

DV-99 winners allegedly harassed at US mission

Many of the DV-99 winners from Bangladesh are allegedly being harassed at the US embassy's consular section and losing both their money and chances of going to America, reports UNB.

Immigration Advisory Council, a body of immigration lawyers, brought the allegations at a press conference at Jatiya Press Club yesterday.

"At least two thousand of the DV-99 winners were refused visas on the plea of some minor mistakes and they lost about Tk 32 crore," said Advocate Abdullah Faruque, Chief Adviser of the Council.

Some of the victims were present in the news conference and narrated their woes. They appealed to US President Bill Clinton and the embassy here to give them another chance to clarify their faults.

A poor family of three members had to incur a huge financial loss of over Tk 90,000, including US dollar 335.30 in visa-processing fees.

"After visa refusal for minor mistakes, none of the applicants did get their money back," said one of the broken-hearts.

Over 7,000 Bangladeshis

have own DV-99 and about 4,000 faced interview for visa so far, almost half of whom were turned back for some mistakes, newsmen were told.

Meanwhile, in an application to the US President, the Immigration Bar Association of Bangladesh has alleged that the applicants were declared disqualified after payment of the processing fees.

It named a couple of consular officers at the US mission who were "jointly axing applicants for minor mistakes — if spelling of names or the signature of the applicants varies or if the city of birth is not the same as that of entry form or if the dates of birth of the children don't match into with the entry form — though information about the discrepancy is already brought to knowledge of the National Visa Centre."

"These poor applicants are driven out of the embassy and their money is confiscated," says the petition.

"We also informed our urge in writing to the US embassy here and are waiting for their reply," said Advocate Abdullah Faruque.

IDEB urges PM to allot flats, not plots

By Staff Correspondent

The Institute of Diploma Engineers, Bangladesh (IDEB) welcoming the Prime Minister's decision to cancel plot allotment in Bardhara, Banani and Uttara urged her to allot flats instead.

In a press release yesterday IDEB said that residential plot allotment in the city should permanently be forbidden and instead residential flats should be allotted.

The release also said, the city has limited space. So the government should plan not on "horizontal mobility" but on "vertical mobility" by allotting residential flats.

IDEB made the request at the concluding day of its two-day monthly meeting at city's Kakrail area yesterday.

Razzak visits DND dam repair work

Water Resources Minister

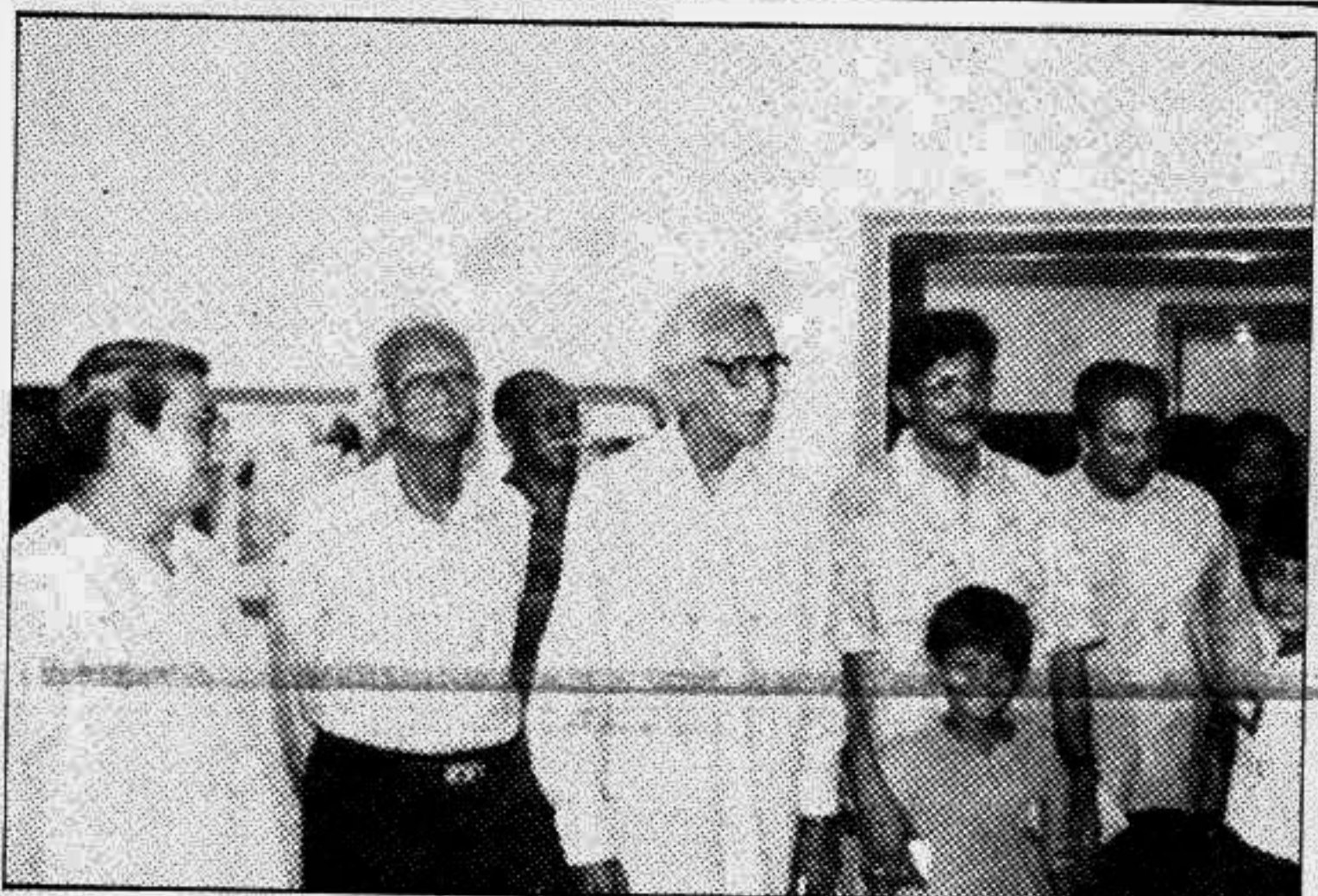
Abdur Razzak yesterday visited Dhaka-Narayanganj Dam (DND) to see the progress of the repair and construction work of the dam damaged by the last year's devastating floods, reports BSS.

The minister directed the Bangladesh Water Development Board (BWDB), which is implementing the project, to take all precautionary measures to protect the DND from any possible flood this year.

He said the government would not tolerate any irregularities in the repair and construction work to protect the project.

Habibur Rahman Mollah, MP, and senior officials of the BWDB were present.

Later the minister visited the sluice gates of the Water Development Board at Rampura.



Noted educationist Prof Anisuzzaman (L) inaugurated the solo painting exhibition by Mohammad Eunus at the Shilpangan art gallery in the city yesterday.

Dacoity at Mohammadpur

By Staff Correspondent

Dacoits robbed cash taka, gold ornaments and valuables worth about Tk 3.5 lakh after stabbing the owner of the house at Babar Road in Mohammadpur yesterday afternoon.

The injured was identified as Dr Rafiqul Islam who was admitted to a local clinic with stab wounds in his abdomen, according to his relatives.

A gang of about six dacoits got inside the residence after ringing the calling bell at about 4 pm.

When Dr Rafiqul Islam tried to resist them, the robbers stabbed him in his abdomen and left the house with Tk 2.5 lakh in cash, gold ornaments and other valuables.

Mohammadpur police said last night that they have heard about the incident and officials visited the spot.

No case was filed till filing of this report.

JCD procession in city

Jatiyatibadi Chhatra Dal (JCD), student wing of the main opposition BNP, will hold processions in the city demanding withdrawal of cases against its leaders, reports UNB.

JCD will bring out procession today in every ward and on July 20 in every thana demanding withdrawal of what they said false cases against BNP Dhaka City convenor Sadek Hossain Khoka, MP, Nazimuddin Alam, MP, JCD general secretary Nasiruddin Ahmed Pintu and other JCD leaders and workers, said a press release.

First class 2nd in M Pharm

Hamim Zahar, a Bangladeshi student, has stood first class second in the M Pharm examination of Delhi University under the session 1998-99, says a press release.

She also obtained first class second position in the B Pharm examination from the same university.

Hamim leaves for Australia on July 20 to attend Sydney University for Ph.D. degree. Hamim is the eldest daughter of Ms Shamim Zahar and Zahurul Haq, photo Editor of the Daily Janakantha.



A view of the city BNP protest rally at Purana Paltan yesterday.

— Star photo

Five hurt in city

By Staff Correspondent

Five people, including two women, were injured in separate incidents in the city yesterday.

The injured were identified as Mostafa, 26, Summi, 16, Sajjat Ali, 35, his wife Flora Begum, 25, and Jamir Miah, 45.

The first incident took place at Tikatuli in the city's Shitrapur area when Mostafa, a cable operator, was returning from his shop around 4 pm. A gang of four led by Amin and Momen stopped his rickshaw and demanded his valuables.

When Mostafa refused, the gang stabbed on his hand and belly and snatched away Tk 26,000 which he collected from his client as rent.

Mostafa was rushed to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) with critical injuries.

When contacted Shitrapur thana, the duty officer said that they didn't hear anything and none had gone to file any complaint in this connection.

In the second incident, Summi was shot at Commissioner Road in city's Shyampur area at about 12.30 pm yesterday.

Summi was moving to her sister's residence at Jurain by rickshaw, when she reached Commissioner Road, two rival groups traded gun shots and she received injuries in hand and head.

Duty officer of Shyampur thana last night said that police visited the girl at the DMCH and she is improving.

The last incident took place at Sultail in city's Badda area, when a gang of miscreants led by Anwar and Kabir attacked at the residence of Sajjat Ali with lethal weapons around 2 pm yesterday.

The gang attacked the house at Sultail and indiscriminately chopped Sajjat, his wife Flora and Jamir. They received injuries during the attack. The reason behind the attack was previous enmity over land dispute, it was learnt.

'Trial of Col Taher was anti-constitutional'

Speakers at a meeting yesterday

termed Col Taher's execution "brutal killing in a mock trial" and demanded fresh trial to prove all the doings under martial law were illegal, reports UNB.

The "so-called" trial of Col Abu Taher was anti-constitutional and against the rule of law, said eminent lawyers at a discussion meeting on the issue.

Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD) National Sports Council Auditorium ahead of the death anniversary of Col Taher, hanged on July 21, 1976 in Dhaka Central Jail during military rule following a political tropy-turvy.

JSD President and Fisheries and Livestock Minister ASM Abdur Rab presided over the meeting addressed, among others, by Advocate Gaizul Haq, Supreme Court Bar Association president Barrister Shafiq Ahmed, JSD general secretary Hasanul Haq Inu and party leader Nur Alam Ziku.

Advocate Gaizul Haq, one of the lawyers who had moved for Col Taher at the martial law court, said the trial did not take place properly and could be challenged under the existing law of the land.

"We could not present different aspects of the case before the court... we wanted to know why Taher and others were convicted," he said. "We searched for the motives of the case, but failed."

"We could not dig out the quarters behind the case, whether there was any local or regional conspiracy, he told the function, adding people also remained in the dark about the motifs of Bangabandhu killing."

Barrister Shafiq said Col Taher was killed as per a design in the name of trial. The reason was not mentioned while the martial law was declared. There is no provision in the constitution for declaring mar-

tial law in the country."

The court, where Taher's trial was held, had no locus standi and so it was illegal, he opined. The court and other military activities were illegalised through the 5th and 7th amendments to the Constitution.

"But, the activities can be challenged as those were illegal by virtue of the Constitution," he said. "It can be challenged where the fundamental base of the Constitution was scrapped."

The Supreme Court lawyer observed the 5th and 7th amendments were made to give legal cover to the illegitimate activities, "but the amendments themselves were also illegal."

JSD president Rab said why the trial of Taher killing could not take place when the trial of Bangabandhu killing took place and the jail killings case revived.

"The countrymen and the freedom fighters hope for a fresh trial of the case from the government," he said, adding that further political killings would stop through the trial.

"It will prove that there is a Constitution, law and judicial system in the country," he said. Inu demanded of the government to declare all activities in the martial law court illegal and publish the White Paper on such deeds during the period of martial law.

"Unmask those who violated the Constitution before the people to give the democracy an institutional shape," he said.

JASAS rally today

JASAS, cultural front of BNP, will hold a rally at Mukattagan in the city today protesting false cases filed against BNP leaders including Sadek Hossain Khoka, reports UNB.

Central leaders of BNP and JASAS will address the rally, said a press release.

Concern over PM's statement on confce centre

By Staff Correspondent

Sylhet Division Development Council has expressed deep resentment at the statement of the Prime Minister regarding establishment of a conference centre at the city's Osmany Udyan.

The Council president Advocate Abed Raja issued a statement yesterday rebutting the Prime Minister's argument of having no option for setting up such a centre in the city. He asserted that if government wishes he can search out an alternate site for the centre.

He also noted that no conscious citizen can support establishment of a centre felling the trees of Osmany Udyan.

In a separate statement Abed Raja expressed his concern at non-implementation of the runway expansion work of Osmany International Airport despite clear announcement from the Prime Minister in that respect.

Sajeda's call to determine state of environment

Minister for Forest and Environment Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury yesterday asked all concerned to determine the latest state of environment of the country on the basis of proper information to ensure sustainable development, reports BSS.

She was speaking as the chief guest at the certificate awarding ceremony among the participants of the training programme titled "National Training on Bangladesh State of Environment Data Collection and Reporting" at a city hotel on Thursday.

The Minister said the present government had taken a number of measures for the protection and development of environment.

Sajeda Chowdhury said United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) has been entrusted with the task of formulating a global state of environment report with the aim of determining the latest state of global environment.

She said the report on the Bangladesh's State of Environment would be formulated on the basis of information to be collected from different government and non-government organisations.

The minister expressed the hope that the government would be able to formulate necessary policy guidelines and programme to attain sustainable development and face challenges of the twenty first century after identifying the environmental problems in Bangladesh.

Tree fair drawing heavy crowd in Ctg

CHITTAGONG, July 16: The 15-day long Tree Fair at Gymnasium premises and its adjoining areas of M A Aziz stadium is drawing heavy crowd, reports BSS.

The main theme of the fair is "Plant tree and save the environment." It was inaugurated by Mayor of Chittagong City Alhaj A B M Mohiuddin Chowdhury on July 7.

Organised by the Chittagong City Corporation for the third time, there are around 45 stalls with different varieties of saplings in the fair, being visited by a huge member people from all walks of life every day.

The horticulturists, even from far flung areas of the district, are visiting the fair to collect their favourite saplings and seeds for their orchard as well as for their homestead.

A considerable number of rare saplings from home and abroad are on sale at the fair.

Fair officials said many visitors preferring rare saplings for their gardens.

Speaker returns

Speaker Humayun Rasheed Chowdhury returned home yesterday after attending the conference of the World Council of Former Foreign Ministers in Moscow, reports UNB.

In the conference, the Speaker focussed on the probable role of various regional groups, including SAARC and ASEAN, in establishing peace and resolving various bilateral and inter-country problems in the next millennium.

Ashrayan Project 350 families rehabilitated in Noakhali

NOAKHALI, July 16: Once they had endured the worst of life passing days under open sky. Now they are happy as their worst days are over. Some 350 homeless families in Sadar and Hatia thanas have been rehabilitated in 35 barrack-like houses under Ashrayan Project, reports UNB.

"We do not demand a lot. Our basic demands are shelter and three meals a day, and we have got the shelter, so we are happy," said a member of the rehabilitated families.

Officials said 255 barrack-like houses in three thanas of the district under Ashrayan Project are being constructed for rehabilitation of homeless families.

They said Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina had directed them to rehabilitate the homeless people of Companyganj, Hatia and Sadar thanas of the district through cooperatives.

The rehabilitated families in the two thanas have already formed nine cooperatives.

The officials said some 279 acres of land have been acquired for construction of 202 barrack-type houses in Sadar thana under the supervision of army.

In Hatia thana, 46 acres of land have been acquired for constructing 46 houses while 10 acres in Companyganj thana for seven houses.

Seminar on population held

Labour and Employment Minister M A Mannan yesterday stressed the need for concerted effort to control the huge population of the country into manpower, reports BSS.

The government of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina places emphasis on the spread of technical education side by side with general education to achieve this target," he said in a speech to a seminar organised on the concluding day of self-employment training course in the city.

The seminar, Population is Not the Problem - Population is Its Solution, was organised by Bangladesh Employment Association and Self-Employment Finance.

Presided over by chief adviser of the organisation National professor Prof Kabir Chowdhury, the function was addressed, among others, by Whip of the Jatiya Sangsad Prof Khaleda Khanom, Director General of Manpower Bureau Abul Kalam Azad and General Secretary of the organisation Prof Deen Mohammad.

Mannan said: "The government has taken initiatives to set up 11 more technical training Centres in as many greater districts."

He said that the government had decided to set up a technical training centre for women in Dhaka and five others in as many divisional headquarters.

He urged non-government organisations to come forward for this purpose.

Fifty students from different schools took part in the course.

Three rivers flowing above danger level

Although the monsoon is less active over the country, the river Padma, Surma and Kushi-yara are still flowing above danger level in four points, reports UNB.

In the Ganges basin, Padma recorded further rise by 3 cm at Bhagyakul and was flowing 17cm above danger level at the point. It also rose by 24 cm each at Pankha and Rajshahi and 13 cm at Hardinge Bridge points.

In the same basin, the Mohananda at Chapainawabganj marked further rise by 23 cm and the Goral rose by 12 cm at Goral Railway Bridge.

In the Meghna basin, the Surma is flowing above danger level by 39 cm at Kanaighat and 17 cm at Sunamganj although it recorded fall by 16 cm each at Kanaighat and Sylhet and 10 cm at Sunamganj. The Kushi-yara also marked fall by 13 cm at Amalshid and was flowing 29cm above danger mark.

The Flood Information Centre said almost all the rivers in Brahmaputra and South Eastern Hill basins recorded fall and are flowing below their respective danger levels.

Bangladesh students attend UNIS confce in New York

Four Bangladeshi girl students from the Mulberry School of the Tower Hamlets of London recently went to New York. British delegation to attend the UN conference on Civil Conflicts and its Global effects, reports BSS.

The four students-Irina Hussain, Kibria Begum, Syeda Khanom, and Sheila Begum, along with a delegation of 60 other countries, took part in group discussions and workshops designed by the United Nations' International School (UNIS) to stimulate talks on key issues, according to a delayed message received from London today.

The lucky students earned their places at the conferences by winning a competition organised by the school. They had to prepare a speech on a one-minute speech about the reasons for willingness to visit the UN.

This is the second time that Mulberry school has been invited to the Big Apple. Last year four pupils and two teachers attended the conference on Technology and Communications in the 21st century and their impact on society.

One electrocuted in Pirojpur

From Staff Correspondent

BARISAL, July 16: One was electrocuted at Atarkhali village under Bhandaria thana of Pirojpur district this morning. According to witnesses, the victim Rashid Mirzad, 46, met the tragic end while cutting a branch of a tree. He suddenly came in touch with high volt live electric wire of REB nearby and fell on the ground.

He died on way to hospital.

Pakistan admits crossing into Indian territory

ISLAMABAD, July 16: The Pakistani authorities admitted for the first time Friday that their troops crossed into Indian territory during two months of fighting in Kashmir, the BBC reported here, reports AFP.

There was "occasional and aggressive patrolling" by Pakistani troops on the Indian side of the Line of Control (LoC) that divides Kashmir, General Pervez Musharraf told the BBC in an interview on the frontline.

Musharraf, the head of the Pakistani army, said this had been done to prevent any possible Indian attack on Pakistan.

Pakistan has until now consistently denied Indian accusations both that its forces crossed into Indian-administered Kashmir or that they fought alongside Moslem guerrillas.

While it openly conducted artillery duels with India, it described all the fighting in Indian territory as Kashmiri freedom fighters.

India has maintained its soldiers were mainly fighting Pakistani troops.

Musharraf's admission

came as the guerrillas continued withdrawing from key heights in Indian Kashmir.

Also in the interview, Musharraf accused India of trying to hide the true extent of the casualties it suffered in its efforts to evict the guerrillas.

He added he hoped the withdrawal of the insurgents would be completed by Saturday.

On Sunday Pakistani and Indian senior officers agreed on a military "disengagement" and the guerrillas began to retreat.

A week earlier Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif announced he would attempt to persuade the guerrillas to withdraw, still insisting they were not under his control despite international scepticism.

Pakistan controls the northern third and India the southern two-thirds of the disputed Himalayan territory. Both claim all of the region and have fought two of their wars since 1947 over its ownership.

The latest crisis in Kashmir attracted international concern as tensions soared between the two arch-rivals, which both conducted nuclear weapons tests last year.

UNSC may see reform within a year: Annan

PRAGUE, July 16: The UN Security Council could be reformed within six or 12 months, UN Secretary General Kofi Annan said here Friday after talks with Czech Foreign Minister Jan Kavan, reports AFP.

Annan said the body must be reformed to allow nine Security Council countries to overcome the veto that a single country can impose.

"The Kosovo conflict clearly demonstrated the need for a reform of the Security Council," the UN chief said, expressing regret that "the NATO bombing in Yugoslavia took place without the consent of the Security Council."

While no Security Council vote was held on a resolution supporting the bombing, it was widely assumed that Russia and China - two permanent members of the council - would have blocked one.

Annan is to meet with Czech President Vaclav Havel and other political leaders during his two-day visit.

Russian police detain Chechen security minister

MOSCOW, July 16: Moscow police on Friday arrested the security minister of the separatist Chechen republic in an incident Grozny denounced as a provocation aimed at torpedoing a key summit between the two sides, reports AFP.

Prosecutors said that Turali Ali Atgeriyev was arrested for his role in a January 1996 attack by Chechen gunmen on the southern Russian town of Kizlyar in which at least 20 Russians and 13 Chechens were killed.

That raid was staged by Chechen warlord Salman Raduyev and came amid a bloody 1994-96 war for independence that ended in the north Caucasus republic's de facto independence.

The 300-strong group of Chechens then took 160 hostages during a raid ending in a Russian military assault that saw most of the gunmen slip away undetected. Many remain on Russia's wanted list to this day.



Children are catching fish in the pumped out water from inside the flood protection dam at Jahanabad, Mirpur in the city yesterday.

— Star photo by Anisur Rahman