

UN ANTI-CORRUPTION CONFERENCE

Lack of political will blamed for failure to recover stolen assets

REZAUL KARIM, from Bali, Indonesia

Requesting countries' lack of efforts and political will has been largely blamed for failures in tracing and recovering stolen assets from developed nations, speakers at an international workshop here said on Thursday.

The key problem in asset recovery efforts is not the complicated legal procedures overseas, as is widely perceived or claimed by developing countries, they said.

The workshop styled 'Mutual legal Assistance (MLA) for Asset Recovery' was part of the five-day UN Anti-Corruption Conference of the State Parties to the UN Convention Against Corruption at Bali International Convention Centre in Nusa Dua.

The high-profile conference attended by over 1000 delegates, civil society members, journalists, observers and NGO representatives ended here yesterday.

Some conference delegates, including Kuwait and the United States, presented success stories about the repatriation of illegally obtained funds from abroad.

The American delegation said the US had sent back stolen assets worth some US\$ 20 million to the Peruvian government without any

complicated legal procedures.

The money was recovered from corruption cases involving former President Alberto Fujimori and his aides.

Kuwait, meanwhile, managed to recover its stolen assets from Britain after a nine-year legal battle with convicted Kuwaiti corruptors. The repatriated assets, valued at \$548 million, were part of over \$1 trillion in stolen Kuwaiti money allegedly kept in Britain.

Speaking at the workshop, Kuwaiti delegate Mohammed al-Moqatei said the repatriation efforts only cost his government 7 percent of the recovered funds. He said his government employed special investigators to trace and take back the siphoned money.

"While the MLA is very useful, we relied on several other means to get assistance, including hiring lawyers. We employed four people to handling the case," Moqatei added.

However, an Indonesian delegate told the workshop that Indonesia had so far achieved a very little in its efforts to get back stolen money from abroad. "We have lost 90 percent cases involving state money," said Yusufidi of Indonesian Attorney General's office.

At the workshop, an American delegate said the US was willing to help any country filing for legal assistance or assets forfeiture as long as the requesting nations stated clearly what they wanted the American government to do, and explained the connection between the request and the criminal case.

"We don't need a long written request. And I think you should believe that there is someone on the other side of the phone that will answer you if you try," said Daniel Claman, a senior counsel of the assets forfeiture and money laundering section at the US Justice Department.

Indonesia has only managed to repatriate \$600,000 from Australia over a major corruption case involving the late owner of BHS Bank, Hendra Rahardja, and was waiting for \$1 million to be sent home from Hong Kong, said an Indonesian delegate.

Meanwhile, the rich and poor nations managed here yesterday to resolve their differences on how to monitor the compliance of state parties to the UN Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC).

They also settled a dispute over how developed countries could provide technical assistance to developing countries in fighting

graft.

There was lengthy discussion even on the concluding day of the 5-day UN anti-Corruption Conference. The asset recovery resolution is intended to address the difficulties of developing countries in claiming back their stolen assets, mostly from developed states.

"We have managed to solve our differences to come up with a resolution on the review of the implementation of UNCAC. Its visionary resolution, and it will benefit both developed and developing countries," said Sajid Bilal, spokesman for the developing countries G-77 group plus China.

The issues of a mechanism to finance the review activities and a reference to the existing pilot projects for the implementation of the convention were, however, dropped from the resolution.

The developing countries wanted the funding sourced from a proposed regular budget of the UN while the rich countries insisted it was to be open form a voluntary contributions.

Delegates of the developing countries said that they would work it out during the inter-session period and finalise it in Doha in 2009.



Awami League presidium members hold a meeting at the residence of AL Acting President Zillur Rahman in the city yesterday.

POST-SIDR REHABILITATION

ADB, other aid agencies to provide \$190m

UNB, Manila

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) and other aid agencies will give Bangladesh US\$190 million in loans and grants to assist in recovery from a devastating cyclone last year, the Manila-based bank said yesterday.

A loan of US\$120 million will be provided by the ADB, along with US\$60 million from the Japan Bank for International Cooperation.

The Canadian International Development Agency is also

arranging a US\$10 million grant while ADB will provide a separate US\$200,000 technical assistance grant.

Tropical Cyclone Sidr struck Bangladesh's southwest coast on November 15, killing more than 3,300 people and leaving tens of thousands homeless. The floods and cyclone affected 25 million people and caused losses of up to US\$3 billion, the ADB said.

Bangladesh has sought US\$2 billion in foreign aid to rebuild homes, schools and embank-

ments. It earlier received commitments of about US\$500 million.

About 40 percent of the funds from the ADB and its development partners will be used to finance imports of essential commodities, particularly for agriculture, to ensure quick recovery.

The rest of the money will go to rehabilitating rural and urban infrastructure such as roads and bridges, as well as flood control, drainage and irrigation facilities, the banks said.

Declare poultry industry as emergency sector

Say experts

UNB, Dhaka

The poultry industry needs to be declared as an emergency sector immediately to protect the large number of poultry farmers from an impending disaster, experts said yesterday.

They voiced concern as the booming poultry industry has been struck by avian influenza.

"Thousands of poultry farmers have been compelled to shut down their farms following a sharp fall in the prices of poultry products after the reported attack by avian influenza. Now this sector should be declared as emergency sector to save lakhs of farmers," Moshir Rahman, president of World Poultry Science Association, Bangladesh Chapter, told the media.

He said, "No one has so far died after eating poultry eggs or chickens, but people have got panicked after the media reports on an outbreak of bird flu in the country." He said poultry traders have set

up 11 check-posts across the country where medicines are being sprayed on poultry eggs and chickens before they are sent to markets.

"Only setting up of check-posts or spraying medicines on the poultry products or culling the poultry birds cannot help. People must also be made aware that avian influenza will not infect them if they eat chickens and eggs after properly boiling them," he said.

Livestock expert Dr Manjur Aziz urged the government to consider the poultry industry as the topmost priority sector as employment of thousands of farmers is at stake.

"The poultry industry has the potentials to steer Bangladesh towards rapid economic progress like the garment and shrimp industries. Now this booming sector is facing a severe threat following the attack by avian influenza. The government should take all-out efforts to tackle the threat effectively," he said.



Police arrested three youths with two firearms and nine rounds to bullets at Pallabi in the city yesterday.

'Proper utilisation of wetlands can bring about development'

BSS, Dhaka

Speakers at a seminar in the city yesterday said socioeconomic development of the people in South Asia is possible by properly utilising the wetlands and natural resources.

Planned use of wetlands can protect the country from the impacts of global climate changes and future environmental disasters along with strengthening the economy, they told the seminar at the National Press Club.

Nature and Biodiversity Conservation Society (NBCS) and TMSS jointly organised the seminar marking the World Wetlands Day-2008. Chaired by NBCS President Shariful Islam, the seminar was addressed by former chairman of Privatisation Commission Dr Enam Ahmed Chowdhury as the chief guest.

Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha (BSS) Chief Editor and Managing Director Zaglul Ahmed Chowdhury, World Peace Mission Chairman Kamol Kumar Saha and TMSS Director AKM Fazlul Haq also

addressed the seminar. Water Resources Planning Agency Director General M Inamul Haq, Stamford University Civil Engineering Department Chairman Prof Dr M Zahurul Islam and Shahjalal Science and Technology University Civil and Environmental Engineering Department Head Dr Mohammad Aktarul Islam Chowdhury presented papers on the subject.

The speakers said sound wetlands could contribute to a healthy and sustainable economic condition. Therefore, the wetlands should be utilised for welfare of the people by protecting those from ruin and preserving biodiversity through proper and time-befitting work plans.

Dr Enam Ahmed Chowdhury said a coordinated plan would have to be adopted for preservation of wetlands and natural resources.

Steps should be taken at the state level and awareness created among the people of all strata on the issue to

Sidr-affected students get school kits

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Society for People's Actions In Change and Equity (SPACE), a non-government organisation, yesterday distributed 400 school kits among the Sidr-affected students and 400 pieces of winter clothing among the elderly poor people at Moraleganj in Bagerhat.

The SPACE distributed school bags, pencils, sharpeners and khadas among the students of government primary schools, high school and some NGO-run schools so that the students can return to their institutions, a press release said.

DHAKA TODAY

Roundtable

Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust organises a roundtable on accidents on naval routes and legal measures. Venue: Biam Foundation. Time: 9:00am.

Seminar

Children's Film Society, Bangladesh organises a seminar on children's film. Venue: Public Library seminar room. Time: 10:00am.

Workshop

Crime Reporters Association of Bangladesh and Bangladesh Manobadhikar Bastobayon Sangstha jointly organise a workshop to present a research findings on 'Study on duties and obligation of the law-enforcing institute'. Venue: Dhaka Reporters Unity. Time: 9:30am.

Seminar

Lok, a magazine in Bangla language, organises a seminar on contemporary Bangla poetry. Venue: BCS Admin Academy auditorium. Time: 10:00am.

Odhikar demands lifting of emergency to ensure freedom of media

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Odhikar, a human rights organisation, yesterday demanded immediate lifting of the state of emergency to ensure freedom of the media and an end to extra-judicial killing and torture.

In a press release Odhikar expressed its deep concern over the ban on two talk show programmes of a private television channel and said the imposition of Emergency Power Rules curtails the rights of the citizens.

It also demanded release of all political activists, workers and peasants and trials of arrestees respecting their human rights, and a halt to indiscriminate arrests and custodial deaths.

The organisation also expressed concern over the deteriorating law and order situation.

RAPE OF SCHOOLGIRL

Rights activists demand punishment to rapists

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Two women's organisations yesterday formed a human chain in the city demanding arrest and exemplary punishment to the rapists of a schoolgirl.

They also demanded proper treatment of the victim who is still seriously ill.

The human chain was organised jointly by the local units of Bangladesh Mahila Parishad and Bangladesh Mahila Ainjibi Samity.

District President of Mahila Parishad Abida Raihan Buli, Vice-president Shahin Akhtar, General Secretary Kalpana Roy, Legal Aid Secretary Shakila Islam and women lawyers Shamima Khanam, Khairun Nahar Kaji and Rajshahi City Corporation's Ward Commissioner Shahna Begum Shikha took part in human chain.

Sources said local drug peddler Sajenur Bewa of Godagari Rail Bazar took the schoolgirl of Srimantapur village to her home on January 9.

On the following day, Sajenur along with her two sons Rakib and Bablu got the girl married with another drug peddler Asaduzzaman Rubel of Achua village through a fake court-affidavit.

Then the gang took the girl to Savar in Dhaka and raped her one after another. The rapists also took video of the rape scenes and tried to sell her to an Indian trafficker at Tk31 lakh.

The organisations alleged that police did not take any action despite they were informed.

The victim's father lodged a case with Godagari Model Police Station on January 17 accusing seven people.

As police remained inactive, the victim's father himself rescued her daughter braving risks on his life just before she was trafficked to India.

The rescued girl was admitted to One Stop Crisis Centre of Rajshahi Medical College and Hospital on January 20 and police recorded her statement there.

Officer-in-Charge of Godagari Police Station said they have arrested two accused Asraf Ali and her wife Aleya Begum in this connection.

Two powerful bombs seized, one held

UNB, Chuadanga

Members of the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) recovered two powerful bombs at Muslimpara in the town last night.

Acting on a tip-off, the Rab members conducted a raid on a banana garden at about 8:30pm and seized the two bombs, each weighing 2kg.

They also picked up a youth, Ali Hossain, as he was suspiciously moving in the area at the time. He was taken to local Army camp for interrogation.

Jamalpur Bar Assoc executives

BSS, Jamalpur

Adv Muhammad Baqi Billah and Adv Md Shafiqul Islam were elected president and general secretary of Jamalpur District Bar Association on Thursday.

The election to the 15-member executive committee for 2008 was held at the District Bar Association Bhawan.

Other office-bearers are: Vice-presidents Adv Md Khwaja Nazim Uddin and Adv Md Ashraf Haque, Assistance General Secretaries Adv Md Ahsanuzzaman and Adv Md Shafiqul Islam, Auditor Adv Md Rafiqul Islam, Library and Literary Secretary Adv Md Ismail Hossain and Cultural and Sports Secretary Adv Shah Md Enayet Hossain.

The elected executive committee members are: Adv Md Ayub Ali, Adv Md Abdur Rahman, Adv Md Khairul Islam, Adv Md Mubarak Hossain, Adv Md Jalal Uddin and Adv SM Rafiqul Alam.



Foreign Adviser Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury visits the Bogra Technical Training Centre yesterday.

Steps underway for more manpower export to Korea, Europe, America

Says foreign adviser

BSS, Bogra

Foreign Adviser Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury yesterday directed the authorities concerned to introduce English and Korean language courses in all technical training centres (TTCs) of the country to help send more manpower abroad.

The adviser gave the directive during his visit to Bogra Technical Training Centre on the first leg of his two-day tour to northern region of the country.

Obituary

RU CORRESPONDENT

Abul Kalam Azad, a freedom fighter and assistant commander of the Muktiyoddha Sangsad Command of Rajshahi district unit, passed away due to a cardiac arrest at Hetem Kha in the city on Thursday at the age of 55.

He left behind his wife, one son, one daughter and a host of admirers to mourn his death.

He was buried with state honour at Hetem Kha graveyard of Rajshahi city after namaz-e-janaza at Hetem Kha Boro Mosque premises after Jumma prayers yesterday.

Rajshahi district unit and city unit of Muktiyoddha Sangsad in separate messages expressed their deep shock at his death and conveyed sympathy to the members of the brave family.

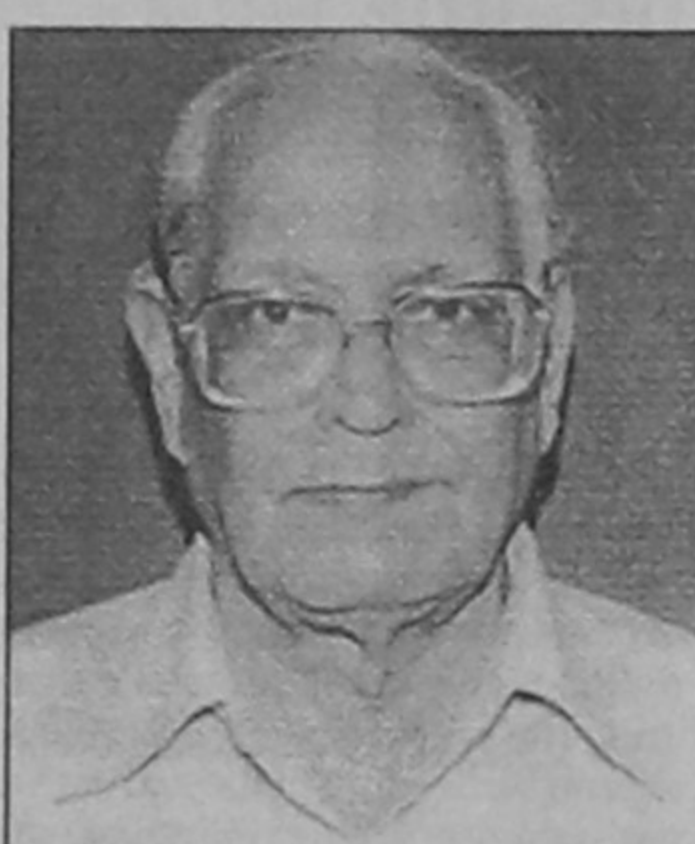
Shamsul Islam

Shamsul Islam, a former manager of Unilever Bangladesh, passed away on Wednesday at the age of 66, says a press release.

He was buried at Banani graveyard after namaz-e-janaza at Gulshan Azad Mosque on Wednesday.

His qulhwani will be held tomorrow after Asr prayers at his residence (Dusk View Apartment, House-40, Road-25, Gulshan-1) in the city.

Relatives, friends and admirers have been requested to attend the qulhwani and pray for salvation of the departed soul.



Death anniversary of Justice Debesh today

Today is the fourth death anniversary of Justice Debesh Bhattacharya, an eminent jurist and champion of human rights, says a press release.

On the occasion, Justice Debesh Bhattacharya Foundation will distribute warm clothes and food among the destitute in Ellenga, Tangail.

Justice Bhattacharya is widely remembered for his involvement in defending democratic and human rights. Because of his involvement in political activism, Debesh Bhattacharya, then an advocate at Mymensingh district court, was put in jail by the Muslim League government as a security prisoner during 1949-50.

After independence, Bhattacharya, who was also a senior advocate of the Supreme Court of Pakistan, was appointed a judge of the newly established Bangladesh High Court in January 1972. He was elevated to the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court in June 1975 and retired from the bench in 1977. He proved himself to be an outstanding jurist and some of his verdicts had been historically precedent setting judgments.

Justice Bhattacharya was associated with a number of social and civil society organisations. He was a member of the Gono Adalat (people's court) set up to try the war criminals of 1971.

He has established a number of educational institutions at his home village where he carried out philanthropic activities. He has published a number of monographs, including an anthology of poems.



Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Chandpur

The second death anniversary of Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury, a veteran parliamentarian and organiser of the liberation war, will be observed today.

On the occasion, Qurankhwani, milad mahfil and special prayer have been arranged after Asr prayers at his ancestral home in Puran Bazar of Chandpur, said family sources.



Temperature may fall

UNB, Dhaka

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

Mild cold wave, which is sweeping over Rajshahi division, may sweep the regions of Jessore, Kushtia, Faridpur, Tangail and Mymensingh, Met Office said.

Light to moderate fog may occur over the river basins of the country during early morning, it said, adding that night temperature may fall slightly over Rajshahi, Dhaka and Sylhet divisions and the regions of Jessore, Kushtia and Comilla and may remain nearly unchanged elsewhere over the country.

Yesterday's highest temperature of 26.0 degree Celsius was recorded at Cox's Bazar and the lowest of 08.2 degrees at Rangpur and Dinajpur.

The sun sets in the capital at 5:45pm today and rises at 6:39am 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	22.1	13.6	87	43
Chittagong	24.2	14.5	90	63
Rajshahi	20.8	08.6	99	61
Khulna	22.5	13.2	89	59
Barisal	22.7	12.2	91	60
Sylhet	22.5	12.0	97	54
Cox's Bazar	26.0	15.5	82	69