

PM for regional cooperation to eradicate poverty

UNB, Dhaka Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday stressed the importance of stronger regional cooperation to eradicate poverty from South Asia as it is the common enemy of all the countries in the region.

her Jamuna official residence in the evening. The Ambassador congratulated Hasina on the landslide victory of the Awami League-led grand alliance in the December 29 general election and her assumption of office as prime minister.

people's welfare. She apprised the Bhutanese envoy of her government's plans and programmes to attain food security and create social safety net in the country.

during the meeting. Both hoped that bilateral relations between Dhaka and Thimpu would be strengthened in the days ahead.



Visitors admire photos at a photo exhibition titled 'Rupasi Bangla Photo Contest' organised by Bangladesh Photojournalists Association (BPJA) at the association auditorium in the city yesterday.

Make integrated efforts to tackle militancy

Parliamentary body asks foreign ministry

STAFF CORRESPONDENT A parliamentary body yesterday asked the foreign ministry to make integrated efforts to tackle 'rising militancy' and global economic meltdown which are big challenges for the present government.

Sangsad Bhaban. Foreign Minister Dr Dipu Moni and Advocate Mahub Uddin Khokan, the lone member in the committee from opposition, were engaged in a debate over the militant issue, meeting sources said.

manpower is not available in the foreign ministry. BNP lawmaker Mahub Uddin Khokan said the image of the country would be tarnished if the government repeatedly raised militancy issue.

Japan hands over materials for 92 portable steel bridges

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Japan yesterday formally handed over to Bangladesh materials for constructing 92 portable steel bridges at upazila and union levels. Masayuki Inoue, ambassador of Japan to Bangladesh, formally handed over the construction materials at a ceremony at LGED bhaban at Agargaon in the city.



Sara Advertising Limited Chairman Alhaj Md Nazrul Islam Shikder inaugurates the new office of the firm which was shifted to Motaleb Mansion at Motijheel in the city recently. Managing Director of the company Md Haroon-Or-Rashid, Marketing Director Md Anwar Hossain, Engineer Md Jakir Hossain and Md Monir Hossain were present on the occasion.

Speaking on the occasion, he said construction of portable steel bridges will not only generate domestic economic growth but also enhance more foreign investment in the country.

Moreover, this will strengthen the traditional friendship between these two countries besides benefiting the two peoples, he added.

The Japanese government provided 1.973 billion yen assistance for constructing the surface part of the bridge while Bangladesh spent 2.041 billion yen for constructing the pillars of the bridge.

The installation work of the bridges will be completed in 68 upazilas under 17 districts. Japan has been providing grant aid and loan programme in different sectors of Bangladesh since 1973.

WEATHER TODAY

No change in temperature likely

Table with columns: City/Town, Temperature in Celsius (Max, Min), Humidity in percentage (Morning, Evening). Rows include Dhaka, Chittagong, Rajshahi, Khulna, Barisal, Sylhet, Cox's Bazar.

Tejgaon College principal held, freed on bail

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police arrested Principal of Tejgaon College Abdur Rashid from his Monipurpara residence in the city early yesterday on charges of misappropriating Tk 3 crore and trading fake certificates.

However, he was freed on bail after Gulshan police had produced him before a city court.

Sub-Inspector (SI) Rawshan Zaman of Gulshan Police Station told The Daily Star that Abdur Rashid was arrested after Capt (ret) Kazi Mostafa Hasan, acting registrar of Royal University, had filed a case against eight people on April 8.

Kazi alleged that Rashid, an adviser to the university from 2003 to 2008, and his accomplices were involved in trading fake certificates of the university and misappropriated Tk 3 crore from the university fund.

SI Rawshan, who is also the investigation officer (IO) of the case, said the principal denied the allegations saying his signature bore no importance to issuing certificates or making any transactions.

Newspapermen stage sit-in

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Journalists and employees of different newspapers yesterday staged a four-hour sit-in at their offices demanding solving problems of different newspaper offices, including the daily Ittefaq, the Bangladesh Observer, the daily Janakantha and the daily Dinkal.

They also staged a demonstration in front of the National Press Club to press home their demands.

Journalists from the protest meeting urged the government to interfere in resolving problems in different newspapers, including Ittefaq, Dinkal, Observer and Janakantha.

They also demanded full implementation of the seventh wage board award in all newspapers and formulation of a media policy.

Journalist leaders in the meeting said they will bound to announce tough programme if the government does not take initiative to resolve problems of newspaper industry.

Presided by Iqbal Sobhan Chowdhury, co-convenor of Sangbadik Sramik Karmachari Oikya Parishad, the meeting was addressed, among others, by Ruhul Amin Gazi, Fazle Imam, Alaf Mahmud, MA Aziz, Shah Alamgir, and Omar Faruk.

CPB to observe 'local govt empowerment day' today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB) will observe 'Local government empowerment day' today with a demand of establishing a self-governed local government system through curtailing authority of lawmakers in local government.

To press home the demand CPB will hold rally and bring out protest processions across the country.

CPB President Manjurul Ahsan Khan and General Secretary Mujahidul Islam Selim in a joint statement yesterday said people's empowerment is necessary to make democracy meaningful and there is no alternative to empowerment of local government to empower people.

They demanded amendment to the upazila parishad bill passed in the parliament recently to strengthen the democracy.

Bangladesh Manobadhikar Samonnoy Parishad in another statement yesterday said that the recently passed upazila parishad bill goes against democratic values.



Indian Foreign Secretary Shiv Shankar Menon calls on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at her residence at Jamuna in the city yesterday. (Story on Page 1)

DISASTER MANAGEMENT AND PREPAREDNESS 'Form bodies at hospitals to address emergencies'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a roundtable yesterday underscored the need for forming disaster management and preparedness committees at hospitals to ensure healthcare facilities during and after the emergencies.

Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) and James P Grant School of Public Health, Brac University jointly organised the roundtable titled 'Save lives, make hospitals safe in emergencies' at Brac University in the city.

The speakers said emergencies during disasters and other crises put healthcare providers under stress and lack of accountability and

government's failure aggravate the problem. An integrated planning is needed to address such issues, they said.

TIB Chairman Prof Muzaffar Ahmad underscored the need for creating mass awareness about hygiene and right to healthcare.

He also demanded the existing health institutes be made functional to make the best out of the limited resources.

Vice Chancellor of Brac University Prof Jamilur Reza Chowdhury emphasised strengthening the monitoring system to stop irregularities in the health sector.

TIB Executive Director Dr Iftekharuzzaman presented the keynote paper at the

roundtable where he suggested ensuring citizens' participation, strengthening infrastructure, creating reserve capacity and developing a strong information and communication system to this end.

The speakers also demanded transparency and accountability to establish good governance, which will ensure right to healthcare.

They also demanded a code of conduct for the people concerned of the area to ensure healthcare for all.

Dr Zafrullah Chowdhury, programme coordinator, Gonoshasthya Nagar Hospital, and Brig Gen Dr Abdus Shahid Khan, director, DMCH, also spoke.

INTEREST-FREE LOAN HC stays Agrani Bank's decision

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court (HC) yesterday stayed for three months the Agrani Bank authorities' decision to sanction loans to its high officials for purchasing cars and for their maintenance without any interest.

The HC also issued a rule upon the government and the bank authorities to explain within six weeks why the decision should not be declared illegal and why the interest should not be imposed upon the loan already disbursed to some of its officials.

The HC bench of Justice ABM Khairul Haque and Justice Mamtazuddin Ahmed passed the order upon a writ petition filed by a Supreme Court (SC) lawyer challenging the legality of the bank authorities' decision.

The finance secretary, Agrani Bank Limited and chief executive officer/managing director, general manager and deputy general manager of the bank were asked to reply to the HC rule.

On February 4, the board of directors of the Agrani Bank at its 86th meeting approved car loan facilities up to Tk 15 lakh for seven years to its officials, including assistant general manager and managing director, without interest.

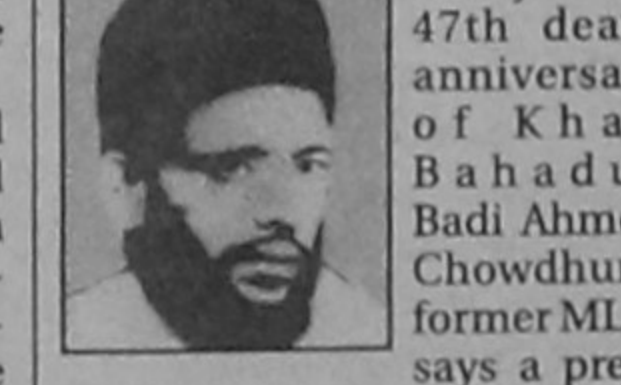
The board also decided to sanction a loan of Tk 30,000 per month for general managers for the maintenance of their vehicles without any interest.

The bank authority issued a circular on February 19 to implement the decision.

Advocate Monjur Murshed, a Supreme Court lawyer, yesterday filed the writ petition as a public interest litigation (PIL) challenging the legality of the circular and the decision of the board of directors.

The petition stated that as per rules of Agrani Bank Employees Advance Regulation 1999, the officials receiving loans for purchasing cars will have to pay interest.

Death anniversary



Today is the 47th death anniversary of Khan Bahadur Badi Ahmed Chowdhury, former MLA, says a press release.

On the occasion, a Qurankhiwani will be held at his Uttara residence in the city. A discussion will be held at Ballchari, Nazmunnessa High School and do mahfil at Hamidia Rahima Begum Etimkhana, Banskhal, Chittagong.



Reza Construction Ltd Director SAS Sahel speaks at a press briefing at the National Press Club in the city yesterday. On his left are Mamtaz Uddin and Matiur Rahman. (Story on Page 1)

LALBAGH SEVEN-MURDER CASE Convict allegedly conceals info to secure bail

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Former Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) ward commissioner Abdul Aziz, a convict in the sensational Lalbagh seven-murder case, has secured bail from the High Court (HC) by allegedly suppressing information about the number of days he spent in jail.

Even his petition, upon which the HC on April 9 has granted him bail, was found missing yesterday from the record of the case submitted earlier to this court, the lawyers said.

The court was due to pass an order on the petition yesterday. But the HC bench of Justice Md Imman Ali and Justice Syeda Afrza jahan recalled its bail order.

The court, however, allowed Aziz to file a fresh petition for bail in this case. It also fixed today for the hearing of the fresh petition.

On May 7 last year, the trial court sentenced Aziz to 12 years' imprisonment in the case.

On April 9 this year, the HC has granted him ad-interim bail for three months upon a petition filed by Aziz stating that he is a man of 55 years and he has already served about seven years in jail.

Deputy Attorney General (DAG) Motahar Hossain Sazu, who representing the government, opposed the bail, saying that the petitioner has not served seven years in jail and he should not be granted bail in this case.

Following his submission, the HC had fixed April 12 (yesterday) for passing the order on the matter.

Aziz's lawyer Shaikh Atiar Rahman yesterday told The Daily Star that the bail petition of his client (Aziz) has now been missing from the record of the case.

But he could not say how the petition went missing and who is responsible for this.

DAG Motahar Hossain Sazu told The Daily Star yesterday that convict Abdul Aziz had suppressed information about the number of days he spent in jail.

According to Sazu, Aziz was first arrested in 2003 in this case and he served less than three years in jail. He was out on bail for the rest of the period.

A Dhaka court on May 7 last year sentenced two men to death, nine to 43 years' rigorous imprisonment (RI) each and Abdul Aziz to 12 years' imprisonment in the Lalbagh seven-murder case.

According to the case statement, a group of criminals led by defeated ward commissioner Abdul Aziz attacked the victory procession of his rival Humayun Kabir on January 31, 1994.

They fired on the procession, killing seven people and leaving several others injured.

Govt to build new rail track on Dhaka-Ctg route soon

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government is going to build a new rail track from Laksam to Chinki Astana on Dhaka-Chittagong route, said a PID handout.

The new rail track, a part of the second rail track on Dhaka-Chittagong route, would be 61 kilometres long.

Financed by Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), the project is scheduled to be finished within four years.

The communications ministry is going to appoint Canada-based organisation 'Canarail' to conduct a feasibility study.

To this end, a contract will be signed between Bangladesh Railway and Canarail tomorrow.

Industrial units asked to set up ETP by June 30

UNB, Dhaka

The government yesterday set anew June 30 as the deadline for installation of Effluent Treatment Plant (ETP) in factories that are releasing chemical wastes alarmingly polluting the water and environment.

The decision was taken at a meeting with State Minister for Environment and Forest Mustafizur Rahman in the chair.

The meeting viewed with grave concern at the pollution of waters in canals and rivers posing health hazards and extinction of fishes.

The meeting directed all industrial units, especially the textile, dyeing and leather factories, to set up ETP by June 30.

Representatives of different industrial units attended the meeting.

Similar deadlines for installing ETP by industrial units were set during the previous caretaker government but the authorities failed to enforce.

The factory owners had pleaded their inability because of the cost involvement in setting up ETP.

MOUDUD'S ACCOUNTS SC again extends stay order

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Supreme Court (SC) yesterday again extended for two weeks its earlier order staying a High Court (HC) verdict that directed the government to allow reactivation of all frozen bank accounts and FDRs of former law minister and BNP leader Moudud Ahmed.

The three-member full bench of the Appellate Division headed by Chief Justice MM Ruhul Amin also asked the government to file a regular leave to appeal with the SC against the HC verdict within two weeks.

The apex court also kept in its record a petition recently filed by Moudud praying for allowing him to use his bank accounts, "which were" made frozen during the immediate past caretaker government.

It, however, upheld the HC order that had allowed Moudud to withdraw Tk 5 lakh a month from one of his frozen accounts with IFIC Bank and to deposit it with his savings account in the same bank from where he can withdraw the money.

The HC on March 4 in a judgement ordered unfreezing of his (Moudud) bank accounts and FDRs.

The SC upon a government petition stayed the HC verdict and then extended for two times its stay order.

Moudud himself moved the petition, while Additional Attorney General M Enayetur Rahim stood for the government.

Obituary

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

SM Monwara Begum (Manu), member of the executive board of Mahila Muktiyoddha Sangsad, passed away at her residence in Patuakhali yesterday at the age of 54, says a press release.

Mahila Muktiyoddha Sangsad in a statement expressed shock at her death and prayed for salvation of her departed soul.

DHAKA TODAY

Seminar

Diplomatic Correspondents Association, Bangladesh organises a seminar on 'Counter terrorism: Bangladesh and EU perspective'. Venue: Hotel Lake Shore. Time: 11:00am.

Workshop

Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and JICA jointly organise a workshop on 'Towards equitable health system through community participation: Experience of community support system and community clinics'. Venue: Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre. Time: 10:00am.

Folksong festival

Surer Dhara organises a folksong festival titled 'Matir Taney Shurer Dhara'. Venue: Lalmatia Girls' High School. Time: 6:00pm.

Reception

Northern University Bangladesh will accord reception to Speaker and Deputy Speaker of the parliament. Venue: Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre. Time: 3:30pm.