



Last Afghan king Zahir Shah dies

AP, Kabul

Mohammad Zahir Shah, the last king of Afghanistan who returned from three decades of exile to bless his war-battered country's fragile course toward democracy, died yesterday, President Hamid Karzai said. He was 92.

Weak if well-meaning during his 40-year reign, Zahir Shah was a symbol of yearned-for peace and

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65pc new doctors seek jobs abroad

UNB, Dhaka

A UN study finds 65 percent of all newly graduated Bangladeshi doctors seek jobs abroad and the country loses 200 doctors from the government sector each year.

Many of the world's least developed countries (LDCs) are losing large part of their already shallow pool of skilled professionals to western countries—hindering their ability to pull themselves out of poverty, according to the study by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTD).

The UN's development arm warned that LDCs could see their long-term growth prospects damaged if the "brain drain" is not addressed.

The study added that foreign aid has been largely ineffective because it has failed to recognise

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Grabbers, corrupt staff gobble up Tangail forests

MIRZA SHAKIL, Tangail

Forests in Tangail all but disappeared in the last two decades. Long term negligence in preserving the forests, allowing a large number of sawmills and brickfields to be set up near the forests, nepotism and corruption in leasing out forestlands to unscrupulous influential people under social afforestation programme, and absence of any monitoring of that programme are some reasons behind the whole-sale deforestation, according to different sources.

The forests in Tangail earlier were spread over 1,22,876 acres of land in five upazilas, 45,565 acres of which were in Madhupur; 47,220 acres in Sakhipur; 21,855 acres in

Ghatail; 7,576 acres in Mirzapur, and 669 acres were in Kalihati, forest department sources said.

Of the total area of forests in the district 55,476 acres are reserved forests with 38,232 acres in Sakhipur; 7,275 acres in Mirzapur; 7,251 acres in Ghatail; 2,500 acres in Madhupur; and 185 acres in Kalihati, the sources added.

Besides, there are 17,436 acres of forests under Madhupur Garh region in Mymensingh.

The forests including the reserved ones in the district shrunk due to indiscriminate cutting and stealing of trees and encroachment upon the forests, the sources said.

Almost two thirds of the forests in Tangail amounting to around 80,000 acres already disappeared

due to mindless cutting of trees allowed by some corrupt forests officials to satiate their greed, the sources added.

According to Tangail Forest Department, around 58,000 acres of forestlands in the district still remain grabbed by influential encroachers, around 20,000 acres of which are in Madhupur, 19,500 acres in Sakhipur, 13,000 acres in Ghatail, 3,300 acres in Mirzapur, and 150 acres are in Kalihati.

The forest department recovered around 10,000 acres of forestlands so far through motivation and by use of force, 5,120 acres of which were recovered in the last six months.

Various programmes, organised

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Bananas are being grown on land that once belonged to the Forest Department in Tangail. Prolonged negligence of the authorities concerned led to unscrupulous people gobbling up large areas of forestland and establishing saw-mills and brick kilns as well.

Joy's wife may arrive in Dhaka to provide legal aid to Hasina

UNB, Dhaka

US Attorney Kristine Overmire, also wife of Sajeeb Wazed Joy, is likely to arrive in Dhaka to provide legal aid for detained Awami League President Sheikh Hasina.

"We're contemplating sending her (Kristine) to provide legal assistance to my mother," Joy told the news agency yesterday over phone from Washington.

In reply to a question, he said, "We haven't yet finalised the date of Kristine's visit to Bangladesh. Papers and documents relating to the cases are being collected from Dhaka."

Hasina was arrested in an extortion case on July 16 and is now detained in a sub-jail.

Responding to a query about AL Acting President Zillur Rahman's remark that AL is not thinking of

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PHOTO: STAR

Coffins of a funeral shop and tyres of a vehicle accessories store occupy a passenger shed on a street in Uttara Sector-13 in the capital. The photo was taken yesterday.

Parents still believe uncle killed Nowshin Stop sending son to school

EMRAN HOSSAIN

Parents of Sadia Nowshin Priyanka, who was found strangled to death inside her family residence at Moghbazar in the capital, stopped sending their son to school out of fear that his uncle might kill him.

The family still believes that Nowshin, a brilliant student of Vigarunnisa Noon School and College who had passed the SSC examination with GPA-5, was killed in an incident of homicide by her uncle Zahidul Haque Rintu. They term the autopsy report as 'somehow influenced'.

The autopsy report submitted on July 21 determined Nowshin's death as a suicide. The family demanded that another autopsy should be done.

Shamsunnahar, mother of Nowshin, who passes her days now staring at photo albums full of her daughter's pictures, rejected the

autopsy report outright. She also mentioned that Rintu, also an employee of Brac Bank, has been missing since the murder.

The grieving mother stopped sending her son Rownok Shihab Zim, a student of standard-1, to his English medium school at Kakrail, fearing an attack on him too from her brother.

"My Nowshin never even raised her voice and had no romantic relation. She didn't even have any cellphone," cried Shamsunnahar protesting the autopsy report that says Nowshin committed suicide.

"She didn't commit suicide, the autopsy report was not supposed to be like this," Nowshin's mother wailed.

"We can't find any reason for Nowshin to commit suicide. She was killed," said Sultan Faruque Monju, Nowshin's father.

Shamsunnahar asked if

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EXTORTION CASE Ex-BNP MP in Kansat jailed for 5 years

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

A Chapainawabganj court yesterday sentenced former BNP lawmaker Prof Shahjahan Mia and two others to five years imprisonment in a case filed in connection with extorting Tk 70,000.

District and Sessions Judge of Chapainawabganj Hrishikesh Saha also fined them Tk 10,000 yesterday; if unpaid they would remain in prison six more months.

The other two convicts are BNP president of Shibganj municipality unit Shafikul Islam and BNP adherent Aynal Haque.

All of them were produced before the court during the delivery of the verdict yesterday. After the verdict, Shahjahan screamed out claiming he was innocent. He told his lawyers that he would appeal in higher court.

One Panaullah filed the case with Shibganj Police Station on April 23 this year accusing the three of

extortion. Panaullah in his complaint alleged that the accused, misusing their power, forced him to pay Tk 70,000 on November 19, 2005. They also threatened him with death and harassed him by implicating him in false cases.

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Prof Shahjahan Mia

Properties of Harris Chy, Shajahan Siraj to be confiscated

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday ordered to attach properties of Harris Chowdhury, former political secretary to former prime minister Khaleda Zia, and ex-minister Shajahan Siraj, his wife and son in money laundering and tax evasion cases respectively.

Judgement of an arms case against Dhaka City Corporation Ward Commissioner Monwar Hossain Dipjal will be delivered today in his absence.

Another Dhaka court transferred the money laundering case against former housing and public works

minister Mirza Abbas to the Special Tribunal-6 for its quick disposal.

Proceedings of the graft case against Awami League leader and ex-home minister Mohammad Nasim were adjourned yesterday.

HARRIS CASE

Judge Mohammad Azizul Haq of the Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court passed the attachment order, as Harris did not comply with the court order in connection with a money laundering case.

Earlier on July 18, the same court issued arrest warrant against Harris and directed officer-in-charge of Gulshan Police Station to

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CONTRACT FARMING Myanmar may lease 50,000 acres of land to Bangladesh

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Myanmar is considering leasing out at least 50,000 acres of land in its Rakhine state to Bangladeshi private entrepreneurs for 'contract farming'.

Acting foreign secretary Mohammad Touhid Hossain told this to journalists after the conclusion of Dhaka-Yangon bilateral talks in Dhaka. Myanmar Deputy Foreign Minister U Kyaw Thu led the Myanmar delegation.

"A delegation of Bangladeshi [private] entrepreneurs will visit Myanmar next week," Touhid said adding, the land would be leased to

produce agricultural products including paddy, onion, soybean, maize, tea and sugarcane.

The two neighbours also discussed issues over the proposed tri-nation link road connecting Bangladesh, Myanmar and China.

Construction of the Bangladesh-Myanmar portion of the link road, 23-km-long, would start soon having an option to be extended upto Kunming in China. The construction minister of Myanmar is set to arrive on July 27 to finalise an agreement for constructing the link road, foreign secretary Touhid said.

Earlier, during Bangladesh Foreign Adviser Iftekhar A Chowdhury's visit to Myanmar, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the two countries stating that a Bangladesh-sponsored bridge titled 'Friendship Bridge' would be built on the link road.

Issues regarding the 110 kilometres of the remainder of the link road through Myanmar would be discussed in meetings later, added Touhid.

Chinese assistant commerce minister Wang Chao told Finance Adviser Mirza Azizul Islam that Beijing does not have any objection over the initiative of linking Dhaka

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UK cops probe collapse of money transfer company

AFP, London

British police are investigating the circumstances around which a money-transfer company used by members of the Bangladeshi community in London collapsed, a spokeswoman confirmed Monday.

First Solution Money Transfer was unable to deliver at least 1.7 million pounds to about 2,000 families in Bangladesh, The Times reported, and members of Parliament had expressed concerns to parliament of the actions of the company's directors.

"We can confirm that an investigation is underway by officers from the Financial Investigation team at

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Biman turns public limited company

RASHIDUL HASAN

Bangladesh Biman finally turned into a public limited company (PLC) yesterday, starting anew its journey with the name Biman Bangladesh Airlines Ltd.

Under the Company Act, Biman will now run independently and take its own decisions including procurement of new aircraft, Biman high officials told The Daily Star yesterday.

However, Biman would initially be a fully government-owned company and its board of directors comprises six government officials -- secretaries of the Cabinet Division and ministries of energy, commerce, finance, civil aviation, foreign affairs.

The six secretaries and a joint secretary to the civil aviation ministry have been made the seven shareholders of the national flag carrier corporation turned PLC, Biman sources said.

Under the PLC arrangement, the cabinet secretary will be the first chairman of Biman Bangladesh Airlines Ltd and the present Biman managing director (MD) is its chief executive officer as well as MD.

The government will gradually offload up to 49 per cent of the shares of the airline to the private sector, holding 51 per cent shares in its own hands, Communications Adviser Maj Gen MA Matin earlier said.

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Petition seeking Hasina's bail likely in a week

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Pro-Awami League (AL) lawyers may file a bail petition for Sheikh Hasina, AL president and former prime minister, with Dhaka Judge Court within a week.

The lawyers said they were making preparations for a legal battle against the caretaker government and were mapping out elaborate legal steps to defend Hasina, eldest daughter of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

Three AL loyalist lawyers told The Daily Star that a detailed plan

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Prayer Timing		
July 24		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-15	4-50
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	5-00	5-15
Maghrib	6-54	6-58
Esha	8-15	8-45
Source: Islamic Foundation		

Taliban threaten to kill Korean hostages

Afghan, US forces kill 50 militants in two days

AP, AFP, Kandahar/ Kabul

A purported Taliban spokesman said that negotiations for the lives of 23 South Korean hostages had stalled and that militants would kill the aid workers Monday evening if the government doesn't free Taliban prisoners.

An Afghan lawmaker said the militants had upped their demands Monday, saying they wanted all insurgent prisoners in Ghazni province released in exchange for the Koreans, though Qari Yousef Ahmadi, who claims to speak for the militia, denied that was true. Khail Mohammad Husseini, a lawmaker from Ghazni province, where the Koreans are being held, said a delegation of provincial leaders tried to meet with the kidnappers Monday but that the militants didn't

show. He said the Taliban increased their demands by telephone, saying all militant prisoners in Ghazni had to be released.

Ahmadi said militants were still demanding the release of 23 Taliban prisoners but said the government hadn't signalled it was willing to do that.

"If the government won't accept these conditions, then it's difficult for the Taliban to provide security for these hostages, to provide health facilities and food," Ahmadi told The Associated Press by satellite phone. "The Taliban won't have any option but to kill the hostages."

The deputy interior minister, Abdul Khaliq, meanwhile, said Afghanistan was not prepared to make a deal "against our national

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PHOTO: STAR

Mayor Deli Jacques, right, of Danane city in Ivory Coast and his aide on Bangladesh Road, a city road that has been named after Bangladesh recognising the efforts of Bangladeshi UN peacekeepers there.

Ivory Coast town proud of its Bangladesh Road

JULFIKAR ALI MANIK, back from Ivory Coast

In a far off African country of 17 million people and over 60 ethnic groups who speak French and several indigenous languages, a sign-board written in Bangla on a street will simply take you by surprise.

The people of Ivory Coast have named this particular street "Bangladesh Road" in recognition of the contributions made by Bangladeshi Peacekeeping forces.

The name plaque of the road is written in French, English and, of course, in Bangla.

Two months ago on May 21, through a ceremony Bangladesh earned the name of this major road in Danane town, situated close to the borders of Liberia and Guinea. The town's local administration took the initiative.

Sector west Commander of UN peacekeeping mission in Ivory Coast Brigadier General Md Mainul Islam formally inaugurated the Bangladesh Road in presence of the local elite, rebel commanders, UN military observers, police officials and others.

Interestingly, the local people have been informally calling this road as Bangladesh Road for quite some time.

Since Bangladeshi troops under the UN Peace Mission arrived here

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