



Ln Sheikh Kabir Hossain MJF speaks at a discussion on the World Lions Service Day as chief guest at a city hotel on October 8.

INDIAN TRADER MURDER

Prime suspect gets bail

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday granted ad-interim bail to the prime suspect in the Indian trader murder case.

Judge Mohammad Momin Ullah of the Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court granted bail to Ahsan Habib, business partner of the victim Majid Alam, upon a bond of Tk50,000 with two guarantors.

The court passed the order following a criminal appeal for bail filed by the defence lawyers against the rejection order of the lower court.

Earlier, the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court rejected the bail petitions on several dates.

Moving the bail petition, Barrister Mahbub Uddin Khokan argued that some of the accused had, earlier, given confessional statements to magistrates on different dates but they did not

mention his client's name. Moreover, his client was not a business partner of the victim and he is seriously ill, the lawyer added.

Opposing the bail petition, the prosecution said some of the accused gave confessional statements disclosing names of killers but did not mention the name of planners. Moreover, the case is now at the primary stage of investigation.

Majid Alam, 45, an Indian rice trader, was gunned down allegedly by his business partners in front of a hotel at Banani in the city on August 31.

The trader, from New Delhi, was getting into a private car owned by his business partner Ahsan Habib outside his hotel when three armed youths approaching at him and shot him dead at around 11:00am on that day.

Lions World Service Day observed

The Lion Dist. 315 B1 Bangladesh observed the World Lions Service Day (WLSLD) on October 8 in the country, says a press release.

It organised a discussion on the significance of the day at a local hotel on the day.

International Director Ln Sheikh Kabir Hossain MJF was present as chief guest.

Ln Rezaur Rahman presented the keynote paper while Lion leaders Ln Ataul Karim, Ln Engr R Maksud Khan, Ln Benajir Ahmed and Ln Nazmul Huque took part in the discussion.

District Governor Ln MS Shekil Chowdhury in his presidential speech called upon the Lions to remain united and devote themselves to the service activities.

International Director Ln Sheikh Kabir Hossain MJF urged the Lions to dedicate themselves to selfless sacrifices in helping the poor and the distressed in the country to uphold the image of Lionism.

EU envoy presents credentials

UNB, Dhaka

The newly appointed Ambassador and Head of Delegation of the European Commission, Stefan Forwein, presented his credentials to President Iajuddin Ahmed at Bangabhaban yesterday.

Iajuddin focused on the common stand of Bangladesh and the European Union on issues such as security, the fight against terrorism and the strengthening of democratic institutions.

He was talking to Forwein at Bangabhaban concerning a close and cooperative relationship between Bangladesh and the European Union.

"Bangladesh is appreciative of the excellent ongoing cooperation with the EC in several areas, including development and technical assistance, trade preference and humanitarian aid," he said.

He also mentioned the importance of issues such as empowerment of women and eradication of illiteracy and diseases.

As the EU is Bangladesh's largest export destination accounting for about 53.38 percent of the total export value the President mentioned his appreciation for the growing trade between the two sides and expressed his aspirations for an even greater diversification and expansion.

Call for cultural connectivity for peace

Saarc Writers' Confce begins in New Delhi

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The 14th Saarc Writers' Conference began in New Delhi yesterday with a call to include cultural connectivity at next month's Saarc Summit in Dhaka for achieving harmony and development.

Scores of poets, novelists, short story writers and essayists from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Bhutan, Nepal and the Maldives are attending the 3-day conference whose theme is 'Cultural Connectivity for Peace' being organised by the Foundation of Saarc Writers and Literature, according to Indian press reports.

Observing that the objectives of South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (Saarc) cannot be achieved only by pursuing economic goals, former Indian prime minister VP Singh said these nations also need a strong cultural dialogue to strengthen the bond among them.

Delivering the inaugural address, Singh said, "It is the right opportunity to impress upon the Saarc nations that culture is the first point to begin with towards convergence and understanding in South Asia. Nobody can ignore this easily understood fact and all concerned should accept this proposition that only by emphasising the necessity of recognising each other's identities and differences, we can reach synthesis."

"It is a cultural and political challenge to use this connectivity to achieve our goals. It is the responsibility of writers, artistes and thinkers to ensure that such opportunities are not wasted," he added.

Asserting that there are many flash points in the South Asian region that need to be addressed in a realistic

manner, the former Indian PM said political leaders should tackle these complex issues.

"If the leaders are really serious, they cannot hold peace talks in thin air. Undoubtedly there will be differences, but there should be no conflicts," he cautioned.

Expressing concern over the commercialisation of society and decline in values, VP Singh said in today's mechanised society, individuality is being lost.

"There has been a standardisation of human being, and a man at present is valued by what he has and not by what he is. We need to restore the dignity of man through the values of culture. We are on the brink of destroying ourselves. We need material welfare but we cannot lose our souls," he said.

Addressing the gathering, Union Information and Broadcasting Minister S Jaipal Reddy, who inaugurated the conference at the India International Centre, said there are many commonalities among the nations in the region.

"We together speak and share many languages. We need to come together not just in political or economic terms but also in cultural terms, similar to what is happening in Europe these days. South Asia is the only region in the world where regional cooperation is minimum," he said.

Incidentally, it is also one of the poorest regions, Jaipal Reddy pointed out, and added, "We need to examine whether the reason behind the mass poverty was lack of regional cooperation. Another reason for this is the massive expenditure on defence. As a result, we do not have much money to invest on development. Therefore, establishing peace is of utmost impor-

ance and that cannot be achieved only by holding summits and conferences, but by explosion of goodwill."

The region may be divided by the history of conflicts, but it is also united by the commonality of culture, Reddy said while exhorting the peoples of South Asia to move even beyond because the commonalities of modernity are also binding them together.

Communist Party of India General Secretary AB Bardhan stressed the need for greater cooperation in the region.

"We have to unite politically and become good neighbours, and this can be achieved only by solving or forgetting our differences. We know that over five decades of differences (with Pakistan) cannot be solved within a short span. It is a continuous process where writers and thinkers have a very important role to play," he added.

Welcoming around 50 eminent writers, scholars and thinkers from the Saarc region, founder president of the foundation Ajeet Cour lamented that political leaders have failed to acknowledge the importance of cultural connectivity for peace and development of the region.

"I hope that in the forthcoming Saarc Summit in Bangladesh more impetus will be given to exchange and growth of culture and literature," she added.

The conference, which began amid the earthquake tragedy in Pakistan and northwest India, will press for the creation of a separate Saarc Cultural Centre when the Saarc leaders meet at the 13th summit in Dhaka on November 12-13.