

New envoy to Maldives

The government has appointed Abdullah-Al-Hasan as the Bangladesh high commissioner to the Maldives, a Foreign Ministry press release said yesterday.

A career diplomat, Hasan, who joined the erstwhile Pakistan Foreign Service in 1970, was the Ambassador to Kuwait prior to his present posting.

City AL meet today

A special extended meeting of the Dhaka city Awami League will be held at the party central office at Bangabandhu Avenue at 6 pm today, reports BSS.

State Minister for Shipping and general secretary of the city unit Mufazzal Hossain Chowdhury Maya has requested leaders of thana, ward and union Awami League to attend the meeting.

Workshop on 'Disaster Reporting'

70 lakh people in coastal areas vulnerable

CHITTAGONG, Jan 31: Around 70 lakh people living in the country's coastline are not fully protected against deadly cyclones and tidal surges that batter the areas often, relief operators said, reports BSS.

If any cyclone with the intensity of the one that ravaged coastal areas on April 29, 1991 hits the region, loss of life and property along the 710-kilometre coastline might be severe, observed AJM Golam Rabbani, Zonal Officer of the Red Crescent Cyclone Preparedness Programme, Chittagong.

Rabbani made the observation at a workshop on Disaster Reporting, organised jointly by London-based Commonwealth Journalists Association (CJA) and its Bangladesh Branch at the Engineers Institution here recently.

Giving details of cyclone shelters, he said at present there are 1841 cyclone shelters in 15 districts of the coastal regions. 1300 of them were built

after the 1991 cyclone which left at least one lakh and 38 thousand people dead.

Thirteen lakh people, out of one crore and ten lakh who live in the disaster-prone areas, can take shelter in the cyclone shelters during the time of any impending disaster, he said.

Thirty-three lakh people are able to move to safer places of their own during emergency, but about 70 lakh people remain helpless as they have no high-rise building or ground in their vicinity where they can move in times of any eventuality, he added.

According to the Meteorology Department, at least 34 severe cyclones had ravaged the country's coastline over the last four decades since 1960, claiming about five lakh and fifty thousand lives and wiping out a big chunk of public or private property.

The memories of 1960, 1961, 1965, 1970, 1985, 1988, 1991 and 1996 cyclones and tidal

bore, that brought death and destruction in an unprecedented scale, still haunt people of the coastal areas.

Detailing the disaster preparedness measures, Rabbani said the recommendations of Dr Jamilur Reza Chowdhury committee formed on the heels of the 1991 disaster are yet to be implemented.

The committee recommended construction of 3,500 more cyclone shelters, but paucity of funds stood as a hurdle to its full implementation.

About 32,904 cyclone preparedness programme (CPP) volunteers are now working in 30 thanas of the coastal areas, but the number is below the required figure, relief officials said.

Despite fund constraints, the Red Crescent has trained 2,070 Imams, 4,000 fishermen and students of 60 schools on disaster preparedness during the current financial year.

BNPS rallies from today

By Staff Correspondent
Bangladesh Nari Progat Shangha (BNPS) will organise nationwide rallies from today in different parts of the city in protest of increasing criminal activities and to raise public awareness to protect the environment, said a press release last night.

Drama and songs will be performed at the rallies. Actresses Afroza Banu, Laila Hasan and others will also deliver speeches it added.

WVA meeting now Feb 4

The Women's Voluntary Association (WVA) has changed the date of its general meeting scheduled for February 3, says a press release.

The meeting will now be held on February 4 at 10 am at the WVA auditorium.

The date has been changed due to unavoidable circumstances. Members are requested to attend the meeting.

Street drama festival begins today

A week-long National Street Drama Festival begins in the city today to celebrate the international recognition of February 21 as International Mother Language Day, reports BSS.

State Minister for Information Prof Abu Sayeed will inaugurate the festival at the Central Shaheed Minar at 4.30 pm. Prof Mostafa Nurul Islam will be present at the ceremony.

A total of 32 theatre groups from across the country will take part in the festival, said a Bangladesh Group Theatre Federation press release.

A discussion organised by the Theatre Federation will be held as part of the festival.

Chairperson of the Federation Sara Zaker will preside over the discussion while Ramendu Majumdar, Nasir Uddin Yusuf, Pijush Bandopadhyay, Liakat Ali Lucky, M Hamid and Keramat Mawla will speak on the occasion.

Army chief back from Nepal

Chief of Army Staff Lieutenant General Muhammad Mustafizur Rahman, Bir Bikram returned home yesterday after attending the closing ceremony of the four-nation regional peace exercise in Kathmandu, Nepal, reports BSS.

The exercise 'Aanushilon Shanti Proyash' concluded in the Himalayan Capital today, an ISPRE press release said here.

Besides Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, the USA, and host Nepal joined in the exercise through a platoon of army personnel from their respective countries.

General Mustafiz witnessed the concluding day's events along with the US Army Pacific Commander, chief of staff of the Sri Lanka army and the resident co-ordinator of the UN system in Nepal.

The chief of army staff of the Royal Nepal army, the Charge d'Affaires of Bangladesh in Nepal and other senior officials saw off the Bangladeshi army chief at the Tribhuvan Airport prior to his departure for home.

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