Reja.

The decision remained withhold regarding the second vice president post as two contestants Shafikul Islam and Kazi Gias secured same votes.

### RTI ACT IMPLEMENTATION

## Culture of refusal bar to info dissemination

Say speakers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Implementation of Right to Information (RTI) Act is being hampered due to inadequate knowledge about the law, bureaucratic issues, antiquated mindset of some journalists and a culture that refuses to disseminate information.

The opinions came at a seminar on "Experience sharing of RTI Act by Journalists" jointly organised by Management and Resources Development Initiative (MRDI) and World Bank Institute at a city hotel in Karwan Bazar.

Speakers at the programme said some journalists see RTI Act as a tool used by incompetent reporters, not capable of collecting information through their own sources.

They feel embarrassed to use the Act as it may question their capability as professional reporters, they said.

Farid Hossain, bureau chief of Associated Press, blamed lack of in-house training and encouragement to raise journalists' interest and awareness about the Act.

This is a major reason why many journalists remain suspicious and confused about the law, he added.

The Act also intimidates many bureaucrats, as it is a more formal and transparent process of giving information, the discussants said.

They fear drawing attention to themselves if the provided information is used to put the organisation under a negative light, they added.

"All in all, people seeking information under the (RTI) Act are not well-informed about the law, and neither are people receiving these requests," said Farzana Naim, director (governance), Manusher Jonno

Foundation.

There is a need to create more awareness and a culture that encourages sharing of information, she said.

Information Commissioner Prof Sadeka Halim said it is unfortunate that while the prime minister is talking about taking the Act to the remotest of areas, many government secretaries are unaware of the law.

Referring to the concerns of journalists, Prof Sadeka said Information Commission is always ready to extend cooperation to journalists.

But the commission has its own limitations regarding logistics and manpower. Although it is an independent body, it cannot appoint its own staff independently, she said.

Prof Sadeka stressed the need for more training of designated information officers so they can help people seeking information.

Earlier, Parimol Palma, senior reporter of The Daily Star; Emran Hossain, staff reporter of The Daily Star; Rashed Mehdi, senior reporter at Daily Shamokal; and Rafiqul Islam Sabuj, senior reporter at Daily Shokaler Khobor; shared their experience on using the Act.

They said many government officials, even at the top level, are not aware of the Act and most organisations do not have designated officials to see to requests based on the Act.

Boishakhi TV Chief Executive Officer Manjurul Ahsan Bulbul moderated the programme. Information Secretary Hedayetullah Al Mamun; News Editor of The Daily Star Ziaul Haq Swapan; MRDI Executive Director Hasibur Rahman; and Joint News Editor of Daily Samakal Dipanker Lahery also spoke.

## 'Trauma units at dist hospitals to cut road crash casualties'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Health and Family Welfare Minister Dr AFM Ruhul Haque at a meeting yesterday said the government is planning to open trauma units at district level hospitals to provide emergency medical assistance to road accident victims and reduce casualties.

Society of Surgeons of Bangladesh organised the meeting at Dhaka Medical College Hospital in the city marking the first death anniversary of two associate professors of Dinajpur Medical College killed in a road accident.

"Road accidents are very common in our country and ratio of injury per accident is also high. So emergency medical service at hospitals is very important," he said.

Awareness on preventing road accidents among drivers, vehicle owners, law enforcement agencies and pedestrians must also be raised, he added.

Nirapad Sharak Chai Chairman and actor Elias Kanchan said it is regrettable that the government did not provide any plan in this year's budget for prevention of road accidents.

Bangladesh Medical Association Secretary General Dr Sarfuddin Ahmed; and Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University Basic Science Dean Prof Iqbal Arsalan spoke at the programme, presided over by the society Vice President Prof Kanak Kanti Barua.

## Wife of late AL leader dies of 4 days injury

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Selima Khan Majlish, wife of late Awami League lawmaker Shamsuddoha Khan Majlish, died early yesterday, four days after she was severely injured by unknown criminals at her Savar residence on the outskirts of the capital.

Masud Chowdhury, Dhaka district AL organising secretary and a nephew of Selima, told The Daily Star that Selima died around 1:00am at Combined Medical Hospital (CMH).

On Tuesday, some criminals tried to slit Selima's throat and stabbed in her abdomen. She was rushed to a local clinic and then shifted to CMH.

After the incident, Masud filed a case with Savar Police Station accusing unidentified criminals.

Police have so far detained four people-- Abul Kalam Azad, 30, husband of Selima's granddaughter Tilotoma Khan Majlish, Azad's cousin Selim, 32, housemaid Sarala Sarkar, 32, and her husband Haripada Sarkar, 40.

After the preliminary interrogation, police freed Sarala and Selim, and took Azad and Haripada on remand for two days each.

Police suspect that family members and close relatives were involved in the murder to grab her properties.

Masud said police did not arrest the real culprits yet. Sub-Inspector Sheikh Farid Ahmed, investigation officer of the case, said they gathered bits of important information, but he declined to disclose those for the sake of investigation.

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