

Take up programmes to spread edn in rural areas

President urges Lions Club

UNB, Dhaka

President Iajuddin Ahmed yesterday called on the Lions Club to take up special programmes to spread education in rural areas along with their service-oriented activities.

"You can play an important role in supplying education materials, construction of permanent structures and providing stipends among poor but meritorious students in rural areas," he said.

The President was addressing

the 12th Annual District Conference of Lions Club International District-315 A-1 of Bangladesh at Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre in the city.

He lauded the Lions Club for undertaking programmes like voluntary blood donation, treatment for children and self-employment projects, and providing emergency relief materials in disaster-hit areas.

He hoped that Lions Club members inspired by the ideals of ser-

vice would contribute more to the cause of humanity. "There is a lot of scope for the district units of Lions Club to provide service for the poor people of developing countries like Bangladesh."

Iajuddin said the service-oriented activities being carried out by the Lions Club to bring smile on the faces of helpless people have to be spread in the rural areas.

"I do hope that Lions Club members would not only render their service in Bangladesh but also outside of it," the President said.

District Governor of the Lions Club International, Bangladesh Shahab Uddin chaired the convention while President of the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI) Mir Nasir Hossain was present as special guest.

District governors of the Lions Club International, lions' leaders and invited guests were present at the convention where Lion Shamsuzzaman Khan and Lion Labibur Rahman also spoke.



President Iajuddin Ahmed speaks at the 12th Annual District Conference of Lions Club International District-315 A-1 at Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre in the city yesterday.

Army officer killed in Cuban plane hijack attempt

AP, Havana

A pair of heavily armed Cuban soldiers seized a city bus, killed an army officer and triggered a gun battle in a foiled bid to hijack a charter flight bound for the United States.

The young army deserters were arrested before dawn Thursday on the tarmac of a terminal that handles special charter flights between Havana and Miami, as well as New York and other American cities.

The soldiers forced a city bus to head to Havana's Jose Marti International Airport at gunpoint and killed Army Lt. Col. Victor Ibo Acuna Velazquez aboard a plane that had no passengers or crew apparently because there were no flights at the early hour. Both were apprehended.

An Interior Ministry statement suggested that Acuna Velazquez, who was unarmed, happened to be on the bus at the time it was commandeered and died "heroically" trying to thwart the hijacking. Other bus passengers were unharmed.

The government blamed anti-Cuba US policy for the incident. "The responsibility for these new crimes lies with the highest-ranking authorities of the United States, adding to the long list of terrorist acts that Cuba has been the victim of for nearly half a century," it said.

Obituary

Asadul Hakim, only son of former Director of Public Instruction (DPI) late Khan Bahadur Abdul Hakim, died of a cardiac arrest at Bedford, near London, on Thursday night at the age of 70, says a press release.

He left behind his wife, one son, one daughter and a host of relatives and well-wishers to mourn his death.

A gayebana janaza was held at Hittirpou Jame Masjid after Juma prayers yesterday.

Death anniversary

Today is the 35th death anniversary of Lt Md Anwarul Azam, a martyr of the Liberation War, says a press release.

Pakistani occupation forces killed Lt Md Anwarul Azam, then general manager of North Bengal Sugar Mills, and over one hundred officers and workers of the mills on 11th day in 1971 in Natore.

After independence, the government renamed Gopalpur Rail Station in Natore as Azim Nagar in recognition of his contribution to the Liberation War.

North Bengal Sugar Mills authorities will hold a milad mahfil and discussion to mark the day.

HAGUE CONFERENCE

'Enact laws to ensure rights of women'

ANSAR AHMED ULLAH from The Hague

Speakers at a conference in The Hague recently expressed concern over the violation of women's rights in Bangladesh.

They also demanded enactment and implementation of laws in order to improve the situation.

The conference titled 'Women: Future of Bangladesh' was organised by the Netherlands-based diaspora organisation BASUG (Bangladesh Support Group) with the support of Oxfam-

Novib, Seva Network Foundation and Mondriaan.

It was addressed by Sultana Kamal, former adviser to caretaker government, Dr Radj Bhondoe of Seva Network Foundation, Prof Tanzen Murshid of University Libre de Brussels, Muhammad Jahangir of Grameen Bank, Dr Ahmed Ziauddin, international law consultant, Ansar Ahmed Ullah, co-convenor of Brussels-based European Bangladesh Forum, Maaik de Loer of Oxfam Novib, London-based Journalist Masuda

Bhatti, Bikash Chowdhury Barua, president of BASUG, and Dr Peter Custers, chairman of International Centre for Democracy in Bangladesh.

At the start of the conference, a video message of Nobel Peace Prize Winner Prof Muhammad Yunus was screened.

In his message, Prof Yunus said the women of Bangladesh have made tremendous progress in recent years.

He appreciated the efforts of BASUG for organising the programme in Europe which, he said, would draw more attention to issues concerning women of Bangladesh internationally.

Chief Reporter of the daily Suprobhat Bangladesh M Nasirul Haque and Khalilur Rahman Chowdhury of a Bangladeshi NGO Endeavour also took part in the conference.

The Counsellor of Bangladesh Embassy in the Netherlands Zikoey Ahaad and representatives from the Dutch foreign ministry, development agencies, human rights activists and a number of organisations of migrants were also present at the conference.

A solo photo exhibition titled 'Working women of Bangladesh' by Bangladeshi photographer M A Taher was organised on this occasion.

Celebrated dance artists from Bangladesh Shamim Ara Nipa and Shibli Mohammad along with local artists took part in the cultural programme.

The daylong conference was also attended by people from different continents.

Salam joins Shanto-Mariam University as director

Lt Col (Retd) Abdus Salam Mian has joined Shanto-Mariam University of Creative Technology as its director recently, says a press release.

Prior to his new assignment, he was the vice-principal of Bangladesh International School in Dhaka.

Lt Col Salam got commission in Army Education Corps in 1976 and served the army in different capacities.

He did his Masters in Bangla from Karachi University and secured First Class First position.

He did another Masters in English from Dhaka International University at the age of 60, and secured Second Class First position.

He is the vice-president of Tangail Association in Dhaka.

1,560 sacks of fertiliser seized in Madaripur

UNB, Madaripur

Some 1,560 sacks of fertiliser and a huge amount of spurious 'zarda' were recovered in separate drives in the district in the last two days.

Acting on a tip-off, a team of army troops led by Major Mamun raided a trowler in Kumar River at Mustafapur in Sadar upazila yesterday noon and recovered 1,560 sacks of fertiliser, smuggled from Ghorashal Fertiliser Factory in Narsingdi district.

Later, the army men arrested fertiliser trader and Payerpur UP chairman Mozlem Akon in this connection.

They also seized the trowler and sealed off one fertiliser godown.

In another drive, the army men unearthed a factory producing spurious 'zarda' at Guatala in Shibchar on Thursday night and arrested its owner Abdus Samad Khan.

They also seized 110 kilograms of fake 'Munipuri zarda', 1,400 cans of fake 'Hakimpuri zarda' and 'zarda' making materials, including 3,000 empty cans.

2 drug peddlers held with ganja, phensidyl

BSS, Rangpur

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) in separate drives arrested two drug peddlers and seized huge quantities of contraband ganja and phensidyl from Rangpur and Kurigram districts on Thursday, Rab and police sources said.

A Rab team from Rangpur camp in a raid at 4:00am on Thursday picked up Mohammad Babul, 28, son of Rajab Ali of frontier village Biddiyabagish at Fulbari in Kurigram, from Fulbari area and seized five kgs of smuggled Indian ganja from his possession.

Another Rab team from the same camp arrested Amir Hossain alias Monir Hossain, 28, son of Hanif Sarder of village Bhabanipur under Kalkini upazila in Madaripur district, from Boldipukur Bus Stand on Rangpur-Dhaka highway at Mithapukur at 2:00pm on Thursday.

Rab also seized 118 bottles of contraband phensidyl from his possession during the raid while the drug peddler was waiting for a Dhaka-bound coach after bringing the phensidyl from the frontier areas.

Rab handed them over to Fulbari and Mithapukur police respectively on Thursday afternoon, the sources said.

Sonargaon programmes on Mothers Day

Pan Pacific Sonargaon has drawn up a number of programmes to celebrate International Mothers Day on May 13, says a press release.

Mothers going to any restaurant outlet of the hotel -- Cafe Bazar, Jharna, Ciao -- on the day in a group of three will be able to dine free both at lunch and at dinner.

The hotel will also host a reception on the occasion to pay tributes to successful mothers and their successful children.

Industries Adviser Geetiara Safiya Chowdhury will be present at the reception.

DHAKA TODAY

Roundtable

Bangladesh Parishad Andolon (Bapa) and Bangladesh Architects Institute will jointly organise a roundtable on 'Evicting illegal structures on the bank of Buriganga and things to do'. Venue: National Press Club. Time: 3:00pm.

Award giving ceremony

SM Mozammel Haque will be awarded Bruno Padak by Bangladesh Astronomical Association. Venue: Russian Cultural Centre. Time: 5:00pm.

Documentary screening

Bengal Gallery of Fine Arts will screen a documentary titled 'Joi-Chobi' on the works and life of artist Alakesh Ghosh. Venue: Bengal Shilpalaya. Time: 7:00pm.

UNFPA Roundtable

UNFPA will hold a roundtable on the occasion of the International Day of Midwife'. Venue: IDB Bhaban. Time: 10:00am.

Seminar

Shipping and Communication Reporters' Forum (SCRF) organises a seminar titled 'Water transport management in Bangladesh: Prevailing situation and measures to be taken'. Venue: Moni Singh-Farhad Memorial Trust Bhaban. Time: 10:30am.

Rotary Dhaka Central

The District Governor Annual visit and Club assembly of Rotary Club of Dhaka Central will be held. Venue: Dhaka Sheraton Hotel. Time: 5:00pm.



Former adviser to the caretaker government Dr Akbar Ali Khan speaks at a seminar on 'Right to information for democracy and good governance: Possible role of caretaker government' at LGED Bhaban auditorium in the city yesterday. On his left is Prof Abdus Salam while on his right are Executive Editor of Dainik Sangbad Manjurul Ahsan Bulbul, Dr Shamsul Bari of RIB and Sanjida Sobhan of Manusher Jonno Foundation. Mass-line Media Centre (MMC) organised the seminar to mark the World Press Freedom Day.

Hasina says she is ready to face charges

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League President Sheikh Hasina has said she will return home on Monday to face what she calls "fictitious" murder and extortion charges filed against her while she was travelling in the United States and Europe, according to a report published in The Washington Times on Thursday.

In a telephone interview from London, the former prime minister told The Washington Times that she was prepared to fight the charges when she gets home.

Hasina said there have been 19 attempts on her life. "I survived all of them because Allah saved me. Why should I be worried now?" she said, when asked if she was concerned about her safety on her return to Bangladesh. "Allah has given me a life to do some work for the people of Bangladesh. I will work for my people. I am ready to die for them."

The AL chief said the government had shown "double standards" by charging her and then preventing her return to the country.

"They thought I would be afraid to face these charges," she said. "Who are they to decide whether

we stay in the country or go abroad? That is for our people to decide."

Proclaiming her innocence, Hasina said, "I know I haven't done anything wrong. I have not killed anyone." She accused the Jamaat-e-Islami of wrongly implicating her in the case.

Hasina also criticised the caretaker government for failing to hold elections originally scheduled for January.

"There was a mass movement when the caretaker government took over. Their first job was to hold elections. They haven't done that yet," said Hasina.

The report added: US State Department spokesman Sean McCormack said the Bush administration was watching the situation "closely" and has urged the caretaker government "to move as expeditiously as possible to elections so the Bangladeshis can exercise their right to vote."

He warned that if "the caretaker government doesn't take the right decisions, then ... there is a real possibility that this can threaten Bangladeshi democracy and nobody wants to see that."

10 fall sick after taking watermelon in Rajbari

UNB, Rajbari

Ten people fell sick after taking watermelon at Hugladangi village in Baliakandi yesterday.

Local people said Arshad of the village bought two watermelons from Baliakandi Bazar Thursday evening and took them to his in-law's house at the same village.

The 10 members of his in-law's family and their neighbours, including Arshad and Sakiruddin, fell sick after taking the watermelons in the morning.

They were admitted to Baliakandi health centre.

When connected, health officer Golam Kibria said unscrupulous traders might have ripened the watermelons by injecting them with toxic chemicals.

Training on refugee law begins today

UNB, Dhaka

A three-day residential training on refugee law begins today at the Proshika Human Resource Development Centre Trust at Koitta in Manikganj district.

Funded by United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Empowerment through Law of the Common People (ELCOP), an advocacy and research NGO, organised the training, said a press release.

The programme aims to sensitise the participants on international mechanism for the protection of refugees, their rights and related issues.

A total of 30 individuals representing faculty members from different public and private universities, government officials from concerned ministries and Law Commission, members of Bangladesh Army, Bangladesh Rifles and human rights practitioners from NGOs and inter-governmental organisations will take part in the programme.

Call to protect fish resources in Halda river

BSS, Chittagong

Stakeholders put emphasis on taking effective short- and long-term measures with involvement of both public and private sectors to preserve the bio-diversity and indigenous fish species of Halda river, country's only natural fish breeding habitat.

They observed that meaningful steps to this effect will not only save the fish resources of the river from gradual extinction but its accumulative contribution to the economy will be huge and worthy.

Official sources said a project, which has been taken to bring back the lost glory and uniqueness of Halda river, is in limbo due to non-allocation of fund even after passing of one year of the scheme.

"Restoration of the natural breeding habitats of the Halda river" with 5 years of implementing period from July 2006 is to turn some specific areas of the river as "fish sanctuary" and to preserve bio-diversity of the Halda river by protecting some indigenous fish species particularly the brood fishes (mother fish).

About a year back, the government declared some areas of the river stretching about 40 kilometers from Karnaphuli river mouth

to Nazirhat point as "fish sanctuary".

The river is the country's only source of fish fry as brood fishes of indigenous species like Rui, Katla, Mrigel and Kaliboush migrates to the Halda from different rivers and releases eggs during March-June period every year.

Egg-collectors collect the eggs from the river soon after the spawning by mother fishes by using thick net and after some natural process at small pond adjacent to river bank sell them to fish hatchery and nursery owners.

Experts and officials said different human-made and natural disasters like destruction of spawning ground by loop cutting pollution of river by industrial waste, unplanned building of huge sluice gate by the locals for irrigation purpose, indiscriminate catching and killing of fish fry particularly the mother fishes and geographical change in the river due to erosion for years have posed a serious threat to the bio-diversity of Halda.

Due to the risk factors, the river once a safer place for brood fishes for releasing their eggs has now turned into a quite dangerous one resulting in drastic fall in availability of eggs as lesser number of mother fishes come there for

releasing eggs in recent years.

A study carried out by Prof Mohammad Ali Azadi of Zoology Department of Chittagong University, an expert who has been carrying out research works on the unique character of this river and its fish spawning, showed that the amount of collected fish fry from the river came down to 400 kilograms in 2006 from 2500 kilograms in 1945.

Mohammad Ershad Miah, district fisheries officer and project director, told BSS that the area under Tk 13.68 crore (estimated) project include development of hatchery and fish sanctuary, rehabilitation of poor fishermen to discourage them from catching fishes during spawning period of March to July, dredging of river, development of canals, training of the unskilled egg-collectors, carrying out study work by the experts and awareness campaign.

He said amount of egg collection from the river and supply of fish fry has increased significantly in last couple of years following some primary steps taken at both public and private levels that include training of poor egg-collectors on modern fry-breeding process and awareness campaign to stop killing of mother fishes during peak season.

WEATHER TODAY

Mild heat wave may continue

UNB, Dhaka

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

Prevailing mild heat wave over Rajshahi and Khulna divisions and the regions of Dhaka, Madaripur, Comilla, Barisal and Patuakhali may continue, Met Office said.

Day temperature may remain nearly unchanged over the country.

Yesterday's highest temperature of 37.0 degree Celsius was recorded at Rajshahi and Ishwardi and the lowest of 22.0 degrees at Comilla and Srimongal.

The sun sets in the capital at 6:29pm and rises at 5:21am tomorrow.

The 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	36.0	25.0	59	46
Chittagong	35.6	24.6	74	69
Rajshahi	37.0	23.6	69	53
Khulna	35.5	23.6	74	54
Barisal	35.5	23.5	76	61
Sylhet	34.8	25.3	61	50
Cox's Bazar	33.0	23.0	70	69