



SM Ali's birth anniversary today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Today is the 74th birth anniversary of Syed Mohammad Ali, better known as SM ALI, founder Editor of The Daily Star.

SM Ali was born in Sylhet in 1928. He was the eldest son of late Syed Mustafa Ali, an official of the Assam Civil Service. He was born to a noted Bengali literary family. He was the nephew of famous litterateur Syed Mujtaba Ali and Syed Murtaja Ali.

He died in 1993 in a Bangkok hospital at the age of 65.

SM Ali made his way up from a cub reporter to one of the country's

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Bail petitions for Liaquat, Arman to be moved today

SAKYASEN MITTRA, Kolkata

The bail petition for Liaquat Hossain and Arman Khan, the criminals from Bangladesh who were arrested in Kolkata, would be moved today before the Chief City Magistrate's Court of Kolkata.

Liaquat's wife and Arman's brother will appeal for bail before the court, as lawyers of Kolkata are boycotting courts protesting increase in court fees, family sources said.

The court was scheduled to hear the bail petitions on Wednesday, but could not due to the ongoing law

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UNFPA calls for more focus on health, edn

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) has said there should be more focus on healthcare and education for poverty alleviation.

The observation was made in the State of the World Population Report 2002, titled 'People, Poverty and Possibilities', released globally yesterday by the UN agency.

To reduce poverty, it called for global partnership for ensuring better reproductive healthcare services, reducing maternal mortality rate (MMR) and infant mortality (IMR), achieving universal primary education, promoting gender equity and empowering women, combating HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria and other deadly disease and ensuring environmental sustainability. All these have direct relation with poverty reduction, the report said.

It also calls for targeting assistance directly to the poor and to give them a voice in policies and programmes that affect them.

It urged governments, communities and international agencies to help develop participatory approach for poverty alleviation.

In Bangladesh, the report was released by UNFPA Representative Sunita Mukharjee at a press conference

at the Jatiya Press Club.

She said, "Poverty reduction in Bangladesh is being addressed largely by the ERD which has taken a very keen interest in formulation of an 'integrated poverty reduction strategy paper' (IPRSP). The goal of the country is sustainable development and poverty reduction."

She said, "Poverty is not just about money. It is health, education, nutrition, maternal mortality, gender equity, infant mortality and many other related aspects which largely remain hidden but are equally important."

Sunita said HIV/AIDS is most important in respect of poverty reduction. Bangladesh is lucky to have low prevalence of HIV/AIDS. But it is highly vulnerable as it is surrounded by countries which have high prevalence rates and levels of literacy and awareness are very low in the country.

HIV/AIDS has direct link with poverty reduction. Poverty leads to urbanisation, migration and human trafficking, which contribute to spread of the disease.

Sunita pointed out, "With all these factors, we have low levels of knowledge on reproductive health and low condom use. Bangladesh is a country which is among those having the highest clientage sex workers and shared needle use. The clientage is 18 to 44 per week per sex worker".

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Eighty-year-old dies during army raid

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

An eighty-year-old man died of cardiac arrest at Jagatpur in Kachua upazila on Tuesday night, when a team of the joint forces raided his house in search of his UP chairman son.

Haji Amiruddin, father of Abul Kalam Azad, chairman of Ashrafpur Union, suffered a massive heart attack when the troops assaulted him to get information on his son's whereabouts, sources said.

However, the army sources claimed the octogenarian had fallen sick seeing the army men in his house.

Amiruddin was rushed to the Kachua Upazila Health Complex where attending doctors declared him dead.

According to sources, Azad is an accused in a number of criminal cases and has gone into hiding since the army drive began.

The sources also said the team recovered a foreign revolver from the chairman's house during the

raid.

Meanwhile, the army has rounded up seven listed criminals and 53 others in a countrywide sweep over the last 24 hours ending at 8:00am yesterday.

They also seized 23 firearms including four pistols, three revolvers, five pipe-guns and three shot-guns.

The troops have so far arrested 8,027 people, including 1,835 listed criminals, since the Operation Clean Heart started on October 17. They also seized 1,389 firearms along with 27,719 rounds of ammunition.

In the capital, an army team arrested a 'close aide' of former Awami League lawmaker Shamim Osman at Khilgaon last night.

Zafarullah Zafar, leader of the infamous Zafar Bahini which operated in the now-closed Adamjee Jute Mills Limited area, had taken shelter in the city after the anti-crime drive began.

The troops meanwhile handed

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Tinni murder Driver Dulal quizzed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Criminal Investigation Department (CID) yesterday interrogated the chauffeur of Jatiya Party (Monju) Chairman Anwar Hossain Monju on the whereabouts of former lawmaker Golam Faruk Ovi, a suspect in the killing of Tania Mahbuba Tinni.

Dulal Hawlader, the driver, knew Ovi for a long time, as Ovi often used Monju's car after he split off from the Jatiya Party of HM Ershad. Ovi joined hands with Monju in 1999.

Dulal is known to have driven Ovi around, police sources said.

The CID picked up Dulal at 12:30pm from his house and released him after a three-hour interrogation.

Additional Inspector General of Police (CID) Ashraf Huda told reporters that Dulal was interrogated for information about Ovi. He did not give more details.

Ovi has been absconding since the murder of Tinni, an actor and model. Police believe he is hiding

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PHOTO: PID

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia talks to ministers and diplomats on arrival at Zia International Airport yesterday from Saudi Arabia after performing umrah.

Dhaka explores Indian CNG expertise

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, New Delhi

The state-owned Gas Authority of India Limited (GAIL) is in talks with Bangladesh and three other Asian countries for setting up compressed natural gas (CNG) stations for public transport in those countries.

Bangladesh, Iran, Indonesia and Nigeria have expressed keen interest in taking GAIL's consultancy services in setting up gas-based transport system, GAIL Chairman Prasanto Banerjee said.

In Bangladesh, he said, GAIL would provide consultancy for

setting up CNG stations in Dhaka under a project of the Asian Development Bank.

The GAIL would provide similar services for setting up CNG stations in Tehran and Isfahan, Banerjee said, adding that a GAIL team of experts is also assessing a similar project in Almaty, capital of Kazakhstan.

Countries like Bangladesh and Iran have been encouraged by India's success in converting the public transport system into CNG-powered in New Delhi and Mumbai, he said.

CNG is being increasingly seen

as a way of reducing dependence on oil as well as of tackling environmental pollution.

The Indian capital has 7,400 buses and 45,000 taxis and auto-rickshaws running on CNG.

He said the GAIL is holding talks with several multinational companies to jointly undertake gas pipeline projects in Africa, China and Russia.

India's demand for CNG for automobiles and pipeline gas to households will rise five times to nearly five to six million cubic meters per day in the next decade from the present demand of one million cubic meters per day.

India, Russia oppose US plans to strike Iraq

Delhi Declaration demands end to Pak support to Kashmir militants

AFP, New Delhi

The leaders of Russia and India yesterday came out strongly against the use of force in Iraq and demanded Pakistan end its support for Muslim militancy in the disputed state of Kashmir.

Russian President Vladimir Putin and Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee, at the end of intensive talks here, also signed a landmark agreement - the Delhi Declaration - for "further consolidation of strategic partnership" between the two long-time allies.

In a hard-hitting joint statement, which indirectly took a swipe at the United States for its urging of a military strike on Iraq, Putin and Vajpayee said they wanted to see a political and diplomatic solution to the crisis.

"Both sides strongly opposed the unilateral use or threat of use of force in violation of the UN charter

as well as interference in internal affairs of other states," the joint statement said.

"It was stressed (in their talks) that the comprehensive settlement of the situation around Iraq is possible only through political and diplomatic efforts in strict conformity with the rules of international law only under the aegis of the United Nations," it added.

On Kashmir, Vajpayee and Putin "stressed the importance of Islamabad implementing in full its obligations and promises to prevent the infiltration of terrorists across the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir and at other points across the border."

They also called on Islamabad "to eliminate terrorist infrastructure in Pakistan and Pakistan-controlled territory as a pre-requisite for the renewal of the peace dialogue" between India and Pakistan "to resolve all outstanding issues in a

bilateral framework."

The joint statement said India and Russia, facing Islamic insurgencies in Kashmir and Chechnya respectively, were determined "to enhance collective and bilateral efforts to prevent and suppress terrorism."

"Such measures should be directed also against those states, entities and individuals who sup

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Pricilla once again not produced in court

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The police once again failed to produce Moniza Pricilla Raj before the court, despite court order, for the hearing on her bail petition yesterday.

Pricilla, a local guide of the two foreign journalist facing seditious charges, was not produced before the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court, Dhaka, yesterday, though on December 2 the court had fixed December 4 for the hearing on the bail petition of Pricilla in her presence.

The defence lawyers Advocate Syed Rezaur Rahman, Khondoker Abdul Mannan, and Ila Chanda, wanted to know from the court at about 2.00 pm whether Pricilla had

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Dhaka's reply to Channel-4

BSS, Dhaka

Documents and materials recovered from the two detained foreign journalists indicate that they were pursuing a premeditated pattern of activities to vilify Bangladesh as a fundamentalist state, the foreign ministry said here yesterday.

Director General of the External Publicity Wing of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) in a letter replying to Channel-4 Television chief executive Mark Thompson wrote that the two foreign journalists were carrying prepared texts and were taking photographs and making video at predetermined locations and influencing people to make statements to match their premeditated story.

"We have taken note of your

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IFJ urges PM to free journalists

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) has urged the prime minister to immediately release of local and foreign journalists arrested during November 25-29 and to drop all charges against them.

In a letter to the Prime Minister Khaleda Zia, IFJ President Christopher Warren expressed deep concern over the arrests. Journalists in Bangladesh are facing obstruction in their professional work, he alleged.

These arrests are "an attack on press freedom, designed to intimidate both local and international media workers", Warren said.

The IFJ president urged the

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Home, sweet home

Thousands leave capital for villages to celebrate Eid

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

With Eid-ul-Fitr only a day away, thousands of people from the capital were heading home yesterday for the festival.

A heavy rush of homebound people was witnessed at all the three inter-district bus terminals, Sadarghat launch terminal and at the Kamalapur railway station. The official Eid holiday begins today.

People were seen queuing for tickets at the Sadarghat launch terminal and the entire place was crammed with passengers, complete with their voluminous bag and baggage, headed for the southern districts of Barisal, Pirojpur, Bhola, Chadpur, Barguna, Jhalakathi and others.

According to the Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BITWA) sources, 40 big launches

and one hundred small and medium launches left the terminal yesterday for the designated destinations.

However, even these vehicles were insufficient to cater to all the homebound travellers and a good number of them were seen travelling on the deck and rooftops of the launches as tickets for the cabin were long sold out.

Unlike previous years, passengers are not having to face the usual mishandling by the porters and the ticket touts seem to have disappeared from the terminal. This is because of the recent army drive. The terminal area is being patrolled by army personnel round the clock.

Meanwhile, a team of Marine Shipping led by a marine magistrate has been working to check the overloading of launches while another team of the shipping minis

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