

# Respect for HR necessary to ensure peace, democracy

## Speakers tell EU jamboree

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Respect for human rights is a must to ensure peace and democracy in a society, said the speakers at a jamboree marking the 60th anniversary of the adoption of universal declaration on human rights yesterday.

European Union Ambassador Stefan Frowein said, "I also think a strong case can be made that respect for human rights is part and parcel of good governance and, as such, conducive to the peaceful and democratic evolution of society."

Welcoming the newly formed National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), he said as a new defender of the victims of human rights violations, the commission would face many challenges and it requires courage, wisdom, a strong sense of independence and integrity in discharging its duties.

The jamboree titled 'EU Human Rights Jamboree' was organised by the delegation of the European Commission to Bangladesh at a city centre.

The EU envoy further said that protection of the freedom of media and avoidance of intimidation and harassment



National Human Rights Commission Chairman Justice Amirul Kabir Chowdhury inaugurates a fair on human rights at the Spectra Convention Centre in the city yesterday.

of journalists are also an important benchmark for human rights values.

"We should never forget that journalists are also human rights defenders. They are often in the front line when it comes to voicing support for democratic values and reflecting an accurate picture of developments in a given country," Stefan Frowein said.

Inaugurating a fair on human rights at the centre,

NHRC Chairman Justice Amirul Kabir Chowdhury said, "Human rights are linked to the practice of democracy, rule of law and pursuit of justice in a society."

Urging authorities to ensure independent functioning of NHRC, Nijera Kori Coordinator Khushi Kabir said, "The commission must have the mechanism to ensure its actual functioning rather than just be a decorative body.

It is necessary to ensure that its independent functioning is not intimidated and influenced in anyway."

Several NGOs have set up stalls at the fair venue showcasing their publications on human rights issues, including posters, books and magazines.

The EC has a plan to spend 130 million on governance and human rights for the period 2007-2013.

# Depression over Bay moves westwards

UNB, Dhaka

The depression over south-west Bay moved slightly westwards over the same area at 3:00pm yesterday.

A special Met Office bulletin said it was centered about 1845 kms south west of Chittagong port, 1775 kms southwest of Cox's Bazar port and 1725 kms southwest of Monglaport.

"It is likely to move in a west-northwesterly direction further," it said.

Maximum sustained wind speed within 44kms of the depression centre is about 40kph rising to 50kph in gusts/squalls. Sea will remain moderate near the system.

Maritime ports of Chittagong, Cox's Bazar and Mongla have been advised to hoist distant cautionary signal number one.

All fishing boats and trawlers over north Bay have been advised to remain close to the coast and proceed with caution until further notice. They are also advised not to venture into the deep sea.

# Take steps to cut trade gap

## President urges Malaysian govt

UNB, Dhaka

President Iajuddin Ahmed has urged the Malaysian government to take effective steps for reducing the existing trade gap between Bangladesh and Malaysia.

The President's request came when outgoing Malaysian Ambassador to Bangladesh Dato Abdul Malek Bin Abdul Aziz made a farewell call on him at Bangabhaban in the city yesterday.

Iajuddin also called upon the Malaysian investors to invest in Bangladesh's construction, power plant, waste management, ICT, tourism, machin-

ery and industrial sectors, as presently very congenial investment atmosphere is prevailing in the country. He mentioned that thousands of Bangladeshis are currently working in Malaysia and urged the Malaysian government to recruit more skilled workforce from Bangladesh.

He conveyed his sincere wishes and best regards to the King and the prime minister of Malaysia and also invited them to visit Bangladesh.

Ambassador Abdul Malek stated that the existing bilateral relations between Malaysia and Bangladesh are excellent and it would be further strengthened in future.

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Deputy chief of the liberation war and chief of the Sector Commanders' Forum Air Vice Marshal (ret'd) AK Khandaker speaks at a press conference at Dhaka Reporters' Unity in the city yesterday. On his right is Lt Gen (ret'd) KM Shafiqullah and on his left is Lt Gen (ret'd) CR Dutta.

# Loan default charge baseless

## Claims AK Khandaker

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Deputy chief of the liberation war and an Awami League nominee Air Vice Marshal (ret'd) AK Khandaker yesterday said loan default charge against him, for which his nomination was rejected, was illegal and based on partiality.

Chief of the Sector Commanders' Forum (SCF) also said the case filed by IFIC Bank against him goes against the banking laws. Banking Company Act 1991.

"I did not take any loan on behalf of Air Parabat Ltd from the IFIC Bank and that's why, there is no legality to file any loan default case against me," he told reporters at a press conference at Dhaka Reporters' Unity in the city.

Election Commission (EC) on December 4 cancelled Khandaker's nomination paper because of loan defaulter.

The concerned returning officer said Khandaker, who filed nomination paper for Pabna-2, had taken loans from IFIC Bank's Motijheel branch as a director of Air Parabat and defaulted on payment of Tk 14 crore, for which the bank had filed a case against him.

The deputy chief of the liberation war said, "I had not even given any letter or notice informing that I am a loan defaulter."

From the beginning to end, he was remaining in the dark about the case, the former air chief said he had filed an appeal against the ruling of the EC. "I will challenge the IFIC case in the court," he vowed.

"I resigned from Air Parabat as one of its directors before it took loan from IFIC bank," he added.

Former Bangladesh Bank deputy governor and Bangladesh Krishi Bank chairman Ibrahim Khaled said there is no legal basis of the loan default case against AK Khandaker.

"Such a case cannot be filed under loan default laws," he added.

Former army chief and one of the SCF KM Shafiqullah said cancellation of the nomination paper of AK Khandaker is a part of conspiracy.

Khandaker told reporters that he gained the Air Parabat directorship through a 1.25 percent share in the airline, adding, "One cannot be considered for taking of the financial burden of a company if he or she owns less than 20 percent share."

"I did not sign in any financial documents of the organisation and did not become a party to any loan," he further said.

British High Commission in Dhaka and its office in Sylhet will remain closed to the public on December 9, 10 due to Eid-ul-Azha, says a press release.

# Agyan party members become active

## 294 attacked in 18 days

MM RAHMAN and SHAHEEN MOLLAH

Members of Agyan party, who rob people after drugging them, have become active in the capital and on different routes to the capital ahead of Eid-ul-Azha.

Several hospitals, including Dhaka Medical College and hospital (DMCH), reported alarming rise in the number of victims of the Agyan party coming to hospitals for treatment.

Members of such gangs remain active at inter-city bus terminals, launch terminals, railway stations, cattle markets and wholesale markets.

DMCH source said the hospital has been receiving 12 to 22 victims a day since November 20 while the figure ranged from 8 to 15 a month ago.

Dhaka Metropolitan Police sources said plainclothes and uniformed police personnel have been deployed and the presence of community police has been strengthened at strategic points in the city to check muggings.

The sources also said that the police would also provide adequate security by forming surveillance teams and setting up check-posts across the city on the occasion of Eid.

Despite beefed up security, the criminals are committing muggings at cattle markets and at public transport in the city.

On Friday evening, an unidentified elderly victim, aged about 55, was rushed to DMCH from Golapbagh cattle market.

When asked about the incident, he could only say, "I got Tk 40,000 by selling two cows."

Shahabuddin, 35, who was also undergoing treatment at

DMCH, said, "I can only remember that I was going to a travel agent office at Fakirapool from Sayedabad by a local bus on Saturday evening."

"When I came round yesterday evening, I found myself lying on the hospital bed. I was carrying Tk 11,000, which is now missing," he said.

Sirajuddin, a retired deputy director of Family Planning Department, died after he was drugged by a gang of Agyan party in Cantonment Railway Station area on Saturday night.

Quoting his family members, DMCH sources said Sirajuddin fell victim to muggers when he was waiting for a car to go to his residence at Pallabi. The criminals looted his valuables, including a cellphone and money.

An auto-rickshaw driver

took him to his residence at Pallabi with the help of local people. Family members rushed him to Dhaka Medical College Hospital immediately in an unconscious state where on-duty doctors declared him dead at about 11:30pm.

A total of 294 people fell victim to Agyan party in the last 18 days, DMCH sources said.

DMP sources said at least 40 or 50 gangs are active in the city and each gang comprises five or seven members.

The police have arrested over 200 such muggers in the last one year, they added.

The muggers generally use two methods to drug a person -- by mixing foods with drugs and by making the victim smell it, said a medical officer at DMCH.

It takes unconscious victims 4 to 24 hours to come around, he added.

# Prices of onion, chicken soar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prices of onion, chicken, cucumber and milk have soared again as they are in great demand in city markets ahead of Eid-ul-Azha.

Prices of these items went up by 6 to 40 per cent in the last three days.

Local variety of onion is now selling at Tk 40 to 45 per kg, up from Tk 38 to 42 three days ago, and the imported variety at Tk 30 to 32, up from Tk 28 to 30.

The price of one kg of cucumber was Tk 15 to 20 three days ago, which now ranges from Tk 20 to 30.

Battery chicken is now selling at Tk 90 to 95 per kg in

retail market, but the price range was from Tk 80 to 85 few days ago. The price of local chicken went up by Tk 10 per piece.

A packet of milk of one litre is being sold at Tk 50 to 55, up from Tk 47 three days ago.

Shop owners and consumers said packets of milk are not available at many stores.

Although some other items such as sugar, vermicelli, palm oil and tomato are also in great demand, their prices remain almost the same due to the fall in prices of these items in international markets.

Prices of spices also remain stable in the city markets, market sources said.

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