



Former Chief Justice Munim passes away

UNB, Dhaka

Former Chief Justice Dr FKMA Munim died of cardiac arrest at Suhrawardy Hospital in the city at about 1:45 pm yesterday. He was 76.

He left behind his wife, five sons, relatives and a host of admirers.

The namaj-e-janaza for Munim will be held at his 27/4, Dhakeswari Road residence after Zohr prayers today. The qulshwani will be held on Friday (February 23) after Asr prayers at the same venue.

Dr Munim was the chief justice during the late 80s. He was also the first Law Secretary of Bangladesh and involved in framing the country's Constitution.

He also worked as Advocate General and Chairman of Prison Reform Commission and Law Commission.

President Shahabuddin Ahmed yesterday evening visited the residence of Dr Munim to pay his last respect.

The President stayed there for some time and consoled the members of the bereaved family.

He prayed for salvation of the departed soul.

PM opens IEB convention in Khulna today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will arrive here tomorrow to inaugurate the 45th convention of the Institution of Engineers, Bangladesh at 10 am on the premises of IEB, Khulna Centre at Khalishpur.

Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Khaleda Zia will attend the concluding session on Monday.

About 2000 engineers, including 50 representatives from 10 countries, are expected to take part in the convocation.

Dacoity at Gulshan

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dacoits took away cash, gold ornaments and other valuables from a house at Gulshan in the city on Thursday night.

Police quoting the FIR said, a gang of six dacoits entered the house 1/A, Road No 112, Gulshan at about 8:30 pm and confined house owner's daughter, son-in-law and others in a room.

They took away the keys of the almirah at gunpoint and looted Tk 75 lakh, 148 tolas of gold ornaments and other valuables worth about Tk 12 lakh.

During the incident, house owner and his wife were away from the house.

A case was filed with Gulshan police station. None was arrested in this connection till filing of this report last night.

60 injured as RU students clash with villagers

80 shops, 20 houses torched

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

At least 60 people, including 35 students were injured 25 of them seriously, in a series of clashes between the students of Rajshahi University and villagers at RU railway station and Meherchandi village adjacent to the campus yesterday.

The agitating students torched 80 shops in railway station area and 20 houses at Meherchandi village.

Police and witnesses said a group of students went to a restaurant near Rajshahi University railway station to take their lunch at noon.

After lunch there was an altercation between the students and employees of the restaurant over payment of bills. At this stage, the students beat up two employees of the restaurant and left the scene.

Hearing the news people from the adjacent Meherchandi village armed with lethal weapons, attacked the students' messes at the village that resulted in a clash between the two groups.

At least 20 students and 10 villagers were injured in the clash.

After Juma Prayers the varsity students equipped with lethal weapons torched 80 shops in railway station area and 18 houses at Meherchandi village. The villagers also retaliated.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 7

ZIA put on alert

UNB, Dhaka

Zia International Airport, the gateway to Bangladesh, has been put on alert in the wake of political unrest in the country.

Officials said unstable political situation, recent bomb blasts and sniper attacks forced the authorities to maintain security at the key installation.

Director of the ZIA Wing Commander Salim Ullah told UNB that the measures had been taken at the instruction of the government to avoid any untoward incident.

He said meeting was held with all the 17 agencies working at the Dhaka airport and each was asked to take extra precautions.

"Security has been intensified and the vigilance of the intelligence agencies has been increased," the Wing Commander said.

Sources said vigil was increased on incoming as well as outgoing passengers, particularly on nationals of Afghanistan, Pakistan, Nigeria, Sudan and Sri Lanka.

ASM NURUNNABI

The craze for construction of shopping complexes as well as apartments for residential purposes seems to have reached its peak in the capital city. As land is scarce in the city and commercial ventures are jostling for space, a very dangerous tendency for grabbing public land and even roads and pavements seems to be emerging among entrepreneurs engaged in property development business.

This detrimental trend has a wider background. The absence of an urbanisation policy or a human settlement policy, urban growth and urban development in Bangladesh is basically Dhaka-oriented. Already 30 pc of the urban population is concentrated in the Dhaka megacity region. The trend is becoming more entrenched.

As the city is growing at a rapid pace and there is scarcity of land, it is not surprising that some of the business-minded people have no serious respect for law would from time to time look for the loopholes in the existing rules that control their business and also make attempts at testing the resolve of the people employed by relevant

DOWN TO EARTH

City's growing trend of high-rise construction

government agencies to enforce the law. Instances of such encounter between the various government agencies and private bodies violating the law abound. Observers note that the tendency of certain private concerns engaged in real estate business to violate the rules has lately reached dangerous proportion. In a recent case, the RAJUK itself flouted its own rules when it allowed high-rises in six-storey zone. It has been reported that violating restriction on construction of buildings beyond six-storeys, RAJUK has approved at least 17 plans for 10 to 20 storey buildings in Dhanmondi residential area under the cover of privately owned plots.

The RAJUK officials said the plans were approved between 1996 and 1998 on the basis that the lands were privately owned. They said there was no provision for obtaining the environmental certificate at that time.

Experts said restriction on building height has been imposed considering environmental impact and how utility services were equipped in that area to provide these services. A landowner, in no way, should be exempted from the restriction, they said.

A Professor of Civil Engineering at BUET said that as per law, approval from all relevant utility companies must be obtained before starting construction of a

high-rise building. In the above context, it is felt that government take a serious stand on the matter. Failure on the part of the Dhaka City Corporation as well as other government or autonomous bodies to enforce the law will in effect create anarchy in the city life.

Developer-built-programmes are continuing apace with little attention to the creation of greenery, provision of adequate utility services and elimination of pollution menace, traffic congestion and drainage problem. The government can't abandon its programme of high-rise buildings, but it has to be pursued with a vision and a planning process that ensure quality of life.



A discussion on 'Democracy, Rule of Law and Bangabir Osmani' was held on the occasion of the General's 17th death anniversary at Osmani memorial auditorium in the city yesterday.

Confce on regional food security begins in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Scientists working on rice and wheat across the world converged in the city yesterday to discuss the crucial issue of food security for an expanding population in South Asia, threatened by a slowdown in yield growth.

Lack of new farmland and continuing resource degradation are the main concerns of scientists and technical experts who began a three-day annual meeting of the 'Rice-Wheat Consortium for the Indo-Gangetic Plains' (RWC) at a city hotel.

RWC is a body of scientists and technical experts from national agricultural research systems (NARS) in Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Pakistan. RWC was established in 1994 as an eco-regional initiative taken by the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR). CGIAR is the apex body of 16 prime international agricultural

organizations.

Some 55 participants including Director General (DG) of International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) Ronald Cantrell, DG of CIMMYT Prof Timothy Reeves, chiefs of NARS from India, Pakistan, Nepal and host Bangladesh, agronomists and economists from different countries involved with RWC are taking part in its seventh annual meeting.

Addressing the inaugural session as chief guest, former agriculture secretary Dr AMM Shawkat Ali stressed on developing new technologies and lowering production costs of wheat and maize so that these crops can compete with rice. Dr Ali retired as agriculture secretary on February 14.

He happily noted that maize production in Bangladesh increased 10 times in less than a decade due to growth of poultry industry.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 7

'Improve law & order in the Sundarbans'

3-day confce in Khulna ends

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

The three-day national conference on the Sundarbans ended here yesterday with a declaration to save it at any cost.

The three-day conference was divided into four sessions where speakers expressed their opinion to improve deteriorating law and order in the Sundarbans for preserving and protecting the flora and fauna.

They said that poaching of all animals including deer and illegal entry into the forest must be stopped with immediate effect to conserve the bio-diversity project.

Environmentalists and educationists who spoke in the sessions stressed the need for opinion of experts and people in general before government undertakes development schemes in the neighbouring areas of the Sundarbans.

"This suggestion must be accepted to save the forest from being adversely affected due to

unplanned development works," speakers said.

Experts said all possible effective measures are needed to protect and preserve the real beauty of the world's largest mangrove forest.

They also said that anything damaging beauty and environment of the Sundarbans must be stopped.

They also demanded a ban on oil and gas exploration work in and along the Sundarbans to save its flora and fauna from being perished due to adverse effect.

The experts further stressed the need for formulating an effective policy on the Sundarbans which has already been declared World Heritage Zone. Amendment to wildlife preservation act was also suggested in the conference for stricter control over the forest to prevent poaching and containing crimes.

Renovation and, if necessary re-excavation of creeks and canal and dredging of rivers passing through the forest also figured among other

SEE PAGE 11 COL 6

Eight killed as truck falls into ditch in Dhamrai

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least eight people were killed and 20 others injured when a truck loaded with coal skidded off the road and fell into a ditch near Kaliya bus stand under Dhamrai upazila yesterday morning.

Police said the accident took place when the driver of the Pabna-bound truck from Sylhet lost control over the steering at about 9 in the morning. Loaded with coal, the truck was also carrying about 16 cattle traders on board.

All the eight died on the spot. Of them the identity of four are Rabul Hossain, 36, son of Razzak Ali Dewan, Riazuddin, 35, son of Kashem Ali, Kamal Dewan, 38, son of Sohrab Dewan and Atiur Pramanik. They are the residents of village Joinagar, Iswardi. Identity of other victims could not be known. Dhamrai police recovered the

bodies and sent them to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) morgue for autopsy.

The injured were admitted to local hospital and clinics.

One Abdus Salam filed a case with Dhamrai thana in this connection.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 6

48 shops gutted in Chittagong

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

At least 48 shops were gutted in a fire at Berar Market in Khatunganj area in the city yesterday morning.

The fire broke out at around 4 am and continued for about two hours. Eight fire fighting units from different stations rushed to the spot and extinguished the blaze after two hours.

Passenger allegedly molested at ZIA by trolley-boy

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A Singaporean female passenger was allegedly molested by an on-duty trolley-man inside a toilet at the Zia International Airport yesterday.

The incident took place at about 1:30 pm when Kumari Jina Joy, 31, after arrival at the ZIA went to a toilet at the terminal building on completion of formalities at the immigration counter. She came from Mumbai.

The trolley man was identified as Murad. He had led her to the toilet when she sought help.

Jina lodged a complaint with the CAAB.

The lady was then taken to Deputy Security Officer Zakir Hossain, who recorded her complaint. Later CAAB cardiographer Taibur Rahman send a written FIR to the cantonment police in this regard.

A police officer at cantonment thana claimed that some CAAB officials helped the trolley man to escape from the customs hall.

JU convocation today

JU CORRESPONDENT

The second convocation of Jahangirnagar University will be held today.

President Shahabuddin Ahmed, chancellor of the university, will preside over the function while chief of the former Caretaker Government Justice Habibur Rahman will be the convocation speaker.

A total of 3018 students that include honours graduates between 1991 to 1997 and postgraduates between 1992 to 1997 will receive their certificates at the convocation. Besides, there will be six others who were conferred PhD and 16 MPhil degrees up to November, 2000.

The function will begin at 9.30 a.m. with taking of seats by the guests and recipients of certificates at the venue in the university central playground.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 8

FF Abdul Ahad finally gets rid of the bullet ...

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

After long 30 years Abdul Ahad Khan, aged 55, a freedom fighter, finally got rid of the bullet he received in a bloody skirmish with the Pakistani Army in Chittagong on March 26, 1970.

On Monday last, surgeons at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital in an hour-long operation successfully removed the rusting bullet believed to be of SLR machine gun and the surrounding unhealthy tissues from near the spinal cord.

"I was among 5000 newly recruited soldiers in the East Bengal Regiment being trained at Chittagong Cantonment. At about midnight Pakistani tanks and jeeps rolled in and fired indiscriminately at us. I was in my barrack. We all ran away with ammunitions to retaliate but they dominated," said Khan who lives in Tongibari upazila in Munshiganj.

Through all these years Khan never felt the bullet was inside his body. Sitting in his bed no-31, ward no-6 in the hospital yesterday, Khan said in tears that he had been given treatment for the injury that brought a great relief to him.

"I was picked up among about 1000 others to face firing squad but a Pakistani army officer, Lieutenant Col. Kamal, saved my life believing that I was not fighting back on the night of the attack," Khan continued.

After three months confinement in Chittagong jail, Khan now working as a night guard at a cold storage in Tongibari was sent to join the police force in Barisal from where he fled to join freedom fighting in sector 9 in August 1971.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 1