



Mahfuz Anam elected ANN chairman

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Mahfuz Anam, editor and publisher of The Daily Star, has been elected chairman of Asia News Network (ANN) for the current year at a meeting of the board members of the organisation held in Seoul recently.

Established in 1999, the ANN is a network of national daily newspapers published in Asian cities, aiming to provide avenues for cooperation and to optimise coverage of major news events in the region.

Currently, 16 leading Asian newspapers -- The Daily Star (Bangladesh), The Nation (Thailand), The Island (Sri Lanka), China Daily (China), Viet Nam News (Vietnam), The Statesman (India), The Star and Sin Chew Daily (Malaysia), The Jakarta Post (Indonesia), The Straits Times (Singapore), The Korea Herald (South Korea), Daily Yomiuri and Yomiuri Shimbun (Japan), The Philippine Daily Inquirer (Philippines), Vientiane Times (Laos) and The Kathmandu Post (Nepal) -- are its members.

In its bid to serve as an alternative source of information for Asian countries from the Asian perspective, the ANN publishes a weekly magazine -- Asia News -- and runs a website -- asianewsnet.net.

Two top Ctg AL leaders sued

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Two top leaders of Chittagong city unit of Awami League (AL) were sued for reported extortion and physical assault in the port city.

A trader filed the case against Chittagong city AL General Secretary Kazi Enamul Haq Danu and Joint Secretary Dr Afsarul Amin, accusing them of demanding extortion and assaulting him, said police.

The trader identified as Abdul Mannan, owner of a restaurant, filed the case with Kotwli Police Station at around 10:30pm on Sunday.

In the case the plaintiff claiming himself as a BNP activist alleged that Afsarul and Enamul allegedly being driven by political vengeance demanded Tk 50,000 from him as extortion.

The accused AL leaders along with their cadres went to his restaurant to realise the toll and being refused they attacked him leaving him seriously injured on January 9 this year, said police quoting the plaintiff.

However, hearing his cry the local people came forward to rescue him when the accused AL leaders managed to flee, claimed Mannan in the case.

Meanwhile, Arshadul Amin, the younger brother of Dr Afsarul, termed the case as baseless meant for harassing and tarnishing the image of his brother.

"Dr Afsarul is a well-established businessman and well known for his charitable and welfare activities. None could ever bring any such allegation against him so far," said Arshadul.

20 injured as locals clash with members of picnic party at Anwara beach

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

At least 20 people were injured in a series of clashes between the members of a picnic party and local people at a sea beach in Anowara upazila of the district yesterday.

According to sources, some 500 workers and employees of Regent Textile Mills at Kalurghat, who went for a picnic at Parky beach, were locked in a quarrel with the local people over the theft of a mobile phone set at around 11:00am.

Being reinforced in number, the local people again attacked mill workers and employees at 4:00pm leaving at least 20 people injured.

Of them, seven workers were wounded critically and rushed to nearby Upazila Health Complex, the sources added.

The identity of the injured could not be gathered immediately.

Bangladesh at high risk of HIV/AIDS

Says health adviser

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

More efforts and cooperation between the government and non-government agencies are required to combat HIV/AIDS, said Health Adviser ASM Matiur Rahman at a workshop in the city yesterday.

Existing programmes should also be strengthened, the adviser added.

He was speaking as a chief guest at a workshop on HIV/AIDS with the civil surgeons of 64 districts with a view to sharing updated information on HIV/AIDS situation and its response in Bangladesh.

It also aimed at establishing coordinated mechanism at district

and upazila levels for supporting implementation with partners and to communicate government commitment on HIV/AIDS.

National AIDS/ STD Programme (NASP) and Save the Children-USA organised the workshop at Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre.

The health adviser said the figure with 874 HIV infected people is still in a manageable state, but there is nothing to feel content as Bangladesh is highly at risk for HIV/AIDS.

Dissemination of information, proper utilisation of fund, monitoring and evaluation is a must along with time bound initiatives, he added.

Additional Secretary of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare Jamil Osman said around 14,000 men and women across the world are being infected with HIV/AIDS everyday. Half of them are aged between 15 and 20 that means around 7,000 young people are being infected with HIV/AIDS daily.

Director General of Health Services Shahjahan Biswas presided over the inaugural session while among others Line Director of NASP SM Mustafa Anwar and Programme Manager Hanif Uddin also spoke.

Historic Mujibnagar Day today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The historic Mujibnagar Day will be observed today commemorating the formation of Bangladesh's first government-in-exile at Baidyanatholla mango grove in Meherpur on this day in 1971.

The place was later renamed Mujibnagar showing tribute to the country's independence hero Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, who was declared president and supreme commander of the armed forces.

Syed Nazrul Islam was made acting president in the absence of Bangabandhu, who had been arrested by the Pakistani occupation forces on March 25, 1971.

The Mujibnagar government with Tajuddin Ahmed as the prime minister led the country's nine-month liberation war that ended with the surrender of the occupation forces on December 16.

Awami League (AL) has taken up programmes to mark the day across the country.

In Dhaka, the national and party flags will be hoisted at Bangabandhu Bhaban at Dhanmondi and also at the AL headquarters on Bangabandhu Avenue at 6:00am.

Party leaders will place a wreath at the portrait of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman at Bangabandhu Bhaban at 7:00am, says a party press release.

In a message on the eve of the occasion, AL President Sheikh Hasina, who is now on a private visit in the USA, said the exiled government's contribution to emergence of Bangladesh would never be forgotten.

She paid rich tribute to Syed Nazrul Islam, Tajuddin Ahmed, M Mansur Ali, AM Quamruzzaman and others who led the revolutionary government.

Hasina recalled the contribution of civil and military officials of the revolutionary government, and of the political leaders, freedom fighters and martyrs who struggled for independence.

Obituary

Advocate Abdul Matin, vice-president of Bangladesh Muslim League and general secretary of Moulvibazar district unit, passed away due to a cardiac arrest at Osmani Medical College Hospital yesterday at the age of 52, says a press release.

He left behind his parents, wife, one daughter and one son.

His was laid to rest at his family graveyard after namaz-e-janaza at his village home at Gobindapur under Rajnagar upazila.

Hanna Rahman

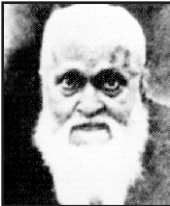


a hospital on April 15 at the age of 81, says a press release.

She left behind her husband and two sons.

She was an active member of Shakhawat Memorial Girls' School Alumni Association.

Death anniversary



Bangla AK Fazlul Haq, he was a former education, agriculture and rural development minister in undivided Bengal and a long-time chairman of Barisal Pourashava.

A milad mahfil and discussion on his life will be held at his son's Lalmatia residence after Maghrib prayers.

A discussion and Qurankhwani will also be held in Barisal.

Lt Col Abdul Qadir



The 36th death anniversary of Lt Col M u h a m m a d Abdul Qadir, a martyr of the Liberation War, will be observed today, says a press release.

He was killed on this day in 1971 in Chittagong. The Qadirabad Cantonment in Natore was named after him in recognition of his contribution to the Liberation War.

A milad mahfil will be held at his residence today.

Shabnam Huq

Today is the 7th death anniversary of Shabnam Huq, wife of Arham Masudul Huq, executive vice-president and company secretary of Dhaka Bank Limited, says a press release.

A quarakhwani and doa mahfil will be held at Rahmat-e-Alam Islam Mission Orphanage in Tejgaon.

Help recover land grabbed by Aman Appeals Keraniganj resident

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A complainant has urged the authorities concerned to help recover his land grabbed by a former state minister for labour and manpower during the tenure of immediate-past coalition government.

Lutfur Rahman Chowdhury, a resident of Kaliganj in south Keraniganj, made the appeal at a press conference at Dhaka Reporters Unity auditorium yesterday.

He said the caretaker of the land Harun-Ar-Rashid filed a case with South Keraniganj Police Station on April 10 accusing 15 people including the state minister Amanullah Aman as prime accused of grabbing 1.25 acres of land at Zinzira in Keraniganj.

"For fear of reprisals, I could not make any complaint against the state minister earlier, but owing to changed

situation I am now praying for immediate recovery of my land from the clutches of the main accused and his accomplices," said Lutfur.

In a written statement, he mentioned that one Nurun Nahar Begum built a hut on his land in September, 2005 after grabbing it illegally with the help of the then lawmaker.

Lutfur also alleged that he had received death threats several times since the grabbing of land where a multi-storied commercial building named Tanak Tower is being constructed.

He also produced papers before the journalists regarding general diary and cases filed against the state minister on charge of land grabbing.

Hill demolished to create housing plots

FROM PAGE 1

Finally, the army stopped the work and impounded the bulldozers.

The hill at Kolatoli dubbed as 'Ecologically Critical Area' (ECA) was turned into residential plots, violating a law that makes destruction of hills, without permission from the forest ministry, illegal.

The major steps regarding the approval of the housing project were taken during the immediate past BNP-led government's regime, especially road construction by cutting down forests and hills started on October 24, 2006, just four days before the caretaker government assumed power.

Keeping the local forest officials in the dark, the present district commissioner of Cox's Bazar, with assistance of some employees of the district administration had started constructing roads for the project, which was finally stopped after the joint forces had intervened on February 19.

An erstwhile inspector general of police (IGP), who is now an adviser to the current caretaker government, ranks atop the list of around 500 professionals including 22 deputy commissioners (DCs) and 25 other government high officials who got involved in the controversial housing project.

The housing project is not only in an ecologically critical area but also on disputed land as both the district administration and the forest department -- each claims the legal authority over the land.

CONCERNS OF ENVIRONMENTALISTS & EMINENT CITIZENS

Local environmentalists and forest officials claim that the housing project has been taken up illegally by destroying forestland and by cutting hills.

In favour of Bangladesh Government Employees' Welfare Board the deputy commissioner of Cox's Bazar took up the construction work of the housing project on the 51 acre hilly forestland in Kolatoli posing serious threat to the ecological balance of the country's key tourist zone, claimed environmentalists, forest officials and eminent citizens.

"Environmental balance of the area is being sacrificed for building a housing project for bureaucrats", President of Cox's Bazar Bachao Andolon (Movement to Save Cox's Bazar) Sharmina Rashmin told The Daily Star.

"Cox's Bazar district administration is carrying out the whole project and they offered plots to the top brass of bureaucrats to get backings from them," alleged a local environmentalist.

Eminent jurist Dr Kamal Hossain and Justice Naurem Uddin Ahmed who visited the area on February 3, expressed their concern about the threat to the beauty of Cox's Bazar in the face of the housing project at the seashore, which is being developed by razing hills.

ALL QUIET IN HOUSING PROJECT AFTER JOINT FORCES' INTERVENTION

After the declaration of the state of emergency, construction work in the project area has been suspended since February 19 due to the armed forces' intervention, but it is not discarded altogether.

Following a series of reports in different media and protests by environmentalists, members of the Bangladesh Army launched a drive against the cutting of hills and seized the bulldozers.

The joint forces also arrested two

persons from the housing project area who were cutting hills. The Department of Environment (DoE) filed a case against some 35 people in connection with cutting of hills there.

NO TOPOGRAPHICAL CHANGE ALLOWED WITHIN ECAS

The government so far has declared 11 areas of the country as ECAs, said a forest official of Cox's Bazar.

No topographical change is allowed inside the ECAs, according to environmentalists.

"No tree and soil are allowed to be cut or destroyed in the ECAs," said the divisional forest officer (DFO) of Cox's Bazar.

An ECA is a defined area or an ecosystem affected adversely by the changes brought through human activities. The Bangladesh Environment Conservation Act (BECA) 1995 has provision for declaration of ECAs by the director general of the DoE in certain cases where ecosystems are considered to be threatened by the possibility of reaching a critical state.

DFO'S VERSION

"The environment and forest ministry in 1995 declared the coastal area of Cox's Bazar including Kolatoli under Jhlongja mouja as an ecologically critical area," DFO Abani Bhushan Thakur told The Daily Star.

"According to the Bangladesh Environment Protection Law 1995, it is an offence to build houses by cutting hills," he said.

Any housing project in an ecologically critical area is totally illegal, he added.

"Therefore the housing project under the banner of the District Collectorate Officials and Employees Welfare Association is illegal," the DFO said.

The housing project in the ECA poses serious threat to the ecological balance, he observed.

About the dispute centring the jurisdiction over the area, the DFO said the forest department is the legal owner of the land.

THE DC'S VERSION

"After the end of the development work in September 2006, drainage and road construction for the housing project was going on," said Aminul Islam who joined as the deputy commissioner of Cox's Bazar on August 2006.

"This is not a hilly land and is not under the jurisdiction of the forest department," he told The Daily Star.

The DFO is carrying out a propaganda campaign in favour of some local NGOs against the housing project, he alleged.

"If this housing project poses a threat to the environment, then why the forest department itself had applied for the lease of the same land?" he questioned.

"We neither did cut the hills nor did we destroy any forest," he claimed adding, "We only levelled the high land for the housing project."

Asked about the allegation by different organisations about cutting of hills, he said, "It's totally false and fabricated."

CTG DIV COMMISSIONER SUGGESTS EXTENSIVE FORESTATION

Meanwhile, the Chittagong divisional commissioner who had visited Kolatoli on February 10 for firsthand knowledge of the situation, vowed to take quick initiatives to stop cutting of hills and to take tough actions against the persons who are engaged in the practice.

The environment and forest ministry had asked Chittagong Divisional Commissioner Mokhesur

Rescue operation of MV Nazimuddin under way

CU CORRESPONDENT

The rescue operation of sunken vessel MV Nazimuddin near the estuary of the river Karnaphuli is under way.

Two salvage firms Hazi Taj Mohammed and Sons and Marine Service Limited located the position of the vessel and were planning to take necessary actions to salvage the vessel, sources said.

Following the accident, the port authorities enforced one-way traffic on its channel since Saturday morning and suspended night navigation until the vessel is rescued.

It would take around one month to rescue the vessel, sources in Chittagong Port Authority (CPA) said yesterday.

Port sources said the vessel MV Nazimuddin sank after MV Titu-Five hit the lighter ship from behind on the Karnaphuli river-mouth at about 5:00am Saturday.



PHOTO: STAR

Guests show the copies of a book titled 'Tajuddin Ahmed: Alok Anantadhara' at a publication ceremony at National Museum in the city yesterday. From left are Advocate Shahdeen Malik, Prof Abdullah Abu Sayeed and Prof Anisuzzaman.

\$14m Australian food aid for ultra poor

Australia signed a \$A14 million food aid agreement with Bangladesh in the city on 15 April to support the efforts of ultra poor people to improve their lives, says a press release.

Australian High Commissioner Douglas Foskett and ERD Secretary Md Aminul Islam Bhuiyan signed the agreement on behalf of their respective sides.

After signing the agreement Douglas Foskett said, "Australia is committed, in partnership with Bangladesh and the World Food Programme, to supporting the efforts of ultra poor people to improve their lives. Our food aid programmes help these people bring about long-lasting change in their circumstances, through improved food insecurity and nutrition, and the development of sustainable income-generating activities."

The Australian High Commissioner also signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the World Food Programme (WFP), who will provide management and supervision support to the government for the food aid programmes.

WFP Representative Douglas Broderick signed the MoU for WFP.

The Australian grant will be used to purchase wheat to support the Vulnerable Group Development (VGD) and School Feeding programmes of the government. The VGD programme will improve the lives of over 500,000 extreme poor people of the impoverished northwest region of the country. It includes provision of a monthly 25kg ration of fortified atta to over 100,000 extreme poor families for better nutrition, and capacity building in income generation skills. The VGD programme participants are also assisted to

establish linkages with NGO micro-credit programmes.

Under the School Feeding Programme children of the selected areas will receive a packet of micro-nutrient fortified biscuits on each school day. This will contribute to increasing their learning capacity, attendance and enrolment rates, as well as improving their health and nutrition. The Australian contribution will reach over 93,000 school children of the northwest region and the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT).



Scholastica student missing

Mohaiminul Haque Khan, 15, a class VIII student of Scholastica, has been missing from Old DOHS field since yesterday evening.

He was wearing a blue T-shirt, jeans and black shoes.

Anybody knowing his whereabouts is requested to contact at following phone numbers: 9899859, 01817-051875.

WEATHER TODAY

Rise in temperature likely

UNB, Dhaka

Rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty or squally wind is likely at one or two places over Rajshahi, Dhaka, Sylhet, Chittagong, Khulna and Barisal divisions in the next 12 hours until 6:00pm today.

Day temperature may rise slightly over the country, Met Office said.

Highest temperature 36.8 degree Celsius was recorded yesterday at Rajshahi and lowest 22.0 degree Celsius at Srimangol.

The sun sets in the capital at 6.20pm today and rises at 5:35am tomorrow.

Highest and lowest temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

City/Town	Temperature in celsius	Humidity in percentage		
	Max	Min	Morning	Evening
Dhaka	35.3	25.5	73	53
Chittagong	32.1	25.0	88	76
Rajshahi	36.8	24.7	70	50
Khulna	34.4	24.8	76	61
Barisal	34.0	23.8	83	57
Sylhet	34.5	23.0	61	57
Cox's Bazar	32.2	24.4	74	79