

Pragmatic foreign policy brightens country's image

Analysts say

BSS, Dhaka

Diplomatic campaign backed by pragmatic foreign policy appeared to have brightened Bangladesh's image abroad in the past one year when the country earned extra attention from global community and economic fora.

Analysts and foreign ministry sources said the international community has already acknowledged that despite the state of emergency rights situation in the country improved far more than the previous year while the number of extrajudicial killings reaching a minimal stage.

The massive anti-graft campaign earned Bangladesh a dignified status after years of stigma when the global corruption watchdogs placed the country on the top of the list of corrupt nations.

"In the backdrop of the political changeover on January 11, 2007 the broad aim of our foreign policy has been to have Bangladesh perceived as a responsible member of the international community," said Foreign Adviser Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury in his year-ending press briefing last week.

This has resulted in winning the support of international actors in reform efforts of the government.

In the past one year Bangladesh ratified the UN charters on corruption and rights of disabled people while inside the country it decided to constitute the National Human Rights Commission.

Bangladesh also performed actively as the reconstituted UN Human Rights Council member.

Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed in September last year addressed the 62nd Council of UN General Assembly that particularly drew the world attention on the development initiatives of the country. He also co-chaired a UN session on climate change there.

Bangladesh was elected the chair of LDC Coordination Bureau in September where it successfully portrayed its position in the World Trade Organisation (WTO).

One of the noticeable achievements in the past one year in foreign relations was the stabilisation of its ties with the neighbouring countries.

On the sidelines of the 14th Saarc Summit, the chief adviser had a fruitful meeting with the Indian

prime minister. Both the leaders agreed to re-activate and strengthen the existing institutional frameworks to resolve all bilateral issues.

The foreign adviser had four meetings with Indian external affairs minister when they discussed all the long-pending issues while India started to handover to Bangladesh the criminals hiding in its territory.

The foreign adviser also interacted with his counterparts from Pakistan, Sri Lanka and other Saarc countries during bilateral visits and at different international fora.

During the past one year Bangladesh also explored potentials of mutual cooperation with Myanmar in matters related to transport, energy and economic development.

Bangladesh participated, for the first time after having the status of full participant, in ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) during the ministerial meeting in Manila.

Last year, a number of delegates from the European Union visited Bangladesh to see the reform efforts of the present government and extended their all-out support to these efforts.

Search on for missing Bangladeshi blue helmet in Atlantic

BSS, Dhaka

A massive search is underway in African coast of Atlantic Ocean as Bangladesh Army Captain Rajibul Kabir went missing in the Sea in Liberia, an ISPR statement said yesterday.

"Until now the body of Captain Rajib could not be found," it said.

But, the statement said, UN helicopters, divers, fishermen and local police were mobilised when the Liberian radios continued to broadcast the report of the mishap in all local languages so the people at the coastlines in neighbouring Sierra Leone, Ivory Coast and the islands of the region or fishing boats and ships in the Atlantic could detect him dead or alive.

Some 20-kilometre area off the coast was kept under intensive observation while the makeshift army camp was set up near the spot to monitor the rescue search.

Referring to local experience, the statement said, due to the geographic and environmental obstacles it was very difficult to carry out underwater search and recover body in the coast of the Atlantic.

Captain Rajib along with two other Bangladeshi army officers went to the beach, 30 kilometres off Liberian capital Monrovia and went missing, as he could not return to the shore due to heavy waves while he was only in waist deep water.

BCL celebrates 60th founding anniversary

DU CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL), the student wing of Awami League (AL), celebrated its 60th founding anniversary yesterday.

To mark the day, BCL leaders placed wreaths at the portrait of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman at Bangabandhu Bhaban at Dhanmandi in the city at about 9:00am.

At about 10:00am, BCL leaders went to the sub-jail on the parliament compound to greet AL President Sheikh Hasina.

They began the celebration programmes at about 8:00am through cutting a cake at Curzon Hall on Dhaka University campus.

BCL also held a discussion in the afternoon.

The BCL, formerly East Pakistan Student League, was formed in 1948 under the leadership of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, then a student leader and a student of DU law department.

Since the inception of the organisation, it contributed a great deal to 1952 Language Movement, 1959 Mass Upsurge, 1971 Liberation War, 1990 Anti-Autocracy Movement and other movements of the country.

Workshop of BNCC Naval Wing begins

UNB, Dhaka

A 17-day annual training workshop of Bangladesh National Cadet Corps (BNCC) Naval Wing began at BNS Shaheed Moazzam at Kapitai yesterday.

A total of 250 cadets are taking part in the workshop, said an ISPR release.

BNS Shaheed Moazzam executive officer inaugurated the workshop as the chief guest.

Its officer commanding is expected to attend the concluding day's ceremony as the chief guest.

The training will conclude with a cultural session and campfire on January 20.

FOCUS donates 22,500 blankets for Sidr victims

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Focus Humanitarian Assistance (FOCUS), an agency of the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN), donated 22,500 blankets to the Chief Adviser's Relief Fund for the Sidr victims recently.

A team of the Aga Khan Council for Bangladesh led by its President Habibul Haque handed over the blankets.

The consignment was a part of the 50,000 blankets arranged by FOCUS.

The organisation has also undertaken an assessment of the affected regions to establish reconstruction and rehabilitation needs and then determine how it be of further assistance to the cyclone victims, says a FOCUS handout.



Justice Muhammad Habibur Rahman speaks at the reunion of Dhaka University Philosophy Department Alumni Association at Teacher Student Centre (TSC) yesterday.

Mystery shrouds death of contractor

Body of youth recovered, 2 shot

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Mystery shrouds the death of a contractor who died after falling from the roof of a four-storey building in the city's Nimtoli area yesterday.

In another incident, the police recovered the body of a youth from a canal at Kamrangirchar on Thursday night.

Meanwhile, two people, including a student of Stamford University, were shot in separate incidents in the city last night.

The contractor was identified as Selim Ahmed, 42, a resident of BK Ganguli Lane at Kayetuli. He was seriously injured when he fell from the roof at around 11:30am. Local people rushed him to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) where doctors declared him dead.

Selim's wife Irin Begum and daughter Afsana Khatun alleged that Masum, owner of the building, and his accomplices pushed Selim to his death from the roof.

A murder case was filed against Masum and others.

On Thursday night, the police recovered the slaughtered body of

Masud from Jhauchar canal at Kamrangirchar.

Masud's maternal uncle Shafiqur Rahman said Masud had been missing since two youths, Tareq and Shamim, called him out of his house at Hazaribagh December 31.

Police said they arrested Tareq and Shamim in this connection.

In another incident, Saimon Rahman, 23, a BBA student of Stamford University, was shot by muggers when he was returning home at about 7:30pm yesterday.

Saimon, who is now undergoing treatment at DMCH, said the muggers took away his mobile phone. They fired at him when he tried to resist them.

In another incident, Abdul Karim, 55, a security guard of a garments factory at Mirpur-14, received a bullet in his leg last night. He was rushed to DMCH.

Meanwhile, a mob beat up an alleged mugger at East Kazipara at about 5:30pm, leaving him critically injured.

He was identified as Sarwar, 25. He is now undergoing treatment at DMCH.

5 Bangladeshis trafficked to India return home

UNB, Benapole

Five Bangladeshis, trafficked to India last year, were handed over to Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) through Benapole check-post yesterday.

They are Tariqul Molla, 14, of Jessore, Nikhil Mondal, 15, of Magura, Asaduzzaman, 13, of Benapole, Hanchung Manna, 18, of Bandarban and her four-year old child Khoai Manna.

Indian Border Security Force (BSF) handed over the five Bangladeshis to BDR.

The BDR later handed over the five to a representative of Bangladesh National Women Lawyers' Association (BNWLA).

BDR sources said an organised gang trafficked the five Bangladeshis through Benapole border in the first part of last year with the false promise of providing them with jobs in India.

Kolkata police arrested them at Sealdah Railway Station and sent them to jail. Later, a local NGO, Prajak, brought them to a shelter home.

The return of the five victims was facilitated following correspondences between Prajak and BNWLA.

Country's highest peak Tlangmoy Swapnachura

Mountaineers claim

DU CORRESPONDENT

A group of mountaineers yesterday claimed that Tlangmoy Swapnachura is the country's highest peak situated in Bandarban district.

The claim was made by some seven members of a mountaineering club named Extremist at a press conference at Dhaka Reporters' Unity.

They said the height of the peak is 3461 feet, some 300 feet higher than Keokradong, which is hitherto the highest peak in Bangladesh.

The members of the team urged the government and the survey department to take necessary measures to declare the peak as the highest one after verifying their claim.

Sajal Khale, a member of the team, said they measured the height of the peak with a GPS device.

The team led by Yahyia Khan climbed the peak of the Tlangmoy Swapnachura on December 24 of last year.

Five other members of the team are: Walid Ashraf Gini, Opar Ahmed, Mirza Zakaria Beg, Muhammad Salauddin and Umme Habiba Shoshi.

They also claimed that they are the first ever Bangladeshis to climb the peak of Tlangmoy Swapnachura located along the Bangladesh-Myanmar border.

Firearms licence renewal date extended

BSS, Dhaka

The last date for the renewal of licence of firearms, issued by the Dhaka Magistracy, has been extended up to January 31.

The time extension has been made as per an official notification under Article 82 of the Arms Act Manual 1924, an official handout said on Thursday.

Death anniversary

Today is the first death anniversary of Alhaj Md Anwar Hossain, ex-engineer of Power Development Board, Dhaka and Transco.

Abu Dhabi, says a press release. On the occasion, a milad mahfil will be held after Zohr prayers at his own residence at Mirpur-2 in the city.

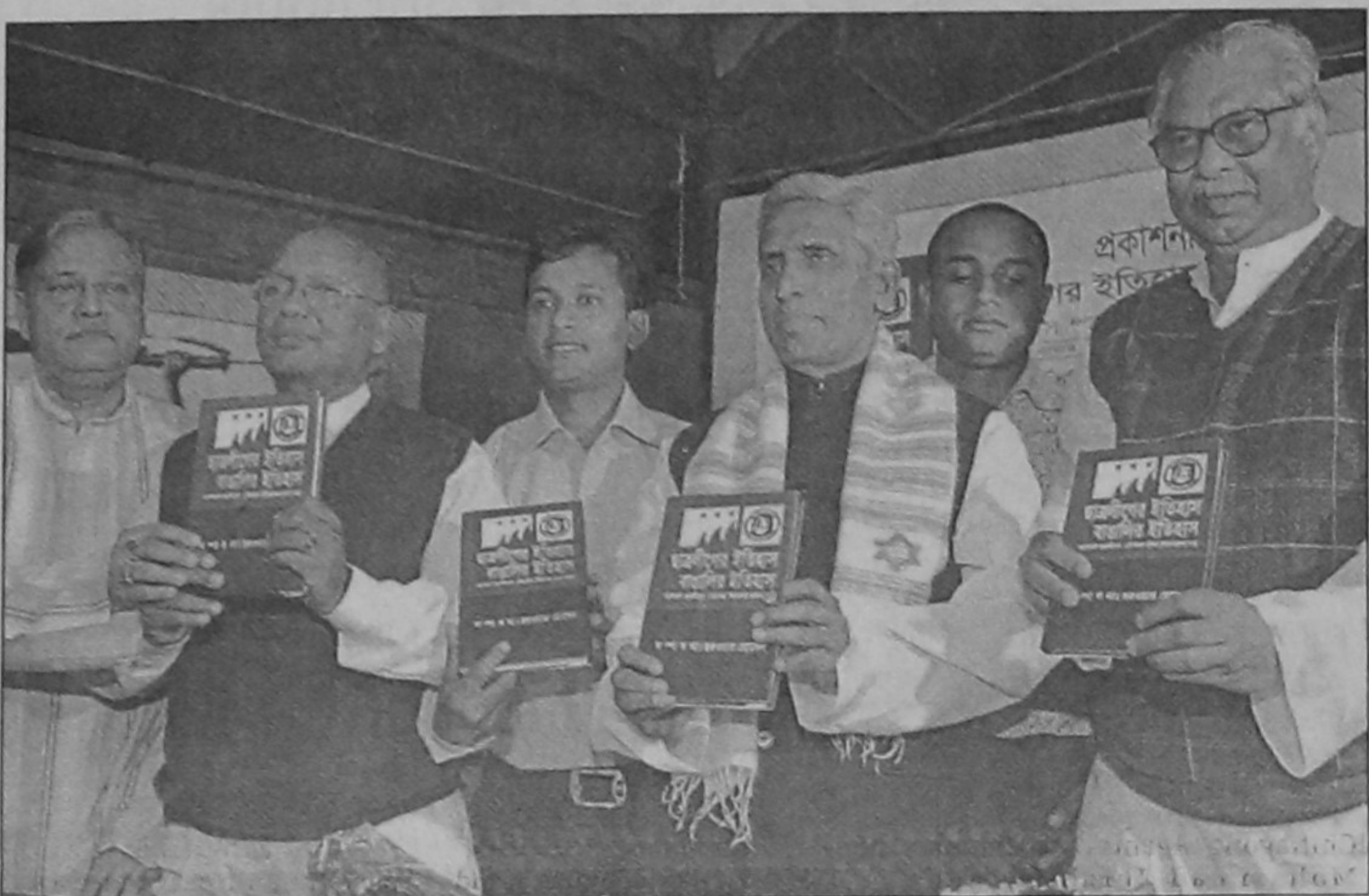
Relatives and admirers have been requested to attend the milad mahfil and pray for his departed soul.

Ardhendu Shekhor Roy

Today is the eighth death anniversary of Ardhendu Shekhor Roy, a former government official, says a press release.

He passed away due to brain stroke in 2000.

On the occasion, different religious programmes have been arranged at the village home at Khoksha upazila in Kushtia and at Jhiltuli in Faridpur town to pray for the departed soul.



Awami League leaders hold copies of a book on the history of Bangladesh Chhatra League edited by Sarwar Hossain at a publication ceremony at Liberation War Museum in the city yesterday. From left are Dr Mohiuddin Jalal, Tofail Ahmed, Sarwar Hossain, Abdur Razzak and Abul Mansur.

1,500 fowls culled in Kurigram

UNB, Kurigram

More than 1,500 poultry birds and pigeons were culled in Bakshipara and Kirshnapur areas of Sadar upazila early yesterday following the detection of bird flu.

Sources at the district administration said they had sent four dead chickens, collected from Ayub Ali's Bakshipara house, to Bangladesh Livestock Research Institute (BLRI) in Savar for laboratory test.

On Thursday, the district administration received a faxed report from BLRI saying that the chickens died of bird flu.

Later, officials of the district administration and the Health and Livestock Department in a pre-dawn joint drive culled the chickens and pigeons at Bakshipara and Krishnapur.

District Livestock Officer Dr AM Shafiuazzaman told UNB that the drive would be carried out in over 500 poultry farms soon.

WEATHER TODAY

Temperature may fall

UNB, Dhaka

Weather may remain dry with temporary partly cloudy sky over the country in the next 12 hours as of 6:00pm today.

Night temperature may fall slightly over the country, Met Office said in a forecast.

Yesterday's highest temperature of 29.2 degree Celsius was recorded at Sitakunda and the lowest of 10.6 degrees at Rajshahi and Srimangol.

The sun sets in the capital at 5:25pm today and rises at 6:43am 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	27.2	15.2	67	54
Chittagong	26.5	15.0	82	72
Rajshahi	27.3	10.6	97	74
Khulna	27.2	14.5	79	-
Barisal	27.3	13.5	85	71
Sylhet	28.5	15.0	70	62
Cox's Bazar	29.0	15.6	80	73



Haphazard dumping of garbage on the roadside at Ashraf Ali Road in Chittagong adds to suffering to passers-by and local people, but the authorities remain indifferent. The picture was taken yesterday.