



Bangladeshi to head Amnesty

Star Report

Irene Zubaida Khan, a national of Bangladesh, is taking over as the Secretary-General of internationally renowned human rights organisation Amnesty International (AI), The Daily Star has reliably learnt.

Later, decisive fire by the BDR personnel, a strong note of protest from the Bangladesh government and a flag meeting between the two sides led to a cease-fire last evening and suspension of construction of the embankment. Tension, however, prevailed in the Bangladesh-Myanmar border.

Meanwhile, BDR has called in reinforcements from Rangamati and Cox's Bazar. Usually, more than a thousand BDR men are posted in the region. The BDR was at its full strength when the tension began.

However, the army has not been alerted, despite its strong presence in the Chittagong region.

"We are in a position to cope with the situation ourselves," said a top-notch BDR official, posted in the area.

The trouble spot is at the Palangkhali Border Outpost (BOP), 30 kilometres off Cox's Bazar

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Forced retirement of 19 after Zia killing 'act of injustice'

JS sub-committee observes at review meeting

By Nazrul Islam

Draft Vested Property Return Bill 2001 okayed

The Cabinet yesterday approved the draft Vested Property Return Bill 2001 for giving back to their bona fide owners the property taken over through state acquisition, reports UNB.

"Main objective of the proposed law is to return the property of Bangladeshi citizens if those are enlisted as vested property," said an official announcement.

It said only those vested lands and buildings that are under government possession would be returned to the original owners or their successors if he or she is a permanent citizen of Bangladesh.

The draft law, which will be placed in parliament as a bill, was approved as recommended by Cabinet committee earlier for vetting it.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina

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FT-7 crash Condition of Reza Emdad improving

By Special Correspondent

The condition of Flt Lt Mohammad Reza Emdad Khan who survived Sunday's crash of a Bangladeshi Air Force (BAF) FT-7 training aircraft at Zia International Airport (ZIA) was improving, sources concerned said.

He was admitted to Combined Military Hospital (CMH) after he bailed out of the aircraft that exploded into flames after take-off.

The crash killed Squadron Leader Mohammad Mohsin, 32, who failed to eject.

A four-member board of

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By Mansoor Mamoon

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Prayer Timings

	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
Jan 9		5.29 pm
Jan 10	6-43am	

Prayer Timings

January 9

Fajr 5-30 6-10

Zuhr 12-45 1-15

Asr 4-00 4-15

Maghrib 5-35 5-40

Esha 7-00 7-30

Women must participate in state affairs & public life

Speakers observe at symposium in city

By Staff Correspondent

Participation of women in state affairs and public life is essential for their empowerment, speakers observed at a symposium on Empowering of Women through Democratic Process in the city yesterday.

Hold at the CIRDAP auditorium, the daylong symposium was organised by the newly formed Department of Women's Studies of the University of Dhaka on the occasion of its launching ceremony in collaboration with Southern Illinois University at Carbondale, USA.

Speakers said members of the civil society, women's rights organisations and citizens at large need to press for the effective participation of women in the development process through their direct election to the parliament and other decision-making bodies.

Terming women's poor representation at decision-making bodies as a democratic deficit, they stressed the need for leaders of the civil society and women's movements to continue their dialogue with legislators and policymakers to keep the issue on the agenda.

Speakers appreciated the High Court's verdict on fatwa (edict) and termed it as a positive develop-

ment for the country's women.

Addressing the inaugural session as chief guest, Vice-chancellor of Dhaka University Prof. AK Azad Chowdhury said education is instrumental in improving the fate of the people in general. "But, empowerment of women through education is all the more important to bring about any radical change in the society."

The VC however said that education alone is not enough and that reforms in the health sector, effective poverty alleviation programmes and social security measures also needed in order to produce any tangible results.

Addressing the meeting as special guest, US Senator and Director, Public Policy Institute, USA, Paul Simon said education of women and their empowerment go hand in hand. "These two areas are very important for the overall development of the society."

He said Bangladesh has a lot of success in different areas and expressed the hope that the issue of women empowerment would be another area of success.

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Land deed or death warrant?

Local administration blamed for the death at Panea

By Morshed Ali Khan, back from Rangpur



Parents, wife and children await trial and punishment of the killers of Jaiyal Abedin, a landless peasant of Panea village under Pirkanj thana, in Rangpur. Abedin was killed in a clash with rich landlords over possession of a piece of khas (public) land.

A land ownership document issued by the district administrator's office in Rangpur turned out to be a death warrant for Jaiyal Abedin, a landless peasant of Panea village under Pirkanj thana, some 30 kilometres off the district headquarters.

On November 3 last year, at the Rangpur Medical College Hospital, Jaijal succumbed to injuries he had sustained in a clash with rich landlords over the ownership of a piece of land. Jaijal tried to secure a small piece of khas (public) land for a fellow landless peasant who had a valid document.

The trouble began when Sayed Ali and Shukkur, two moneyed individuals of the area, unleashed armed musclemen on the landless peasants, injuring nine of them. The miscreants didn't spare anyone, not even seven-year-old pregnant Sajena. The 15-year-old was beaten up so bad that she had to undergo a forced abortion.

A case was lodged in this regard. Sayed Ali and Shukkur along with 37 others, accused in the case, have gone in hiding.

The landless peasants of Panea put the blame on the district administration. Jaijal wouldn't have been killed had the Deputy Commissioner's office taken the simple step of handing over the piece of land to the beneficiary, they complain.

In the midst of intense rivalry between landless farmers and rich landlords, the role of local administration in the sensitive scheme of allocating khas land to the landless has been questioned.

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Nepalese FM in city: Official talks today

Nepalese Foreign Minister Chakra Prasad Bastola arrived here yesterday on a 4-day official visit with a mission to boost bilateral cooperation between Dhaka and Kathmandu.

"We belong to the same region, but we have one-hour flight. This distance should be bridged through bilateral cooperation," he told UNB on his arrival at the Zia International Airport in evening.

Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad received his Nepalese counterpart at the ZIA.

In reply to a question Bastola said all matters of bilateral interest, including trade, economic cooperation and transit, would come up for discussion during the official talks today.

Asked about the holding of SARCC summit stalled for more than a year, he said: "We should make efforts to impress upon India so that it should take place soon."

He mentioned efforts being made by Bangladesh and Sri Lanka to hold the summit, which was scheduled for Kathmandu in November 1999, but postponed following certain developments on regional plane.

Bastola said the Foreign Minis

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Lakhs joined the Akheri Munajat yesterday, the concluding day of three-day Biswa Ijtema, billed as the second largest congregation of Muslims in the world. The Dhaka-Gazipur road was closed by

Star photo

Devotees seek divine blessings for Muslim Ummah

By Staff Correspondent

Azampur in the south, Tongi railway station in the east and Ashulia in the west turned into a sea of humanity during the Munajat.

Add agencies: As Muslim pilgrims from around the world attended the annual religious congregation, the prayers were pronounced in Arabic, Urdu, Hindi and Bangla.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina from New Delhi led the 22-minute Munajat that started at 12:20 pm.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, Leader of the Opposition in Jatiya Sangsad Khaleda Zia, Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad, Home Minister Mohammed Nasim, Food Minister Amir Hossain Amu, Jatiya Party Senior Vice-chairman Raushan Ershad and other ministers and political leaders joined the concluding prayers.

President Shahabuddin Ahmed was expected to join the Munajat, but he cancelled the schedule this morning due to unknown reasons.

The whole area from Joydevpur in the north,

to Azampur in the south, Tongi

railway station in the east and Ashulia in the west turned into a sea of humanity during the Munajat.

Both the prime minister reached the crowded Ijtema venue at 11:10 am and listened to sermons for more than an hour and joined the prayers that started at 12:21 pm.

Ministers, MPs senior leaders and friends and family members of the prime minister also joined the Munajat with her at the roof

Slow-go food procurement spells farmers' woes

By Reaz Ahmad

Sluggish procurement drive by the Ministry of Food has frustrated the government plan to extend adequate price support to rice farmers this year.

According to official statistics, two months after aman harvesting, the ministry has so far procured less than 25,000 metric tons (MT) of paddy and rice from growers, way short of a 250,000 MT target set by the Cabinet on November 27 last year.

The paltry procurement volume represents the dismal scenario now prevailing in public sector grain purchase. Food officials attribute the sluggish drive to a prolonged year-end vacation.

Both prosecution and defence sides completed hearing of arguments in the case on November 2, last year.

The court recorded statements of 45 out of 65 prosecution witnesses.

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Despite flood-induced damages in the

south-western districts, farmers reaped a good aman harvest.

The parliamentary standing committee on food ministry has recently asked authorities concerned to speed up the drive. The deadline to meet the target has also been extended by a month to the end of February.

However, the extension would hardly benefit marginal and low-income farmers. In desperate need for cash to buy inputs for boro cultivation, they have already sold their produce to the middlemen at lower prices.

Conversely, as fear sources, delayed grain procurement would give price incentives to middlemen and stockists who have already purchased rice and paddy at lower prices from the hard-up growers.

The slow-go procurement operation has hurt the farmers most. They are not getting fair prices for their produce in the open market, reports from different districts suggest. Despite flood-induced damages in the

absence of public sector in the post-harvest grain market would largely benefit stockists and big millers, said sources.

According to official estimates, the farmers sustained the bumper spire in crop production despite an unprecedented post-monsoon flood in 16 south and south-western districts, growing one crore MT aman this year.

Although, in terms of volume, the government is set to buy only one-fortieth of the total aman production, public-sector procurement has demonstrational effects on the market price.

If government had met the procurement volume at the peak harvest season, the set price would have dictated open-market price, benefiting farmers, experts said referring to previous years'

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Cold wave kills 9 in southern dists

From Staff Correspondent

BARISAL, Jan 8: At least nine people died in the southern districts under Barisal division over the last three days as a severe cold wave gripped the region with temperatures at night varying between 8 to 10 degrees celsius, according to the meteorological department here.

According to UP chairman of Baufal sadar, Nazirpur, Baga and Surjamani unions and the resident physician of Baufal THC of Patuakhali, Bakuljan Bibi, 70, of Char Barit, Aminunnissa, 52, of Nazirpur, Motaleb Mridha, 55, of Dampara, Prak Krishha Das, 58, of Fultala, Maibar Rahman, 60, of Kalsuri, Abdul Motaleb, 58, of Kachhipara, Mijanur Rahman, 85, of Hosnabad villages and Amjad Hossain, 80, of Charmoniaz, under Baufal upazila and Fatema Begum, 65, of Rajakhalil village under Dumki upazila of Patuakhali district died due to severe cold wave during last three days.

Polying of passenger buses and night coaches to and from Barisal divisional headquarters have also been hampered since last Saturday.

At least 35 passenger launches bound for Bhola, Patuakhali, Barguna, Jhalakati, Galachipa, Amali, Khepupara, Torky, Nazirpur from Dhaka and other places remained stranded for hours together in the dense fog at different points in Meghna and other rivers. Some passenger launches from Dhaka were stranded on shoals at Bhasanchar under Mehdiganj upazila.

Charges were framed against the accused in 1999 and summons were issued upon the prosecution witnesses including the complainant in the case. But no witness was produced by the prosecution side before the court during the last one year.

The decomposed body of Jalal Ahmed Shafi, a DB informer, was recovered from a roof-top water tank of DB Office at Minto Road in the city on March 25, 1999.

Abbasuddin, son of the victim, filed a murder case with Ramna

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