

Govt to change whistleblower protection law

Says law minister
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Necessary amendments would be made in the whistleblower protection law so that people feel protected and are encouraged to disclose public interest related information including embezzlement of public money, Law Minister Shafique Ahmed said at a roundtable discussion yesterday.

He said this in response to speakers' opinions that whistleblowers are reluctant to disclose information due to loopholes in the law including officers-in-charge of police stations being 'appropriate authority' to report to in case of illegal and immoral activities.

Management and Resources Development Initiative (MRDI) in partnership with the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC), USAID and PROGATI organised the discussion titled 'Whistleblowers Protection Act' at a hotel in the capital.

The parliament on June 6 last year passed a bill on protection of whistleblowers.

The bill would encourage a whistleblower to give the authorities concerned information about activities against public health, security, environment, criminal activities and misuse of power and irregularities.

Shafique Ahmed said his government would take steps to enact law aimed to protect witnesses and victims of important cases including those of the war crimes trial.

He said he would consider not making register of Supreme Court the 'appropriate authority' to whom whistleblowers will have to submit information in case of wrongdoings in judiciary.

Earlier speakers urged the minister to make chief justice as the appropriate authority in such cases.

The ACC Chairman Ghulam Rahman said corruption index of our country has been decreasing but the trend is very slow.

US Ambassador Dan W Mozena, among others, spoke.

Mob beats man dead

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A man suspected of being a thief was allegedly beaten to death by a mob in the capital's Uttara yesterday.

The deceased, Shakil alias Bablu, 30, hailed from Tanore in Rajshahi and resided at Turag in Gazipur.

Quoting locals, police said Bablu was caught red handed when he went to the fifth floor of an under-construction building for stealing early yesterday.

A group of construction workers beat him to death and left the body in front of the building in Sector-13 of Uttara.

Police detained Ali Hossain, a construction worker, in this connection.



(From left) Executive Director of TIB Iftekharuzzaman, Mohammad Badiuzzaman, US Ambassador Dan W Mozena, ACC Chairman Ghulam Rahman, Law Minister Shafique Ahmed and Chief Information Commissioner Muhammad Zamir attend a discussion on the whistleblower protection act at a hotel in the capital yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

NEWS IN brief

Body found in capital

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police recovered the body of an unidentified boy, aged around 12 years old and wearing a torn T-shirt and trousers, from the roof of a tin-shed building in the capital's Bangshal area yesterday.

"The body bore no marks of injury. We suspect that he is an underprivileged boy who went there to sleep at night and was electrocuted," said officer-in-charge of Bangshal Police Station, Abdul Kuddus Fakir.

The body was sent to Sir Salimullah Medical

US condoles Bangladeshi peacekeeper's death

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The US Embassy in Dhaka expressed deep sympathy for the family and friends of the Bangladeshi Peacekeeping officer Md Asgar Ali who was shot dead by miscreants in Sudan on Sunday morning.

The peacekeeper from Bangladesh's Formed Police Unit died when a gang surrounded and fired at the staff in the Mission's community policing centre inside Otash camp in Nyala, South Darfur, an US embassy said yesterday.

"US Embassy Dhaka's thoughts are with the family and friends of the fallen Bangladeshi Peace

Repair of roads demanded to prevent accidents

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Roads and highways of the country should be repaired to avert deaths in road accidents, speakers at a commemorating meeting demanded yesterday.

They made the demand at the commemoration programme of filmmaker Tareque Masud and media personality Mishuk Munier.

Khulna Nagorik Samaj organised the programme at the office of Khulna District Lawyers' Association to mark the duo's first death anniversary.

The speakers also urged the authorities concerned to take necessary steps so that no accused drivers are granted bail after cases are filed against them.

Advocate Subrata Kundu, among others,

Sweetmeat shop fined

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A mobile court yesterday fined a sweetmeat shop Tk 50,000 for preparing and selling sweets and iftar items in an unhygienic environment in the capital's Basabo area.

The court led by Mohammad Selim Reza, executive magistrate of Dhaka District Administration, fined Adi Comilla Sweetmeat and destroyed around 25kg sweetmeat of the shop, said a press release.

The team also found toxic chemicals being used in the preparation of jilapi.

Flora, fauna disappear with shrinking wetlands

Experts tell seminar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A considerable portion of indigenous flora and fauna have disappeared from the country thanks to the shrinking of wetlands here, speakers observed yesterday.

Most of the country's extensive wetland that was once home to a huge biodiversity has been devastated because of short-sighted policies, they said.

The continuous shrinking of the marshy lands is another reason behind the receding enthusiasm of migratory birds from visiting the country, they added.

Speakers came up with the observations at a seminar on wetland management jointly organised by Bangladesh Forest Department, International Union for Conservation of Nature, and Nature Conservation Committee (NCC) at the forest department in the capital.

Marghub Murshed, former adviser of NCC, said "It is imperative to conserve what is left of our wetlands since these marshy

areas support the livelihood of millions and harbour a huge biodiversity."

Md Yunus Ali, chief conservator of forests of the forest department, said, "The wetlands in our country could be a great source of ecotourism since it attracts around 207 species of migratory birds."

However, some birds, for instance, Spot bill Pelican and Bengal Florican, has already disappeared because of the wetland shrinking, he added.

Yunus said, "Around 300 plant species and more than 400 vertebrae species are judged to be dependent on wetlands for all or parts of their life cycles."

"Marshy lands also make the livelihood of millions of people, particularly fishermen who constitute 10% of the country's total population," he said.

He also called for protection of the 47 major haors existing in the country that contribute around six to eight percent to the national GDP.

ZIA ORPHANAGE TRUST CORRUPTION CASE

Charge framing deferred till Sep 13

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday deferred till September 13 the hearing on charge framing against BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia, her elder son Tarique Rahman and four others in the Zia Orphanage Trust corruption case.

Judge Mohammad Mozammel Hossain of Special Judge's Court-3 passed the order after Khaleda's lawyer Taherul Islam Touhid submitted a petition seeking adjournment of the hearing.

In the petition, Touhid told the court that they could not bring any order from the Appellate Division on an earlier leave to appeal petition till October filed against a High Court (HC) division order.

The HC, in a verdict on December 14 last year, rejected a writ petition submitted by Khaleda to stop the proceedings against her in the case. The court also said the case proceedings will continue with the trial court.

The hearing on the leave to appeal petition remains pending with the Appellate Division after it adjourned the hearing on June 12.

The Special Judge's Court yesterday asked the defence to submit by September 13 any order of the Appellate Division on the petition.

Otherwise, the court will start charge hearing in the graft case.

Khaleda could not appear before it as she was physically ill, Touhid told the court.

Among the charge-sheeted accused, former BNP lawmaker Kazi Salimul Haque and businessman Sharfuddin Ahmed were present in the court.

Tarique, also BNP senior vice-president, is now in London for treatment with permission from the Supreme Court.



Staff of The Daily Star offer munajat during an iftar party at The Daily Star Centre in the capital yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Polls must be held under neutral admin

Reiterates BNP

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP acting secretary general Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir yesterday said the government has to take initiatives to hold the next national polls under a neutral administration.

"Our stance is in favour of the 13th amendment. The ball is now in government's court. We can only sit down with the government to decide on the chief adviser of the caretaker government," he told a press conference at the party's central office at Nayapaltan.

He, however, said they did not finalise the plan for forming an interim government and were in discussion with legal experts about the plan. "We are hopeful we'll be able to finalise our plan soon."

As the government amended the constitution, they will have to take steps to resolve the crisis, mentioned Fakhru.

The 13th amendment to the constitution

had made the provision to hold the national elections under a caretaker government. But the parliament last year scrapped it by adopting the 15th amendment.

According to the existing provision, the incumbent Awami League-led alliance government will be in power during the next national polls.

But the main opposition BNP and its allies said they will not contest the elections if held under a political government.

On Saturday, BNP standing committee member Moudud Ahmed said his party would publish the draft outline of a non-party caretaker government after the Eid-ul-Fitr.

But Fakhru yesterday said it was Moudud's "personal" statement.

Asked about the prime minister's offer to form a small cabinet ahead of the national polls, he said the prime minister's offer was not clear.

Form Kuakata dev authority

Demands Kuakata investors' assoc

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Kuakata Investors' Association (KIA) has urged the government for a speedy formation of the Kuakata development authority in order to promote the island as a sustainable and eco-friendly tourist destination.

Earlier on May 2, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina directed the relevant authorities to start building infrastructures in Cox's Bazar and Kuakata tourists' centres.

KIA members said it should be done to prevent unplanned growth of the tourist spot.

"We express all-out solidarity with the government in its initiative for the development of Kuakata," said Mostafa Shiblee, one of the KIA members, at a press conference at Jatiya Press Club in the capital yesterday.

KIA officials demanded views exchange meetings with all the stakeholders in Kuakata before setting the modus operandi of the proposed development authority.

"KIA is determined to safeguard eco-friendly and genuine investments for the greater interest of the public," said the President of KIA, MGR Nasir Majumder.

Manzur Alam, another KIA member, said the 20-km long marine drive earthen road that surrounds and protects the island from natural disasters must immediately be carpeted.

DHAKA TODAY

Discussion
Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB) will hold a discussion; Venue: IUB campus, Plot 16, Block B, Bashundhara R/A; Time: 11:00am.

Rally
Bangladesh Chhatra Moitree will organise a rally; Venue: Dhaka University campus; Time: 11:30am.

Discussion
Bangla Academy will hold a discussion; Venue: Seminar Room, the academy; Time: 3:00pm.

Doa mahfil
Bangladesh Film Development Corporation (FDC) will arrange a doa mahfil; Venue: Zahir Raihan Rongin Rasaynagar VIP Hall, FDC; Time: 11:00am.

Discussion
Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal will hold a discussion; Venue: Hotel Rajmoni

WEATHER TODAY

Rains likely
UNB, Dhaka

Light to moderate rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty wind is likely at most places over Dhaka, Rajshahi, Rangpur, Khulna, Barisal, Chittagong and Sylhet divisions in 24 hours till 6:00pm today.

Moderately heavy to very heavy falls are also likely at places elsewhere over the country, Met Office said.

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

The sun sets in the capital today at 6:33 pm and rises tomorrow at 5:34am.

Country's highest temperature 33.6 degree Celsius was recorded yesterday at Sayedpur and lowest 22.5 degrees at Rangamati.

The highest maximum temperature is likely to be 33-34 degree Celsius and the lowest minimum temperature may be 23-24 degree Celsius.

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	28.6	25.3	95	77
Chittagong	29.4	24.5	95	92
Rajshahi	30.2	25.5	96	92
Rangpur	32.3	25.6	86	76
Khulna	28.7	25.8	100	98
Barisal	27.6	25.5	96	92
Sylhet	32.1	25.5	89	80