

NEWS IN *brief*

BSF's torture on Bangladeshi protested

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh National Women Lawyers Association (BNWLA) yesterday strongly protested the torture of Habibur Rahman, a Bangladeshi national, by Indian Border Security Force (BSF).

BNWLA urged both the government of Bangladesh and India to hold fair and impartial investigation into the 'inhuman and cruel incident' and ensure exemplary punishment of the accused, says a press release.

The Bangladeshi citizen was beaten up by some BSF members in Murshidabad district, Paschimbanga as he allegedly refused to pay them

Two industries fined Tk 46 lakh

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A team of the Department of Environment (DoE) yesterday fined two dyeing industries at Shibpur in Narsingdi Tk 46 lakh for illegally operating the factories and polluting the river Brahmaputra.

The DoE team also directed owners Tanvir Chowdhury of Chowdhury Knitwear Ltd and Khadem Monirul Alam of Greenbangla Homtex Industries Ltd to stop operations of their industries

Arrest order for torturers of autistic boy

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday ordered police to arrest two security guards of Shewrapara branch of Monipur High School and College for allegedly torturing an autistic child at the school.

The court also asked police to file a case against Helal and Belal, the security guards, Deputy Attorney General ABM Altaf Hossain told The Daily Star.

Helal and Belal allegedly confined and beat up 12-year-old autistic boy Mainuddin Sharif at the school on the night of January 7.

Alerted by locals, Kafrul police later rescued Sharif, a student of Disability Foundation School at Mirpur-14, and got him to his father the same night. The HC gave the orders during hearing a suomoto rule, which it issued on January 12 after the daily Prothom Alo published a report on the

Govt to give ICT training to one woman of each rural family

BSS, Dhaka

The government is planning to provide computer literacy training to one woman of each family in the rural areas through the Union Information Services Centres (UISC) set up at 4,501 Union Parishads of the country.

Sources associated with the Access to Information (A2I) programme said the initiative to provide ICT-literacy to women has been taken to make other family members ICT literate.

"We are working on how a woman of each family in the rural areas could be given computer training through the UISCs which have already been equipped with desktop and laptop computers, printers, scanners, multimedia projectors and camera," National Project Director of A2I programme

7 jailed for selling porn videos

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A mobile court sentenced seven traders to jail in the city's Farmgate area yesterday for copying porn videos on mobile phones of people in exchange of money, including school children.

The convicts are Md Julhas, 32, Mosharraf Hossain, 23, Osman Gani, 22, Saifur Rahman Tipu, 22, Md Raihan, 24, Md Ali, 22, and Md Didar, 22.

The court conducted a drive at Farm View Super Market and sentenced the seven men of six shops to three months' imprisonment.

City

EVM, the magic box

RASHIDUL HASAN, FROM Narsingdi

The voting in Narsingdi municipality by-election ended at 4:00pm yesterday. One hour later, the results were in hand.

But, how?

A voter had the answer, "It was nothing but the magic box--Electronic Voting Machine (EVM)". He need not give any second thought.

Traditionally, it would take hours to announce the results after completion of counting and accumulating of votes. EVM has now made the process immensely faster.

"I can still remember clearly that it took eight hours after the voting ended at 4:00pm to declare the results in the last municipality polls of Narsingdi held January 17, 2011", Nabi Newaz, a 75-year-old voter, told The Daily Star as the results of yesterday's polls were announced around 5:00pm.

Newaz said he received the January 17 election results at midnight around 12:05am [that means January 18] due to conventional system of vote taking and counting.

All of over 100 voters that this correspondent contacted at different polling stations yesterday, including Newaz, expressed their gladness after casting votes in EVM. This is the second time in the country that all the voters used EVM, as all the 31 centres of the municipality were equipped with the device.

While visiting Abu Taleb, presiding officer of Shalidha poll centre, yesterday, he told this correspondent, "It's now 2:30pm. But in the meantime, more than 70 percent of voters have cast their votes and it has been possible only because of EVM".

"Previously, it had taken 5-10 minutes to complete the process of casting a vote. But now it took a single minute on average to complete the same process", he added.

More than 337 voters could cast their votes in the first hour in a polling centre yesterday, which could not be possible anyway if EVM was not used, Mihir Sarwar Morshed, an election officer of Dhaka region, said, citing a survey of the Election Commission.

"I just pressed the specific button... and that's all", Alifa Begum, a voter at Bidda Sundari poll centre, said.

Earlier, the voters of Comilla City Corporation and Narayanganj City Corporation had found EVM very much user-friendly, putting an end to all controversy and confusion over its use.

The main opposition BNP, however, decided not to back any candidate in the Comilla City Corporation polls as the EC had turned down its demand for not using EVM and deployment of army. The party also had boycotted the Narayanganj City Corporation elections at the last moment on the same ground.

Obituary

METRO DESK



Begum Mazeda Rahman, wife of late Mofizur Rahman, founder vice chairman of Islami Bank Bangladesh Ltd, passed away at her Gulshan residence in the city at 12:15am yesterday at the age of 82.

She left behind her four sons and daughters-in-law and grand children to mourn her death, said a press release.

A doa mahfil will be held today after Asr prayers at her residence at House No-1, Road No-59, Gulshan-2 to pray for salvation of the departed soul.

Qulkhwani

METRO DESK

Qulkhwani of Fatema Khatun Neli, wife of former special assistant to the chief adviser of the caretaker government, Brig Gen (ret'd) MA Malek, will be held after Asr prayers today at Dhaka Cantonment Board Jame Mosque.

She passed away on Monday at Dhaka Combined Military Hospital and was buried at Banani Army graveyard, said a press release.

Relatives, friends and well-wishers are requested to attend the qulkhwani.

Call to hold trial of parties involved in war crimes



PHOTO: STAR

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Trial of political parties or organisations involved in war crimes during the 1971 War of Liberation should be held alongside that of war criminals for the sake of justice, said speakers at a discussion yesterday.

Jamaat-e-Islami and other religion-based political parties should be banned immediately while expediting the ongoing war crimes trial, they demanded.

Ekatturer Ghatak Dalal Nirmul Committee organised the discussion, "20 years of movement for the trial of war criminals: Success and obstacles" in the city's WVA auditorium marking the committee's 20th founding anniversary.

Addressing the discussion, the committee President Justice Ghulam Rabbani said the politics of Jamaat should be banned immediately and

their office and property should be confiscated.

The war crimes trial is not for some special people, he said, adding, "Why can this party (Jamaat) which went against the Liberation War, killed hundreds of people and showed loyalty towards Pakistan still be in operation?"

"We demand an immediate ban on religion-based political parties. We demand a ban on Jamaat and confiscation of its assets otherwise the legacy of war criminals will continue."

Alleging that the US is favouring Jamaat on the issue of war crimes trial, Shahriar Kabir, the committee's executive president, said, "Will Jamaat not be tried just because America opposes it?"

BNP and Jamaat is appointing lobbyist outside the country to raise doubts over the trial and its relevant act. The government must deal with it diplomatically, he said.

Sayedee's counsel denies intimidating prosecution witness

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Defence counsels of Jamaat-e-Islami leader Delawar Hossain Sayedee yesterday denied the allegation of intimidating a prosecution witness in Pirojpur in a case against Sayedee in connection with the crimes against humanity in 1971.

At a press conference held at South Hall of the Supreme Court Bar Association, Tajul Islam, a defence counsel who also visited Pirojpur to prepare the case, termed the allegation as 'totally false', 'baseless' and 'intentional'.

Earlier on Tuesday, 14th prosecution witness Abdul Halim Babul accused the defence counsels of intimidating him at his home in Pirojpur.

"They [defence counsels] went to my house and threatened me," said Babul when he was being cross-examined by the defence lawyers before the International Crimes Tribunal.

However, Tajul Islam yesterday told reporters that Babul had misbehaved with them in December when they went close to his house to make a sketch of the location.

He said they had informed the tribunal on December 4 that they were obstructed from visiting spots and they have video footage to prove it.

Munshi Ahsan Kabir and Tanvir Ahmed Al Amin were present among the defence lawyers at the press conference yesterday.

(From left) Shahriar Kabir, Moinuddin Khan Badal, Ghulam Rabbani, AK Khandaker, and Manzurul Ahsan Khan at a discussion on "20 years of movement for the trial of war criminals: Success and obstacles" in the city's WVA auditorium yesterday. Ekatturer Ghatak Dalal Nirmul Committee organised the programme marking its 20th founding anniversary.

Factory fire burns seven workers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Seven workers of an electric fan factory received burn injuries last night in the city's Shyampur after a fire broke out there and gutted part of the factory.

Six of the injured were admitted to the burn unit of Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

They are Laizu Begum Elias, Monir, Rana, Afzal and Jewel.

Ali Akbar, a worker of the factory, Al Amin Enterprise, told reporters at DMCH that the fire broke out at around 8:45pm from electric short circuit while some workers were working on coil.

TAX DODGING

Moudud submits bail bond

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Former law minister barrister Moudud Ahmed yesterday submitted to a Dhaka court his bail bond in connection with a tax evasion case filed by the National Board of Revenue (NBR).

Judge Mohammad Zohurul Haque of the Senior Special Judge's Court allowed the BNP leader to submit it upon a Tk 5,000 bond with two guarantors.

On January 16, the High Court granted him anticipatory bail for a period of two months after he surrendered and sought bail in the case. The HC also asked him to submit a bail bond to the Sessions Judge's Court in support of obtaining bail in the case.

ASP assistant beats up bus driver

OUR CORRESPONDENT, N'ganj

Transport workers put up a blockade for an hour on a road in Narayanganj Rail Gate-1 area protesting an assault on two of their colleagues by a bodyguard of a police officer yesterday.

Witnesses and the motor workers said the guard of Golam Azad Khan, assistant superintendent of police (ASP) in Narayanganj, charged baton on a bus driver and his assistant alleging that the bus created congestion on the road.

The car of the ASP was stuck in the congestion while he was going to Narayanganj Sadar Model Police Station.

The bodyguard, Ibrahim, baton-charged Md Salu, 35, the driver, and his assistant Abul Hossain at one stage of altercation.

Protect archaeological site of Mahasthangarh

HC asks govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday asked the government to take effective steps to protect and preserve the ancient archaeological site of Mahasthangarh in Bogra and its adjacent shrine and mosque.

Delivering verdict on a writ petition, the court also ordered that the government acquire the private lands within the area by paying adequate compensation to the owners so that they do not suffer any loss for developing the site.

It also asked the district administration of Bogra to consider building another mosque in the open area on the east side of Mahasthangarh so that more devotees can perform their prayers, as the present mosque is unable to accommodate the devotees.

The existing mosque adjacent to the archaeological site must be kept untouched and unharmed, the court ordered.

The HC came up with the directives after considering the recommendations recently placed by a special committee formed to protect the rich archaeological site.

On April 27 last year, the government formed the 12-member committee headed by historian Prof Muntasir Mamun as per an HC order, said petitioner's counsel Manzill Murshid.

The HC on February 2 last year ordered for forming the committee after hearing the writ petition filed by Human Rights and Peace for Bangladesh (HRPB) seeking necessary directives to protect and preserve the site.

The petition was filed as a public interest litigation on the basis of reports published then in various national dailies including The Daily Star that Bogra district administration and Mahasthangarh Mazar Unyayan Committee had started displacing ancient structures at the site to make way for a multi-storey building.

Yesterday, in the verdict, the HC bench of Justice AHM Shamsuddin Choudhury Manik and Justice Jahangir Hossain Selim directed the authorities concerned of the government to take steps by March 15 to implement the recommendations.

The committee in its recommendations said a new mosque can be built at 200 yards east of the main road to make room for increasing number of devotees.

In addition, if the land is found to be privately owned, it can be bought using the fund of the Mosque and Mazar committee -- created with the money donated by fans and devotees.

"A plan can also be made to build a modern foot over bridge over the main road for safe and convenient movement of the devotees. It would also be logical to build facilities of restrooms and providing eating facilities for the male and female devotees along with an orphanage," the committee suggested.

Close inspection and regular audit from the Waqf administrator's office are needed for such a large construction on Waqf locations, the recommendation said.

Deputy Attorney General ABM Altaf Hossain represented the government during the hearing.

ICT ON NEW AGE ARTICLE

Contempt of court order Feb 19

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

International Crimes Tribunal yesterday fixed February 19 for passing the order on the contempt of court rule against the editor, publisher and a journalist of the daily New Age.

The tribunal on October 3 last year issued a show cause notice on them to explain why contempt charges should not be brought against them for publishing an article containing certain "contemptuous" parts.

The article, "A crucial period for International Crimes Tribunal", written by David Bergman, editor (special reports), was published in its OP-ED page on October 2.

Barrister Mustafizur Rahman Khan appeared for New Age Publisher ASM Shahidullah Khan and journalist David Bergman while New Age Editor Nurul Kabir argued for himself before the two-member tribunal headed by its Chairman Justice Md Nizamul Huq.

The trio claimed that the article positively criticised the proceedings of the tribunal against the accused persons, which is not contempt of court.

ACC CASES

Proceedings cancelled against Falu, Hashem

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday cancelled the proceedings of two separate corruption cases filed against former BNP lawmakers Mosaddak Ali Falu and MA Hashem.

Delivering a verdict on two separate petitions, the court declared illegal the notices issued by the Anti-corruption Commission (ACC) to Falu and Hashem, as those were sent to the accused while they were in jail in 2007.

The ACC had filed the cases in 2007 against Falu and Hashem on charges of amassing wealth illegally and concealing information about the wealth on the basis of the two notices.

The court, however, said the ACC can issue fresh notices to the two now in accordance with law.

The HC bench of Justice AKM Fazlur Rahman and Justice Krishna Debnath came up with the verdict after holding final hearing on the petitions filed by the former lawmakers for quashing the proceedings of the cases against them.



Conference

Bangladesh Nagorik Samaj will organise a conference; Venue: the organisation's central office at Mirpur Section-7; Time: 4:00pm.

Discussion

Ganosangskritik Front will arrange a discussion; Venue: Teacher-Student Centre (TSC), Dhaka University; Time: 4:00pm.

Discussion

Bangabandhu Academy will arrange a discussion; Venue: Jatiya Press Club; Time: 11:00am.

Roundtable

Swadhinata Forum will organise a roundtable; Venue: Jatiya Press Club; Time: 10:30am.

Discussion

National Awami Party (Nap) Bhasani will hold a discussion on Shaheed Asad Day; Venue: Dhaka Reporters Unity;



WEATHER TODAY

No change in temperature

UNB, Dhaka

Rain or thundershowers is likely to occur at one or two places over Rajshahi, Rangpur, Dhaka and Sylhet divisions and the regions of Jessore, Kushtia and Comilla in 12 hours as of 6:00pm today.

Weather may remain dry with temporary partly cloudy sky elsewhere over the country.

Moderate to thick fog may occur over the river basins and light to moderate fog may occur elsewhere over the country during mid night till morning, Met Office said.

Day and night temperature may remain nearly unchanged over the country.

The sun sets in the capital at 5:36pm today and rises at 6:43am tomorrow.

Country's highest temperature 29.1 degrees Celsius was recorded yesterday at Teknaf and lowest 10.4 degrees Celsius at Kutubdia.

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	26.0	17.1	76	73
Chittagong	24.0	14.6	85	71
Rajshahi	21.8	14.0	99	74
Rangpur	15.6	12.0	99	89
Khulna	26.5	18.2	90	73
Barisal	24.5	17.0	100	90