

# Ensure security of journalists

**Demands Sultana Kamal; She terms newspersons human rights activists**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT



Journalists are considered defenders of human rights in the modern world and the government has to understand that journalism is a profession no less important than itself or any other line of work, said human rights activist Sultana Kamal.

"The duty of newswomen is immense and their importance is no less than the government or any other profession in any way.

The government has to keep this in mind," she said.

Sultana, also chairperson of Transparency International Bangladesh, demanded full security of the journalists.

She was speaking at a discussion titled 'Journalists in insecurity' organised by anb24.com (Asian News Broadcast 24), an online news agency, at Dhaka Reporters' Unity in the city. She also launched the website of the news agency at the programme.

Also the executive director of rights body Ain O Salish Kendra, Sultana said government should understand that journalists are human rights activists.

"Wherever any violation of human rights occurs they [journalists] will speak up. They will take photographs and spread the news," she said.

Sultana Kamal said the government and home ministry are frequently saying that whatever is being spoken up against the government are not based on facts or exaggerated, she said.

If the interpretation of speaking against the government is speaking against the pro-liberation force or speaking against the government deliberately then it would be regretful, she said.

"No body gave the country's ownership to them [the government] completely. It is our moral responsibility and right to speak if any irregularity or anything undemocratic takes place," Sultana said.

Sultana also urged the newsmen to maintain professional etiquette, decorum and authenticity saying that it would be easier to thwart the repression against journalists if they maintain the etiquette and authenticity.

Biplob Mostafiz, news editor of anb24.com, and Shakhawat Hossain Badsha, president of DRU, also spoke.

# 'Boma' Mizan jailed for 37yrs

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday sentenced a leader of banned Islamist outfit Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) and his wife to 37 years of rigorous imprisonment each for possessing weapons and bullets.

The convicted are Zahidul Islam alias Boma Mizan, an explosives expert of the outlawed group, and his wife Halima Begum alias Sharmin.

Judge Mohammad Akhteruzzaman of the Third Additional Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court handed down the punishment to the couple at a packed courtroom.

Earlier, the prosecution and the defence completed their arguments and the court recorded statements of 8 prosecution witnesses.

On May 2009, Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) captured Boma Mizan from his residence in Taltola in the capital's Mirpur area.

Sharmin tried to commit suicide by blowing herself up when Rab tried to arrest her. She lost one of her hands in the blast and wounded her two-year-old son Saifullah Sukaine Naim and two-month-old daughter Masroba Jannat Tora.

Following a confessional statement of Boma Mizan, Rab busted a "mini-munitions factory" of JMB in East Monipur in Mirpur and recovered a huge cache of bombs and bombing materials.

The elite force recovered 11 bombs, plastic explosives, grenade casings, fuses and detonators, a pistol, and a huge stash of chemical residues from the East Monipur flat that was also recovered by Mizan.

Following the seizure, Rab filed two cases—one for possessing arms and another for explosives—with Mirpur Police Station.

In 2003, Mizan was arrested in Jhikargachha of Jessore, but came out on bail after three months. Since then he had been on the run.

A Chittagong court sentenced him to 34 years of rigorous imprisonment for a bomb attack on a judge in 2005. He was tried in absentia.

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**Venus Transit**  
Observation Camp  
2012

**June 06**

**Date : June 06, 2012, Wednesday**  
**Time : 5:10 am to 10:52 am**  
**Venue: Dhanmondi Club Play Ground, Road No. 08, Dhanmondi R/A, Dhaka**

Organized by:

**Bangladesh Astronomical Association**  
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PHOTO: STAR

**A woman stands beside a family member and sheds tears over the graves of her loved ones at Azimpur Graveyard in the capital yesterday. Eleven members of her family were killed in the Nimtoli tragedy that struck the city two years back, taking at least 123 lives.**

## BNP leader Khokon held again after getting bail

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

DB police yesterday picked up BNP leader Khairul Kabir Khokon in front of Dhaka Central jail.

"He got bail in a case and we went to receive him in front of the jail gate when police suddenly came and picked him up around 7:15pm," said Khokon's wife Shirin Sultana told The Daily Star.

She said the law enforcers did not say why they picked him up.

Khokon got bail in the arson case filed for setting a vehicle ablaze on April 19, said court sources.

Contacted, Anwar Hossain, deputy commissioner of Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP), Motijheel division, confirmed the incident.

## NIMTOLI TRAGEDY

# Remove chemical warehouses

**Urge victims' families, several orgs**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

With a call for raising awareness to prevent fire incidents, the second anniversary of the Nimtoli inferno was observed in the capital yesterday with the reminiscences of the devastating fire that killed at least 123 people, mostly women and children.

Observing the day, family members of the victims of the inferno and several organisations reiterated their demands to immediately remove all warehouses of chemicals and inflammable substances from the city's residential areas.

Bangladesh Society for Burn Injuries (BSBI) and Bangladesh Garments Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) organised a press conference to mark the day as a 'Day for Raising Awareness about Fire.'

They also demanded that the government nationally recognise this day in remembrance of the Nimtoli tragedy.

Earlier, they brought out a procession from Central Shaheed Minar to Dhaka Medical College Hospital, where the conference was

held, to make people aware about fire accidents.

Brig Gen (retd) Abu Nayeem Md Shahidullah, director general of Fire Service and Civil Defence, said around 15,000 fire incidents occurred in the country last year.

Samanta Lal Sen, chief advisor of BSBI, said carelessness and lack of awareness about fire incidents are two common reasons behind the infernos.

Around 80 per cent of such incidents could be reduced by raising public awareness, he added.

Different organisations and personalities, including local Awami League lawmaker Mostafa Jalal Mohiuddin, paid their tributes to the inferno victims through placing wreaths at the memorial setup in Nimtoli.

Special prayers and discussions were also held marking the day.

On June 3, 2010, at least 123 people were killed and more than 200 others were injured in a fire at Nimtoli that originated from a stove in a building that housed a combustible chemical warehouse on its ground floor.



**Samajik Protirodh Committee, a social organisation, organised a human chain programme in front of Jatiya Press Club in the capital yesterday protesting the abuse of a teenage girl by two policemen and harassment and assault of the girl, her parents, lawyers and journalists by police on the Dhaka magistrate's court premises last Tuesday.**

## POLLUTING RIVER

# Factory owner fined Tk 20 lakh

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Department of Environment (DoE) yesterday fined a waste paper recycling factory owner Tk 20.58 lakh for polluting the river Shitalakhya by releasing untreated chemical effluents.

An enforcement team of DoE detected that Islami Board Factory had been running with environmental clearance and effluent treatment plant in Chitralash of Narayanganj.

Mohammad Munir Chowdhury, director of DoE, who handed down the penalty, said that the factory had released 13 crore litres of liquid effluent in the river through Nayamati canal and destroyed aquatic life and biodiversity.

Content of dissolved oxygen in the factory's effluent was nil though required is 5 to 8 milligram per litre, he said adding that the factory neither has Rajuk approval, as it is located in flood flow zone.

He ordered the factory owner Hazi Abdur Rahman not to discharge untreated until clearance and treatment plant were obtained.

The Shitalakhya has been declared an ecologically critical area and dumping of such wastes is strictly prohibited.

PHOTO: STAR

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# CG system or non-party govt

**BNP leader MK Anwar places options for next general polls**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The BNP now has only a couple of options before it --- either a restoration of the caretaker government system or the setting up of a non-party neutral government to oversee the next parliamentary polls, according to a standing committee member of the party, MK Anwar, yesterday.

The government has to make an announcement in this regard to create a congenial atmosphere for a dialogue with the opposition. "The BNP is ready to cooperate with the government and sit with it in a dialogue," he said at a discussion meeting at the Diploma Engineers Institution auditorium at Kakrail in the capital.

The pro-BNP youth body Jatiyatabadi Jubo Dal organised the programme on the occasion of the 31st death anniversary of late president Ziaur Rahman, founder of the main opposition party.

Ruling Awami League General Secretary Syed Ashraful Islam had recently asked the BNP to come up with a specific proposal for an interim government system, but not for a restoration of the caretaker government.

Meanwhile, at a discussion at the Jatiya Press Club, Rafiqul Islam Mia, another member of the standing committee, yesterday said the BNP leadership would announce tougher agitation programmes at the party's June 11 rally to compel the government to fulfil its demand for a neutral non-party government system.

The country is passing through a critical juncture and there are growing fears among people about the future of democracy in Bangladesh, he said.

## BANIARCHAR BOMB ATTACK

# Christian leaders urge govt for justice

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Christian leaders, at a meeting yesterday, demanded immediate trial of the Baniarchar Catholic Church bomb attack and death penalty for the accused in the incident.

They also expressed their frustration as the charge sheet of the case was not submitted yet, despite 11 years into the incident.

Bangladesh Christian Association (BCA) organised the commemorative meeting at Central Shaheed Minar in the capital marking the 11th anniversary of the gruesome attack.

On June 3, 2001, at least 10 people were killed and 26 others injured in a bomb attack on Baniarchar Catholic Church under Moshupur upazila while a prayer was on going at the church.

The leaders urged the government to finish the trial on the case immediately.

State Minister for Cultural Affairs Advocate Pramod Mankin, also BCA president, and BCA Secretary General Nirmal Razario addressed the programme while educationalist Prof Durga Das Bhattacharya and women leader Shirin Aktar were present among others.

## VEHICLE TORCHING

# Ex-BNP MP Babu sent to jail

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday sent former BNP lawmaker Dewan Salahuddin Babu to jail in a case filed for torching vehicles in Savar protesting the arrest of their 33 top leaders on May 16.

Additional Chief Judicial Magistrate Najmul Haque Shyamal passed the order after Salahuddin surrendered to the court seeking bail in the case.

However, in his order, the magistrate said the charge brought against the accused is non-bailable.

On May 24, Salahuddin, who was elected parliament member from Savar, secured anticipatory bail till yesterday from the High Court.

Granting the bail, the HC had directed the BNP leader to surrender before the trial court after expiry of the bail period.

On May 16, after the news spread about BNP acting secretary general Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir and 32 others being arrested, a group of party leaders and activists, including Salahuddin vandalised a number of vehicles at Savar bus stand on Dhaka-Aricha Highway. They also torched two more vehicles.

Following the incidents, Savar police filed a case against Salahuddin and several others under the Speedy Trial Act.

**The Daily Star**

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