

ROUNDTABLE ON 'FUTURE SAFETY OF SUNDARBANS'

Call to establish people's right to forest

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Sundarbans, the largest mangrove forest in the world, and other forests in the country cannot be protected unless the people's right to the forest is established. Raja Debashish Roy, special assistant to the chief adviser, said this at a roundtable on 'Future safety of Sundarbans' organised by the Prothom Alo at its office in the city. He said the caretaker government can initiate the steps towards establishing this right, but the next elected government should do the rest of the work to this end. There might be debate about

the extent of the people's right to forest, but this right must be recognised, he said, adding that the country can apply the experiences of Nepal or India in this regard. Raja Debashish also stressed the need to increase the manpower of the forest department and their salaries and other benefits in order to protect the forests. He also called for well thought-out plans for the development of cyclone Sidr-ravaged Sundarbans. At the beginning of the roundtable, Editor of the Prothom Alo Matur Rahman said the roundtable is aimed at disseminating information about the Sundarbans and raising awareness among the people with a view to

protecting the largest mangrove forest. Environmentalist and water expert Dr Ainun Nishat, founder of Sundarbans Research Centre Dr Abdur Rahman, Director of Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association Syeda Rizwana Hasan, Joint Secretary Morteza Ahmed of forest and environment ministry, Chief Conservator of Forest AKM Shamsuddin, Dr Mostafa Firoz of Jahangirnagar University and Sundarbans researcher Khasru Chowdhury also spoke at the roundtable moderated by Deputy Editor of the Prothom Alo Sazzad Sharif.



PHOTO: STAR

Participants at a roundtable on 'Future safety of Sundarbans' organised by the Prothom Alo at its office in the city yesterday. From left are Syeda Rizwana Hasan, Dr Mostafa Firoz, AKM Shamsuddin, Dr Ainun Nishat, Raja Debashish Roy, Morteza Ahmed, Dr Abdur Rahman and Khasru Chowdhury.

Muggers snatch Tk 4,000, mobile phone from costume designer

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Muggers took away mobile phone, Tk 4,000 and other valuables from a costume designer at Motijheel in the city when she was returning home at Khilgaon from her office by a rickshaw last night. When her rickshaw was crossing the road between Notre Dam College and Motijheel Ideal School and College at around 10:00pm, a taxicab came close to her and the muggers who were in the cab snatched her bag before speeding away, said the victim, Naznin Jahan Ovi. She was carrying the cellphone, money, official documents and other valuables in the bag, said Naznin who works with an advertising firm. Motijheel police said they sent forces to the spot, but none was arrested.

UK education exhibition begins Feb 14

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The 10th education UK exhibition will begin in the city on February 14 and in Chittagong on February 18. British Council will organise the exhibition. Representatives from 34 UK universities and colleges will participate in the exhibition. Prof Nazrul Islam, chairman of University Grants Commission, will inaugurate the exhibition on February 14. The three-day exhibition will be held at Dhaka Sheraton Hotel in Dhaka and two-day exhibition at Peninsula Hotel in Chittagong. The exhibition will remain open everyday from 2:00pm to 8:00pm and entry fee has been fixed at Tk 60 each person.

Workshop on UNCRC Alternative Report today

A sharing workshop with diverse groups of disadvantaged children on UNCRC (United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child) Alternative Report by Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF) and its partner organisations will be held today at Biam hall in the city, says a press release. The objectives of the workshop are to share the findings of the alternative report and collect necessary input and recommendations from the children in order to draw a more comprehensive picture of the children's situation in Bangladesh. About 60 children from different partner organisations of MJF will take part in the workshop. Representation from hazardous child worker, street children, children in conflict and other disadvantaged population will also be ensured. The workshop will continue from 3:00pm to 5:00pm.

No link between mobile phone use and cancer

AFP, Paris

Japanese scientists looking at patients with brain tumours say they can find no evidence to support fears that using a mobile phone boosts the risk of cerebral cancer. In a study published on Tuesday in the British Journal of Cancer, researchers led by Naohito Yamaguchi compared the history of mobile phone use in 322 brain cancer patients with 683 healthy people living in Tokyo. "We studied the radiation emitted from various types of mobile phones and placed them into one of four categories relating to radiation strength," said Yamaguchi. "We then analysed how they would affect different areas of the brain, taking into account the organ's complex structure." He added: "Using our newly developed and more accurate techniques, we found no association

between mobile phone use and cancer, providing more evidence to suggest they don't cause brain cancer. Previous studies into mobile phone use have thrown up conflicting findings, although the biggest investigation, covering 420,000 people and spanning in some cases more than a decade of phone use, failed to find a cancer connection. Yamaguchi, from the Tokyo Women's Medical University, looked at patients with three types of brain cancer -- glioma, meningioma and pituitary adenoma -- which comprise around 85 percent of all brain tumours. Several countries have guidelines such as advising the public to make shorter calls on mobile phones, use hands-free sets and let children only make essential calls in order to limit exposure to electromagnetic energy.



PHOTO: STAR

Dr June Rollinson, director, British Council, speaks at a press conference on the 10th Education UK Exhibition at Sheraton Hotel in the city yesterday.

WEATHER TODAY

Dry weather likely

UNB, Dhaka

Weather is likely to remain mainly dry with partly cloudy sky over the country in the next 12 hours until 6:00pm today. Light rain or drizzle is likely at one or two places over Barisal, Khulna and Rajshahi divisions and the regions of Tangail and Mymensingh, Met Office said. Light to moderate fog may occur over the river basins of the country during early morning, it said, predicting slight rise in the night temperature over the country. Highest temperature 30.0 degrees Celsius was recorded yesterday at Cox's Bazar and lowest 11.0 degrees Celsius at Srimongal. The sun sets in the capital at 5:48pm today and rises at 6:37am tomorrow. 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	28.0	16.5	56	67
Chittagong	27.0	16.2	73	59
Rajshahi	28.2	15.2	80	74
Khulna	28.0	17.3	70	69
Barisal	28.0	15.5	79	67
Sylhet	27.6	13.8	58	49
Cox's Bazar	30.0	16.8	65	55

DOWRY Housewife succumbs to burn injuries

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A housewife who was set to fire allegedly by her husband about a month ago succumbed to her burn injuries at a city hospital yesterday morning. The deceased was identified as Mousumi Barua, 22, daughter of Uttam Barua of Potia in Chittagong. Police arrested Mousumi's husband Dilip Barua and his brother Kishor Barua from their Khilbaritek residence under Badda Police Station in this connection. Police said Sajju set Mousumi ablaze on January 9 when her father failed to pay a dowry of Tk 80,000. She was admitted to Shahabuddin Medical College Hospital in Gulshan. Mousumi's sister Nishita Barua told reporters at the hospital that Sajju set her sister to fire following a quarrel over the dowry. Earlier, her father paid Tk 30,000, Nishita alleged.

Assault case filed against 11 JCD activists

DU CORRESPONDENT

A student of Dhaka University filed an assault case against 11 fellow students, including three leaders of the Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD), last night. All the accused are supporters of pro-Khaleda faction of BNP. Maruf, a third year honours student of Islamic studies department, filed the case with Shahbagh Police Station accusing the 11 students of beating him up at Shahbagh at around 8:00pm on the day. He belongs to pro-reformist group of BNP. The 11 students beat him up as a sequel to a scuffle between the students of two factions at Zia Hall on Tuesday. The accused include DU JCD General Secretary Saiful Islam Firoz and Joint Secretaries Akramul Hasan and Sajedul Karim Nirab.

Man killed in city as train hits car

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A man was killed when a speedy intercity train hit a private car at Staff Road level crossing in the city's Banani area last evening. The body could not be identified. Government Railway Police quoting witnesses said the Mymensingh-bound Brahmaputra Express hit the private car when its driver was trying to cross the level crossing at 6:45pm ignoring the signal. The police said the car driver drove the car through the wrong side although the gateman downed the iron bar to stop vehicular movement. Officer-in-Charge of GRP Station at Kamalapur Mahabubur Rahman said the private car was blown around 100 metres away and was completely twisted while the body was mutilated. The witnesses also said moments before the train hit the car, another passenger got down from it and ran away.

Air chief hands over report on Sidr relief to president

BSS, Dhaka

Chief of Bangladesh Air Force Air Marshal Shah Mohammad Ziaur Rahman yesterday called on President Iajuddin Ahmed at Bangabhaban and handed over a report on Sidr relief operation by the air force. During the call on, air chief apprised the president of different aspects of the relief operation and post cyclone rehabilitation work including establishing cyclone monitoring cell, arranging reconnaissance and observation flight, relief operation, transportation of relief material by helicopters and transport aircraft and other supporting activities.

DHAKA TODAY

Conference
The inaugural ceremony of the first national conference of National Children Taskforce (NCTF) will be held. Venue: LGED Bhaban. Time: 10:00am.

Seminar
Disaster Management Bureau and UNDP jointly organise a seminar on Sidr and early recovery action plan. Venue: Brac Centre conference room. Time: 9:00am.

Premiere show
The premiere show of the films 'Mukto Jibon' and 'Fera' will be held. Venue: Spectra Convention Centre. Time: 10:00am.



PHOTO: STAR

Hua Du, country director, Bangladesh Resident Mission, Asian Development Bank, speaks at a roundtable on 'Energy Alternatives for Bangladesh' at the National Press Club in the city yesterday. On her right are Erich Otto Gomm and Farid Hossain and on her left is Mohammad Mohsin.

Tender of Tk 154cr approved for Pangaon ICT

UNB, Dhaka

The Council of Advisers committee on Public Purchase yesterday approved a tender of Tk 154 crore for construction of jetty, RCC yard, marshalling yard and river bank protection of Pangaon Inland Container River Terminal (ICT). The committee also approved import of 30,000 tons of rock phosphate for the TSP Complex and the freight charges for importing 50,000 tons of urea fertiliser from the UAE.

Advisers and senior officials concerned were present at the meeting at the Planning Ministry with Finance and Planning Adviser Dr Mirza Azizul Islam in the chair. Dr Aziz told reporters after the meeting that they also reviewed a proposal for the TSP Complex and the freight charges for importing 50,000 tons of urea fertiliser from the UAE. Advisers and senior officials concerned were present at the meeting at the Planning Ministry with Finance and Planning Adviser Dr Mirza Azizul Islam in the chair. Dr Aziz told reporters after the meeting that they also reviewed a

proposal for setting up an Effluent Treatment Plant (ETP) for Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation (BSCIC) and sent it back to the Industries Ministry for further review. The purchase committee also sent back two proposals for import of 50,000 tons of TSP fertiliser and 45,000 tons of MOP fertiliser.

Judgment hailed

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Against the verdict with the Appellate Division, Zillur said, "I firmly believe we would get justice in the Appellate Division as well." Referring to a question that fresh charges have been brought against the former prime minister, the AL leader said that Hasina could not be kept behind bars through filing "false cases" as truth always wins. AL leaders Motia Chowdhury, Rahmat Ali, Abdul Mannan Khan, Dr Dipu Moni, among others met Zillur at his residence after yesterday's verdict. Hailing the HC judgement, Hasina's political secretary Saber Hossain Chowdhury said that the public perception that Sheikh Hasina is not guilty of the charges brought against her has now strengthened further. He, however, put emphasis on seeing that the justice is done completely and that the AL chief is released.

Asked to comment, joint secretary general of pro-Khaleda Zia faction of BNP Nazrul Islam Khan said that the secretary general of the party would make its position clear over the matter. Meanwhile, acting office secretary of the same faction Ruhul Kabir Rizvi Ahmed said that fair trial has been established through the judgement. Welcoming the verdict, Acting President of Jatiya Party (JP) Anisul Islam Mahmud said that due process of law has been followed in the judgement. Workers' Party President Rashed Khan Menon observed that the Constitution has been upheld through the verdict. "Now there is no reason to keep Sheikh Hasina detained," Menon told The Daily Star. The government should learn something from the judgement and govern the country in a constitutional way, he added. Bangladesh Islamic Oikya Jote Chairman Misbaur Rahman

Chowdhury said the verdict would remain remarkable in the history of the country. In a press statement, he said the government should release the AL president without further delay. Welcoming the verdict, former president of Dhaka University Teachers' Association (Duta) Prof AAMS Arefin Siddique said that they believe that the law has taken its own course. "The government should free Sheikh Hasina today (yesterday) and through her release it will be proved that the separated judiciary is independent," he told The Daily Star adding that no one is above the law, whether it is the government or any individual. Meanwhile, City unit AL and different front organisations of the party will arrange special prayers today welcoming the judgement.

Contraband drugs worth Tk 1 cr seized

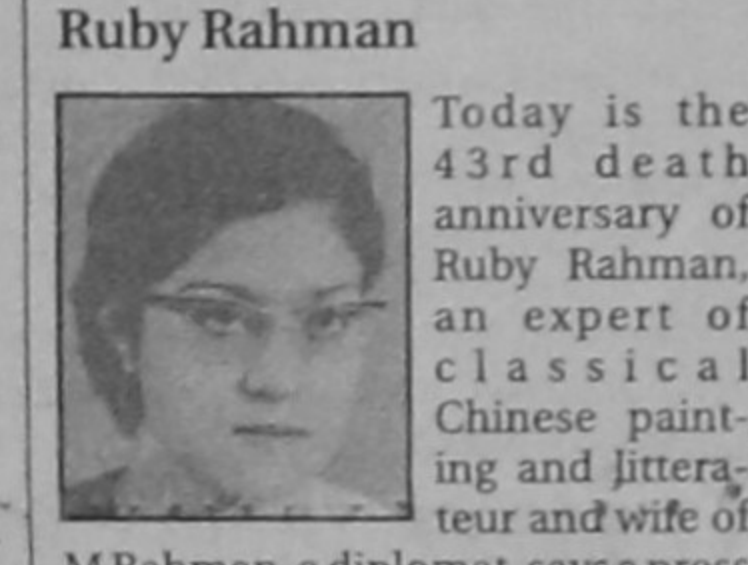
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) seized contraband drugs worth about Tk 1 crore during raids on two drug stores at the Mitford Medicine Market in the city yesterday. Acting on a tip-off, a Rab-10 team conducted raids on Mamun Medical and Simanta Enterprise at the Habib Market from 2:00pm to 7:00pm and seized the contraband medicines, some of which are manufactured in Pakistan and India, said a Rab official, preferring anonymity. The Rab members also arrested two persons -- Kamal Barman, owner of the Simanta Enterprise, and Biplob Sarkar Joy, an employee of Mamun Medical.



Khairul Kabir's 11th anniversary of death today

Today is the 11th death anniversary of eminent journalist Khairul Kabir, founder editor of the daily Sangbad, says a press release. Kabir died in Singapore on February 7, 1997 due to old age complications. He was also the founder and first life member of National Press Club. On the occasion, a milad mahfil will be held at his ancestral home in Ghorasal today to pray for the salvation of the departed soul. Khairul Kabir was one of the authors of the historic 'Six-point', which was the basis of the demand for autonomy for the East Pakistan.



Today is the 43rd death anniversary of Ruby Rahman, an expert of classical Chinese painting and litterateur and wife of M Rahman, a diplomat, says a press release. On the occasion, Qurankhwani and milad mahfil will be held at High Court Mazar in the city. She was killed in a road accident in Lebanon. Her 10 paintings were preserved in the National Museum. Her books titled 'Chinese Fairy Tales' and 'Bichitritra' achieved enormous popularity.



Obituary

MA Rashid, a former civil servant, passed away in New York due to old-age complications on February 2, the day after his 82nd birthday. He is survived by his daughter Afroza and five sons -- Anwar, Haroun, Mamun, Amin and Hamid. His namaz-e-janaza will be held today after Zohr prayers at the Sector-6 Jame Mosque in Uttara. His qulqhwani will be held on January 8 at House-1, Road-7/C, Sector-6, Uttara Model Town, Dhaka (phone-8954155). Well-wishers, friends and relatives are requested to attend the qul and pray for the salvation of his departed soul.

Tender for 3rd round bidding

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to deal with the matters like extension of any block with any other blocks or reserves of any neighbouring country. He said after floating tender, the government will make its highest possible effort to complete the bidding as soon as possible and award the contract by August-October 2008 to utilise the next dry season for offshore exploration work. "Maybe, this is a very tight timeframe but I'll try to make it happen by advancing the schedule," he told reporters in the energy ministry's conference room. The Council of Advisers on Tuesday night approved the model PSC and other relevant documents for international tender. After completion of the bidding round, the winning bidders will sign contract on the basis of the model PSC to conduct their exploration, implement development plan and extract oil and gas in the country's maritime area. Under the model PSC, the country's maritime area has been divided into 28 blocks for the hydrocarbon exploration. Of the blocks, eight are located in the

shallow waters while the rest in the deep-sea area. For the shallow blocks, a total of eight years time will be given to the contractors and they will have to conduct exploration within three years as initial period. Then another two years will be given for extended exploration and another two years for second-time extension. For the deep-sea blocks in the Bay of Bengal, the contractors will get a total of nine years to carry out exploration work. Of the time, five years will be given for initial exploration and then it will be extended in two phases. They will get two years as first extension and another two years as second extension. On completion of the exploration, the contractor will submit a 25-year development plan for gas field and 20-year plan for oil field. However, they can extend the plan period by an additional five years provided Petrobangla's consent. The first round of bidding for striking hydrocarbons in the country was held in 1994. The second round took place in 1998 with the whole country's offshore and onshore areas divided into 22

blocks. A total of eight blocks were allocated to international oil companies (IOCs) under a number of production-sharing contracts (PSCs) for oil and gas exploration under the second-round bidding. The move for third-round bidding was initiated during the immediate-past BNP-led alliance government. But after a break of about 10 years from the second-round bidding, the third round finally got a physical move under the caretaker government as it approved the model PSC. There are a number of differences between the PSC and the model PSC. Under the model PSC, all but three things -- bank guarantee, profit sharing and fiscal incentives -- will be settled through the bidding. "We kept little scope for negotiation... Most of the things will be settled through bidding process," said Energy Secretary Mohammad Mohsin, who was present at the briefing.

Khaleda lawyers file petition

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They were charged with breaching tender conditions in appointing Global Agro Trade (Private) Company Ltd (Gatco), an indenting house, for container handling at the Dhaka Inland Container Depot (ICD) and at the restricted area of Chittagong Port ICD yard despite its inexperience and lack of skill. The co-accused in the case are ex-chairman of Chittagong Port Authority (CPA) commodore (ret) Zulfqar Ali and AMM Shahadat Hossain, ex-director (transport) of CPA AM Sanwar Hossain, former chief finance and accounts officer of CPA Ahmed Abul Qasem, former CPA director Lutful Kabir, son of former shipping minister and BNP leader Col (ret) Akbar Hossain, Ismail Hossain Saimon, Gatco directors Syed Galib Ahmed, Syed Tanveer Ahmed and AKM Musa Kajol and Akbar's wife Jahanara Ansar and one Ehsan Yusuf.

Of them, Musa Kajol, Akbar's wife Jahanara Ansar and Ehsan Yusuf are on the run while the others are now in jail. NIKO CASE The same court gave the ACC permission to interrogate Mamun, a close friend of detained BNP Senior Joint Secretary General Tarique Rahman, at the jail gate after ACC Assistant Director SM Sahidur Rahman, the investigation officer (IO) of the case, submitted a petition. On Monday, Mamun was shown arrested in the case based on the confessional statement of detained former Dhaka Club president Selim Bhuiyan who implicated him with the Niko scam. Selim, in his statement to a magistrate on January 15, disclosed names of several people allegedly involved with the crime. Selim also admitted that all the dealings between Bangladesh government and the Canadian energy company Niko were made

through him. The case, in which Khaleda Zia and five other people are also implicated, was filed with Tejgaon Police Station on December 9 last year in connection with awarding the gas exploration deal to the Canadian company that caused huge losses to the state. The other accused are former law minister Moudud Ahmed, former state minister for energy AKM Mosharraf Hossain, former energy secretary Towfiq-e-Elahi Chowdhury, former acting energy secretary Khandaker Shahidul Islam, and vice-president (South Asia) of Niko Resources Bangladesh Ltd Kashem Sharif. Khaleda, Moudud and Mosharraf were shown arrested in the case on December 30. In the case statement, ACC Assistant Director Mahubul Alam said Khaleda Zia, who was the custodian of the country's wealth, in her capacity as prime minister criminally violated her oath,

abused power and resorted to corruption to give Niko the opportunity to extract gas worth Tk 10,000 crore. The complainant said the other accused were complicit in the illegal deal. CASE AGAINST MILON Metropolitan Magistrate Shahin Uddin passed the remand order after Sub-inspector (SI) Mahmud produced Milon before the court with a seven-day remand prayer for interrogation. Meantime, Shahbagh police produced Milon before the court yesterday on completion of his two-day remand in connection with another case filed for extorting Tk 5.5 lakh from a businessman. Sheikh Raihan Ahmed, executive officer of Seven Circle, filed the case with Gulshan police on January 22 against Milon in connection with extorting Tk 56 lakh from him.