



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.

Irene is currently working as Deputy Director of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Following her appointment, she will be the first South Asian and the first woman to head the organisation. Headquartered in London, Amnesty International has more

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 formed for vetting it.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina

See page 11 col 3

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 Bangladesh 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

See page 11 col 3

Inside Today

Article

Globalisation: How Not to be Marginalised
Column: Heart of the Matter
By Mansoor Mamoon
Page 4

Focus

Crafting the news in a digital age
Page 5

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

Prayer Timings

January 9		
	Azan	Jamaat
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

Source: Islamic Foundation

Ceasefire follows flag meeting

BDR, Nasaka trade fire over embankment on river Naf

By Diplomatic Correspondent

BDR troops yesterday traded fire with Nasaka, Myanmar's border forces, at a frontier position for several hours over construction of an embankment on the river Naf in violation of international norms and an agreement between the two countries.

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.

The Nasaka troops initiated the exchange as they shot three rounds at around ten in the morning after manhandling a BDR courier, who had ventured across the border with a proposal for flag meeting. BDR forces retorted on return of its messenger with automatic weapons including heavy and light machine guns.

Reports have it that the Bangladesh side was provoked into firing at around 12.15pm. Sporadic shooting continued till 3.30pm, mainly from the Myanmar side.

"We only fired warning shots," said a BDR offi-

cial.

Construction of the embankment stopped immediately after BDR had returned fire.

Away in the capital, U Ohn Thwin, the Myanmar ambassador to Bangladesh, was summoned to the Foreign Ministry and handed over a strong note of protest against construction of the embankment along a stretch of the Naf river. The construction, the note pointed out, was in complete violation of Clause 5 of the 1966 agreement, renewed in 1980, between the two countries.

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 Palangkhal Border Outpost (BOP), 30 kilometres off Cox's Bazar

See page 11 col 1

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

JS sub-committee observes at review meeting

By Nazrul Islam

A parliamentary panel has termed the forced retirement of 19 army officers following the killing of the then president Ziaur Rahman as 'an act of injustice and malice.'

The sub-committee formed by the Standing Committee on Ministry of Defence at a meeting yesterday reviewed the issue on an application from Brig(rltd) Giasuddin Ahmed Chowdhury.

The meeting noted that sections 261 and 269 (A) of the Army Regulations were not followed properly in issuing order for their forced retirement. It asked the authorities concerned to take steps for giving benefits to the officers retired in a humiliating manner, a member of the sub-committee told this correspondent.

Presided over by sub-committee Convenor Col (ret'd) Shawkat Ali, the meeting also heard the then Air Force chief A

G Mahmood for forced retirement of more than 300 Air Force personnel for their alleged involvement in politics. Disagreeing with the action taken by him, the sub-committee asked the authorities to compensate them as they were deprived in violation of law.

The sub-committee at its previous meeting on December 12 last decided to summon Mahmood to its meeting reviewing applications from three of the victims: Sergeant Golam Mostafa Kamal Pasha, Flight Sergeant Tofael Ahmed Khnadaker and Nurul Alam.

The Ministry of Defence during Ziaur Rahman's rule had asked the Air Force to take action against those involved in politics. The orders for their forced retirement were based on intelligence reports which, the sub-committee said, were not proper.

Mahmood defended his deci-

sions and said he tried to restore discipline in the Air Force. The decisions were taken as per the rules and regulations which provided such authority to the chiefs of three services, he added. However, the sub-committee suggested updated rules through Constitutional amendment.

Shawkat Ali said the authorities abused their power by issuing such orders. He termed such orders inhuman and inconsistent with fundamental rights.

About the forced retirement of 19 army officers, a sub-committee member, told this correspondent, "It was done as per an evil design of the then Army chief HM Ershad to remove freedom fighter army officers. He had done it overnight taking advantage of the fragile administration of president Abdus

See page 11 col 3

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.

Held at the CIRDPAC 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 were 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.

See page 11 col 4

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 SARRC 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

See page 11 col 3

Khaleda Zia 'obstructed'

Opposition leader Khaleda Zia was prevented near Kurmitola Air Force Base at about 10.15 am yesterday from driving through the runway of Zia International Airport to the Ijtima venue, reports UNB.

She was accompanied by her party leaders.

Party sources said Khaleda used to take this way when she was prime minister as well as when opposition leader. The president and the prime minister also used this way to avoid crowds.

As they wanted to know the reasons for the restriction, an on-duty officer first told them movement through that road had been halted following Sunday's airforce aircraft crash on the runway.

"Later, the on-duty officers said there is instruction from higher authorities of the government that none except the prime minister would be allowed to take the route through the airport runway," said a BNP leader.

Khaleda along with others reached the munajat site earmarked for her at about 11.10 am.

Jatiya Party senior presidium member Rawshan Ershad also took part in the munajat sitting beside Khaleda under a small canopy on the rooftop of a one-storey building of Ashraf Textile Mill at Tongi.

Khaleda was flanked by local women leaders of BNP and its front organisations.

Judgement in Humayun Zahir murder case today

By Court Correspondent

Judgement in the sensational Humayun Zahir Murder Case will be given today, court sources said.

The 8th Additional District and Sessions Judge Mir Mohammad Awlad Hossain will deliver the judgement.

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.

See page 11 col 6



Lakhs joined the Akheri Munajat yesterday, the concluding day of three-day Biswa Ijtima, billed as the second largest congregation of Muslims in the world. The Dhaka-Gazipur road was clogged by the convergence of people of all ages and from all walks of life while on the river Turag it was launches galore with seekers of divine blessings occupying every nook and corner.

--Star photo

Devotees seek divine blessings for Muslim Ummah

By Staff Correspondent

Tens of thousands of devotees from home and abroad joined the *Akheri Munajat* (concluding prayers) at the end of the three-day Biswa Ijtima at Tongi yesterday, seeking divine blessing for peace, progress and prosperity of the Muslim Ummah.

Moulana Jobayer Hasan 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 Reushan 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, 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.

For the first time, Zohr prayers were offered in the main dais after the *Akheri Munajat* as the huge crowd took time to break up.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina from Bata Shoe factory premises at Tongi raised hands with lakhs of devotees.

The prime minister reached the crowded Ijtima 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

of Bata Complex at Tongi.

Khaleda also took part in the Munajat from Ashraf Textiles at Tongi Bazar, along with BNP leader Selina Rahman, Prof MA Mannan, Hasan Uddin Sarkar, Aman Ullah Aman MP and other BNP leaders.

Maulana Ruhul Kismat, Maulana Saad and Maulana Jobayer Hassan delivered concluding sermons starting from Fazr prayers up to *Akheri Munajat*. The Islamic scholars in their sermons emphasised strengthening Iman (belief in Allah) and Amal practice for the doomsday and afterworld.

The Muslims around the world should preach the universal message of Islam to all the households around the globe for the betterment of this world and the world hereafter, the Muslim clerics pointed out in the central message of the congregation.

Though the Biswa Ijtima does

See page 11 col 7

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 yearend vacation.

The slow-go procurement operation has hurt the farmers most. They are not getting fair prices for their produces in the open market, reports from different districts suggest. 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 produces 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 government has fixed prices for paddy and rice at Tk 8.00 and Tk 12.50 per kilogram respectively.

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 spree 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'

See page 11 col 8

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, Ajimunnessa, 52, of Nazirpur, Motalab Mridha, 55, of Dampara, Pran Krishna Das, 58, of Fultala, Majibar Rahman, 60, of Kalisuri, Abdul Motalab, 58, of Kachhipara, Mijanur Rahman, 85, of Hosnabad villages and Anjad Hossain, 80, of Charmontaz under Baufal upazila and Fatema Begum, 65, of Rajakkhali village under Dumki upazila of Patuakhali district died due to severe cold wave during last three days.

Besides, thick fog seriously hampered plying of various riverine passenger and cargo vessels in different rivers particularly at night.

Plying of passenger buses and night coaches on the highways to and from Barisal divisional headquarter have also been hampered since last Saturday. At least 35 passenger launches bound for Bhola, Patuakhali, Barguna, Jhalakati, Galachipa, Amtali, Khepupara, Torkey, 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 Mehendiganj thana of the district last Saturday night.

Passenger buses and night coaches also reached here two hours behind schedule late last night.

Murder at DB office: Hearing of case again adjourned

By Court Correspondent

The hearing of the Jalal Ahmed Shafi Murder Case was adjourned again yesterday.

Judge Sheikh Mohammad Jahangir Hossain adjourned the proceedings till 11 am today following a time petition by the prosecution side.

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

See page 11 col 3

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 Jainal Abedin, a landless peasant of Panea village under Pirganj 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 Jainal Abedin 40, a landless peasant of Panea village under Pirganj thana, some 30 kilometres off the district headquarters.

On November 3 last year, at the Rangpur Medical College Hospital, Jainal succumbed to injuries he had sustained in a clash with rich landlords over the ownership of a piece of land. Jainal 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. Jainal 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.

See page 11 col 1