

New NGO apex body proposed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Representatives of a section of non-government organisations (NGOs) have proposed formation of a federation for the NGOs to protect their interests which, they claimed, the Association of Development Agencies in Bangladesh (ADAB) had failed to safeguard.

At the second national convention of the anti-ADAB organisations, working under the banner of the National NGO Coordination Committee (NNCC), the participants also sounded a note of warning about the political consequences of launching a new NGO platform. The convention was held in the city yesterday.

"We are forming this federation at a time when the BNP-led alliance is in power, but we should not forget that another party may come to power after four years," said one of the 59 district convenors while giving their opinions.

They suggested exchanging views on the issue with all segments of society including the political parties.

Fazle Hasan Abed, co-ordinator of the NNCC and chairperson of Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC), inaugurated the convention at Mirpur Indoor Stadium. The convention was attended by delegates of over 1500 organisations, mostly small NGOs, from across the country.

Abed said, "We had to form the

NAM Summit from today amidst tight security

AFP, Kuala Lumpur

More than 8,000 police patrolled the Malaysian capital yesterday as leaders flew in under heavy guard for the 114-nation Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) summit.

Helicopters hovered overhead and 8,500 police, some armed with M16 rifles, were deployed to central Kuala Lumpur ahead of the summit representing the interests of billions of the world's poorest people from Asia, Africa, the Middle East and Latin America.

Police closed roads and carparks around the Putra World

Trade Centre, where some 60 leaders -- including Cuba's Fidel Castro, Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe and the leaders of both India and Pakistan -- and thousands of delegates will gather for the two-day meeting from today.

Malaysia has detained some 70 members of the Jemaah Islamiyah regional militant group, which is believed to have ties with the al-Qaeda terror network and is blamed for more than 190 deaths in the Bali attack, and officials were not taking any chances.

Inside and outside the summit centre, uniformed and plain-clothes

officers stood guard or conducted mobile patrols assisted by police dogs and mounted units.

Meanwhile, the NAM thrashed out a resolution rejecting a US-led attack on Iraq without the go-ahead from the United Nations over four days of talks ahead of the summit.

The statement was finalised as US President George W Bush gave the UN a new ultimatum: pass a resolution authorising force against Iraq within two months or America will attack.

NAM urged Iraq to step up cooperation with UN inspectors search

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Oli murder case IO report for acquittal of all accused

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Investigation officer (IO) of the Oli murder case in his final report yesterday asked for acquittal of all the 18 accused in the case citing lack of evidence.

IO of the case Criminal Investigation Department (CID) Inspector Akbar Hossain Kazi submitted the final report to the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court, Dhaka yesterday.

The report said there was no evidence against the accused and no eyewitnesses were available to testify against them.

Four-party alliance MP Nasir Uddin Ahmed Pintu is one of the accused in the case.

The others are Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) ward commissioners Chowdhury Alam, Kazi Abul Bashar and Sagir Ahmed, Mainuddin alias Mainu, Mosharrif Hossain, Mohan, Abdul Aziz, Siraj, Ismail, advocate Habibur Rahman Mondal (dead), Ahmed Hossain, Pintu, Miah (dead), Motaleb, Abdul Malek, Noor Hossain and Salauddin.

Nasir Uddin Ahmed Pintu and 10 others were earlier granted bail. But the court on December 17 last year issued warrant of arrest against Pintu and nine others, as they did

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Prime Minister Khaleda Zia exchanges pleasantries with her cabinet colleagues on the tarmac at Zia International Airport yesterday minutes before flying off to Kuala Lumpur to attend the Non-Alignment Movement (NAM) Summit.



PHOTO: STAR

Dhaka Ahsania Mission has turned a residence at Dhanmondi Road No. 32 into its College of Science and Business Studies disregarding the rule.

Birth date commotion in Betar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Commotion is brewing up among officials of Bangladesh Betar news section, particularly among the junior ones, centring an alleged move to change the date of birth of a senior official.

Sources said that instead of taking action against the official, the higher authorities transferred two officials and issued show cause notice on some others for protesting the move.

Ten officials of the news section gave a representation to the information secretary last month, protesting the move concerning Imam Hossain Khan, now discharging the duties of director of news.

According to previous gradation list, Imam's date of birth is February 18, 1946 and he was supposed to go on leave preparatory to retirement (LPR) on February 17, sources said.

But when a process of revising the gradation list began in the mid

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Table with prayer timings for Feb 24, including Sun Rises, Sun Sets, Azan, and Jamaat.

Doubly devious

Ahsania Mission runs college on "illegal" residential building

SHAMEEM MAHMUD

Defying directives from Rajuk to demolish an illegally built house at Dhanmondi residential area in the city, its owner has rather rented it out for non-residential use.

Dhaka Ahsania Mission is running its College of Science and Business Studies at the rented house without permission from the authorities concerned, sources said.

In September last year, Rajuk had cancelled the approved plan of the building at Road 11 for tampering with it and asked the allottee of the plot to demolish the structure. The plan was for a multi-storied apartment building.

But the allottee ignored this and went for construction of third floor of the building in December.

The educational institution housed in the building still continues its activities as usual.

Public relations director of Ahsania Mission Nurul Islam said the college is being run with permission from the authorities concerned. "The structure is not a permanent campus of the institution. We have rented it for use as a temporary one".

Rajuk inspectors visited the site last month and found that preparations were on for adding another floor to the structure. Rajuk then requested the PWD to cancel lease of the plot.

Executive engineer of PWD Shahidul Islam said they have recommended to the Housing and Public Works Ministry cancellation of lease of the plot.

Monuments on grave of 7 Birshresthas planned

BSS, Dhaka

The Ministry of Liberation War Affairs will construct separate monuments on the grave of seven Birshresthas at an estimated cost of Taka five crore 26 thousand.

The work is expected to be completed by 2005, an official handout said here yesterday.

The decision was announced yesterday at a review meeting on the progress of ADP projects of the ministry held in the ministry's conference room with State Minister for Liberation War Affairs Redwan Ahmed in the chair.

The Planning Commission approved the summary of the project on Saturday, the handout added.

Agarwal, six others sued

BSS, Dhaka

The Bureau of Anti-Corruption (BAC) yesterday filed four separate cases against Marwari businessman Om Prakash Agarwal and six others including four officials of the One Bank Limited for embezzling Taka 11.5 crore.

Deputy Managing Director (DMD) Kaisar A Chowdhury, Executive Vice President Farmanur Rahman Chowdhury, Vice President Subhash Chandra Das and Senior Assistant Vice President Nirmalananda Chowdhury of the bank have been named in the cases for facilitating the fraud, BAC officials said last night.

The bank officials were accused for assisting in getting the bank's money through forged documents.

The two other accused in the cases are Narayan Chandra Bhowmik and Hare Krishna Saha. Mohammad Abdul Haq, a BAC official filed these cases with the Motijheel police station here alleg

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Another Al-Hiqma man held

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Detective police arrested another member of Islamic militant group Shahadat-e-Al-Hiqma yesterday.

The arrested was identified as Nazim Uddin, 42, son of Moyez Uddin of Horogram Sheikhpara.

A team of detective police led by sub-inspector Shamsuddin arrested Nazim from the city's Rajshahi Court area at about 11 am.

Nazim was present at the February 8 press conference of Al-Hiqma and was engaged in various offensive activities, sources said.

Barisal mayoral race Big processions, rallies by 'rival' BNP candidates

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

Two 'rebel' BNP candidates yesterday filed nomination papers for the post of mayor of Barisal City Corporation, putting up big show-downs with processions and rallies.

One of them -- district BNP Secretary Eabidul Huq Chandrew crowds much bigger than the party-backed candidate, Whip Mazibur Rahman Sarwar, witnesses said. The other 'rebel' candidate is city BNP president and mayor-in-charge Ahsan Habib Kamal.

It was a city of processions and rallies as ten candidates filed nomination papers for the mayoral post

and 237 for 30 ward commissioner posts. Fifty-two women submitted nomination papers for ten reserved seats. Political parties are not allowed to officially nominate candidates in local body polls.

The city grew tense as the three BNP candidates and opposition Awami League-backed candidate Enayet Pir Khan held separate public meetings and went to the Divisional Commissioner's office with big processions to submit nomination papers. Enayet Pir is contesting as a candidate of the Nagarik Parishad (Citizens' Council), an organisation of socio-

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14 mayoral candidates in Sylhet

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Fourteen mayoral candidates of the Sylhet City Corporation elections billed for March 20 filed their nomination papers here yesterday. Additional Divisional Commissioner (ADC) of Sylhet and election returning officer Mohammad Ali said.

Ali, who received the nomination papers at his office, said 273 ward commissioner candidates for 27 wards of the local government body and 71 female candidates for nine reserved seats for women also filed their nomination papers yesterday.

Accompanied by some central AL leaders and campaigners, sitting mayor and Sylhet City Awami League president Badaruddin Ahmed Kamran went to the ADC's office to file his nomination paper.

Four-party nominee and district BNP president MA Haque also went to file his nomination paper accom

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Seismic centres run into fund shortage

JULHAS RIPON

A Tk 20 crore government plan for four seismic observatories to help give protection against earthquakes has run short of funds, officials said yesterday.

Seismologists accuse the government of neglecting the project.

A top official of the Bangladesh Meteorological Department said the government has failed to understand its importance.

The plan envisages construction of new observatories in Dhaka, Sylhet and Rangpur and modernisation of the only existing observatory in Chittagong.

The buildings were completed

last year, but the government cannot afford to buy equipment.

Following a doubling of the original cost of the scheme, no donor has responded to a request for funds by the Economic Relations Division.

Officials say the Chittagong observatory is outdated and incapable of properly monitoring earthquakes.

They argue that the observatories would make it possible to identify earthquake-risk zones, recommend land use patterns and draw up safety standards for building construction, evacuation and rescue preparedness.

The seismologists argue that

continuous monitoring is important as Bangladesh lies in a seismically active area and is vulnerable to potentially catastrophic earthquakes.

They are pressing for establishment of a fully equipped observation network equipped with a global telecom system.

"We depend fully on the United States Geological Survey report or reports of the observatory centres in India for any data on earthquakes," said Dr Aftab Alam Khan of the Department of Geology, Dhaka University.

MPs to get 324 NAM flats

BSS, Dhaka

Three-hundred twenty-four out of 668 NAM flats will be allotted to members of the parliament, Public Works and Housing Minister Mirza Abbas told the Jatiya Sangsad (JS) yesterday.

To a question by Jamaat MP Delwar Hossain Saidee, the minister said the flats are under construction but fund shortage is slowing down progress of the work which will cost Tk 55 crore.

Purbachal plots Rajuk is preparing a policy guideline for allotment of plots of Purbachal residential project, the minister also told the JS yesterday.

To a question from Shamsur Rahman Sharif (AL), he said that expatriate Bangladeshis earning foreign exchange have already been allotted plots in Purbachal.

Push for vegetable fat

Condensed milk firms lobby for change in standards

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Condensed milk producers are now lobbying with the industries ministry to change the Bangladeshi standards and allow them to use vegetable fat in the item instead of milk fat, sources said.

They have written to the ministry for changing the standards, urging that 'the product is safe with vegetable fat' in it.

The four producers are now running their plants on a January 26 High Court order which allowed them to continue production for at least two months.

The HC order was issued after BSTI (Bangladesh Standards and Testing Institute) cancelled their certification marks on January 23 for violating government-set standards.

As per BSTI specification, the producers have to use liquid milk and sugar, which would turn into fat and provide the required eight percent dairy fat to the product.

But BSTI tests showed that condensed milk, widely used with tea and coffee, was produced with eight percent vegetable fat instead of dairy fat. The tests also showed that some producers used whey powder, starch of milk or caked milk to fulfill the criteria of milk.

After their certification marks were cancelled, Industries Minister MK Anwar had told The Daily Star that use of vegetable fat instead of milk fat in condensed milk was causing serious health hazard.

BSTI officials however declined to say whether the condensed milk so produced is safe for human consumption or not. They also said

they were not sure whether use of palm oil and whey powder posed any threat to public health.

The matter came to the notice of BSTI in August 2002 when its officials inspected a leading factory to find out if its product was up to the mark for export to European countries. They found that the producer of a widely used condensed milk stored piles of "extremely low quality skimmed caked milk and palm oil cake" in its factory.

Since 1997, when it was made mandatory for producers to obtain BSTI certificate, it kept renewing their licences without even examining what kind of fat was being used.

BSTI scientists admitted that during routine yearly tests they

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