

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 reached a minimal stage.

The massive anti-graft campaign earned Bangladesh a dignified status after years of stigma when the global corruption watchdog 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 its 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 Bangladeshi Army Captain Rajib 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 islanders 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 Dhanmondi 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 Uprising, 1971 Liberation War, 1990 Anti-Authority 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 Kapta 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 Habib Hirji handed over the blankets.

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

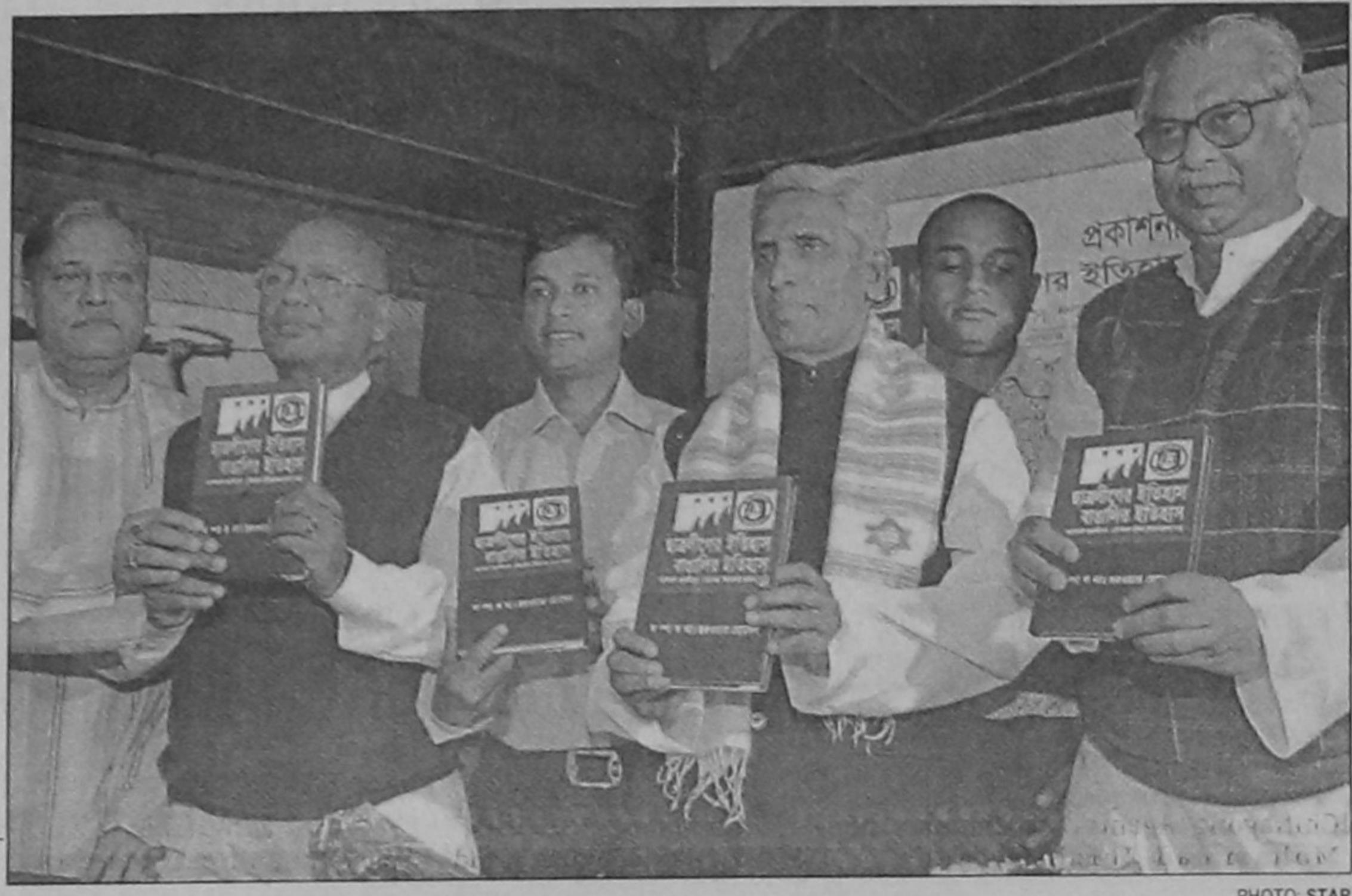
The organisation has also undertaken an assessment of the affected regions to establish reconstruction and rehabilitation needs and then determine how to be of further assistance to the cyclone victims, says a FOCUS handout.

Shahab Siddiqui and Zaiq Karim, two Bangladeshi students of Lubbock High School of Texas, USA, donated the proceeds from wristbands they sold during their vacation for Sidr victims. They handed over a cheque to Brac Deputy Executive Director Md Aminul Alam in the city recently.



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

PHOTO: STAR



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 Sivar 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 Shafiuzaaman 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 Srimangal.

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
Kulhna	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

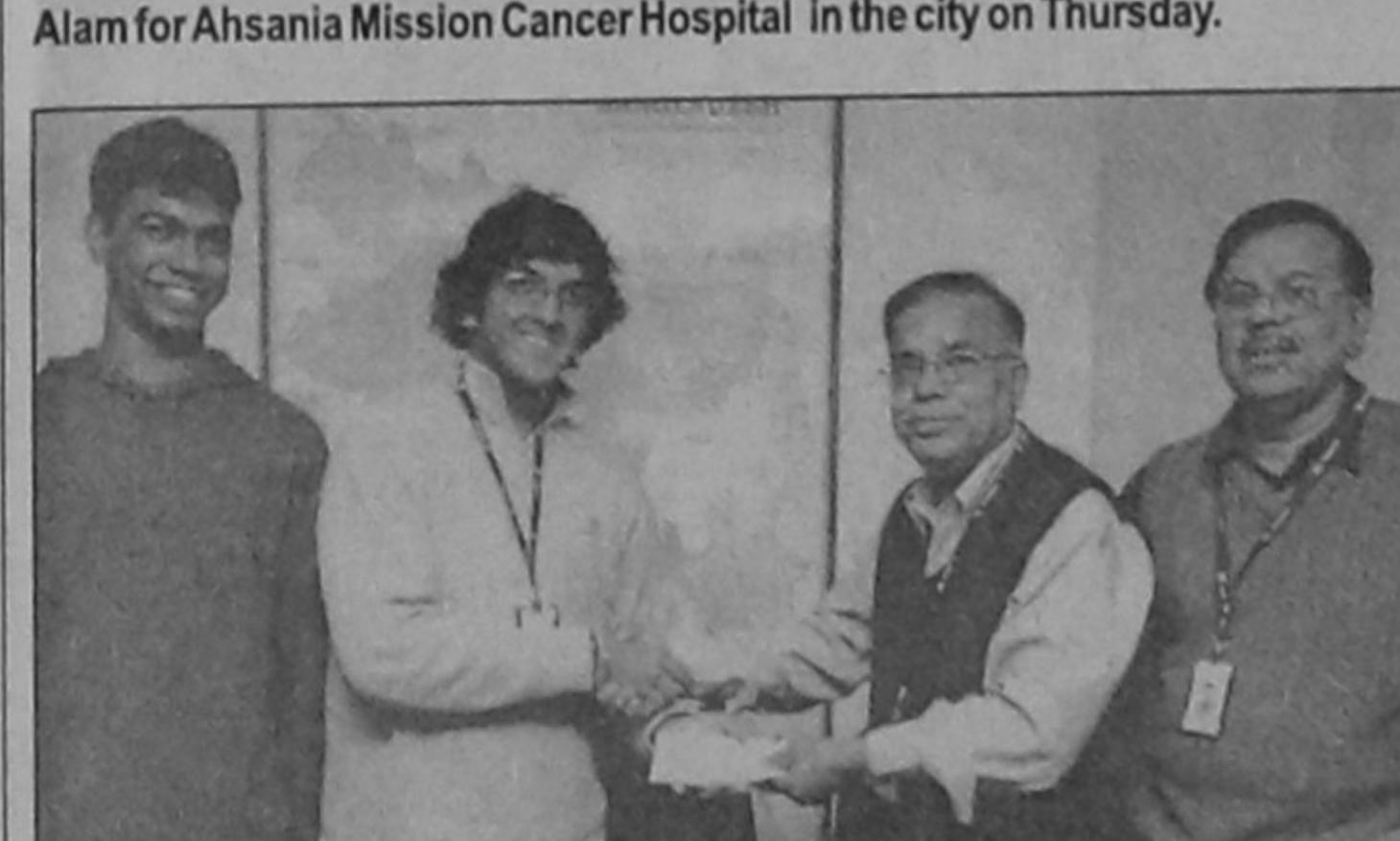


Haphazard dumping of garbage on the roadside at Ashraf Ali Road in Chittagong adds to suffering to passers-by and local people, but the authorities remain indifferent. The picture was taken yesterday.

Khandaker Mushtaq Mahiuddin on behalf of Massia Karim Foundation hands over a cheque for Tk 20 lakh to Dhaka Ahsanah Mission President Kazi Rafiqul Alam for Ahsanah Mission Cancer Hospital in the city on Thursday.



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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 Jessor, Nikhil Mondal, 15, of Magura, Asaduzzaman, 13, of Benapole, Hanchung Marma, 18, of Bandarban and her four-year-old child Khoi Marma.

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 hajat. 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 Khaled, a member of the team, said they measured the height of the peak with a GPS device.

The team led by Yahya Khan climbed the peak of 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.

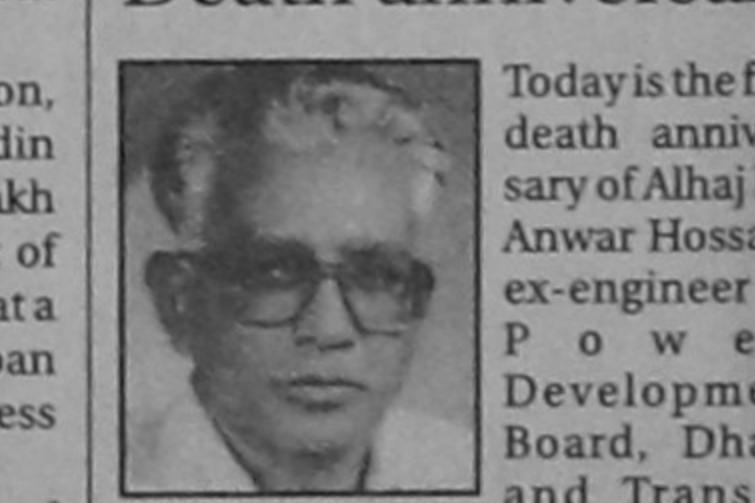
Firearms licence renewal date extended

BsS, Dhaka

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