



Thousands of devotees try to board a train at Tongi Railway Station to return to Dhaka after the Akheri Munajat of Bishwa Ijtema. The three-day Ijtema ended with the Akheri Munajat yesterday. PHOTO: SHAFIQU ALAM

SQ Chy terms Moeen's remark 'insulting' to politicians

UNB, Dhaka

BNP leader Salahuddin Quader Chowdhury yesterday termed the remarks of ex-army chief Gen (ret'd) Moeen U Ahmed 'insulting' to the politicians.

In an interview with a private television channel on Saturday, Gen Moeen said that he did not commit any wrongdoing during the previous military-backed caretaker government's rule.

"The people won't have to wait 50 years for holding trial of General Moeen," SQ Chowdhury told reporters at his residence yesterday.

Gen Moeen, after a long interval, faced reporters while attending an old students' reunion at Tejgaon Polytechnic School in the city.

The former army chief also said that it would take 50 years to evaluate his role during the interim regime.

Salahuddin alleged that the general had snatched the fundamental rights of people in the last two years by placing some people in front in the name of the caretaker government, violating the constitution. "Is it not any wrong?" he questioned.

The BNP leader also said politicians were put behind bars "in the name of curbing corruption" for depoliticisation.

He also criticised the present government for not taking any initiative to put Moeen to trial.

United Airways aircraft narrowly escapes accident

BSS, Dhaka

An aircraft of United Airways, a private aircraft carrier, narrowly escaped a possible accident yesterday afternoon after one of its two engines faced a technical problem.

The Cox' Bazar-bound flight that took off from the Zia International Airport at 2:40pm, however, landed safely after flying over the Dhaka city for 15 minutes.

"We are returning to Zia International Airport as the aircraft got some technical problem, please have patience," Yousuf, the captain of the flight announced from the cockpit.

The frightened passengers, including seven foreigners and four journalists, repeatedly asked the airhostess to make an emergency landing to save the life of 21 passengers.

The airways sources said the flight got technical problem on operation of one engine and was unable to flex its wheels-immediately after the Dash-H aircraft took off from the airport.

All passengers remained safe.

United Airways, one of the two private airliners of the country, started its operation last year with both domestic and international services.

The airways sources said it has two Dash-8 aircraft to operate in the domestic routes and one of the aircraft was grounded earlier owing to technical problems.

2.5 lakh acres of forest land under illegal occupation

BSS, Dhaka

About 2.5 lakh acres of forest lands are now under illegal occupation across the country, including 11,639 acres in Dhaka division.

Secretary to the Ministry of Environment and Forests Dr Mihir Kanti Majumder said this at a press conference at the conference room of the ministry in the city yesterday.

The conference was arranged to explain the ministry's position on a report published in a daily on January 22 last about illegal grabbing of forestlands in Gazipur.

The secretary said the statement presented by the state minister for environment and forests in the parliament on January 21 about illegal occupation of forestlands in Gazipur was completely based on facts and documents.

He said the government has taken initiatives to amend the existing plantation policy in the forestlands so that people become interested in social forestation.

The government would take steps to evict all illegal occupiers from forestlands and encourage social afforestation to ensure ownership of the government on

the forestlands, said the secretary. "There is nothing to be challenged in the statement given by the state minister in the parliament and the ministry is not hostile to any particular person," he added.

He also provided the reporters with the photocopy of the application of Jamuna Group chairman for government permission to use the forestland, which was not granted so far.

For illegal occupation of the forestlands, the secretary said two cases were filed against the Jamuna Group chairman, which was now under trial.

Sewing brings self-reliance to women in N-region

BSS, Rangpur

The profession of handloom sewing has been proved to be very effective in combating munga (near-famine situation) and poverty, and bringing self-reliance for distressed women and unemployed young girls in the northern region of the country.

Taking the sewing as a profession after getting necessary training and support from the departments concerned and NGOs, thousands of women have successfully changed their fates by wearing ready-made handloom garments so far everywhere.

Many others are attaining self-reliance with their own initiatives and getting assistance, support, training, inputs and marketing facilities for their products from different organisations and some of the products are also being exported on a limited scale.

By sewing handloom garments and marketing those, hundreds of distressed women, divorcees and young girls of different rural and urban areas of the region are becoming self-reliant that has ushered in a new era in building a developed Bangladesh.

Dozens of NGOs and some donor organisations, women affairs department,

social service department, youth development department and other government organisations are playing a vital role in encouraging women by providing them with training, sewing machines, credit and input support.

The production of ready-made garments made of handloom fabrics has been growing fast as more and more women, widows, divorcees and teenaged girls are becoming interested in adopting sewing as a prospective profession.

Officials and experts told the news agency yesterday that the distressed women and unemployed young girls are showing more interests in sewing profession, adding they are hopeful that this profession would bring further successes and help empower women at grass roots.

The female sewers are producing mainly garments like blouse, petticoat, semiz, kamiz, salwar, scurf, caps, hats, maxis, baby wears, shirts, pants, futua, caps and other readymade wears for men, women, babies, girls and people of all ages.

Many successful women have launched their small-scale cottage entrepreneurs at their own after attaining their self-reliance and providing training and jobs for other unemployed women

and girls of their areas accelerating faster growth of the sector.

Housewives Banu, 33, and Phul Banu, 30, of remote village Boalmari under Roumari upazila in Kurigram said they sew baby clothes and their husbands sells those in the bazaars and hats of the area and they earn good amount every month as net profit.

"Our sons and daughters are also going to schools and we are now living very well though our days were very bad few years ago," they shared with BSS the success stories of winning against poverty, hunger and illiteracy.

An SSC examinee Parveen Akhter, 16, of Boraikandi village in the same upazila said she sews clothes, earns money and studies at Boraikandi Alia Madrasa.

Housewife Romesa Begum, 45, of village Echakuri, young girls Jasmine Akhter, 19, and Kohinor, 22, of Khatiamari village and housewife Chhoki Begum, 40, of nearby Natunpara village in the same area also narrated similar success stories.

Rashida, 45, and Shyamoli, 45, of Jalagari village in Gaibandha, widows Nirmola Rani, 50, and Indu Rani, 42, of Basontipara village in Rangpur, housewife Shirina Begum, 30, and

**RECONSTRUCTION OF IRAQ
Iraqi president keen to recruit workers from Bangladesh**

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Iraqi President Jalal Talabani has urged Bangladesh to supply skilled and semi-skilled workers to help reconstruct his war-ravaged country.

There is a huge demand for workers in Iraq for the purpose of reconstruction, he said when Bangladesh Ambassador to Iraq Muhammad Kamaluddin presented his credentials to the Iraqi president at Al-Salam Palace in Baghdad on January 19.

The Iraqi president also

said that other areas of cooperation to promote brotherly relations between the two countries should be explored.

In reply, Ambassador Kamaluddin assured him that Bangladesh is ready to join the gigantic tasks of rebuilding Iraq.

The Iraqi president recalled that Iraq was the first Muslim country to recognise Bangladesh as a sovereign state, which fought a just cause for liberation under the great leadership of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, said a foreign ministry press release yesterday.

During the meeting, Ambassador Kamaluddin conveyed greetings and good wishes of the president and the prime minister of Bangladesh to the Iraqi President.

Reciprocating his remarks, Iraqi President Talabani also asked him to convey his salam and regards to president and prime minister of Bangladesh and to the friendly people of our country.

He also assured the ambassador of total cooperation of his government in carrying out his (envoy) tasks in the newly reactivated mission.

ACCA to open its Dhaka office on Jan 27

UNB, Dhaka

The Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA), a global body for professional accountants, is going to launch its office in Dhaka on January 27.

Mohua Rashid, country manager of the ACCA in Bangladesh, made this announcement at a press conference at the National Press Club yesterday.

Commerce Minister M Faruq Khan is expected to attend the opening ceremony of the ACCA's new office at The Westin hotel at Gulshan. Former Adviser of the caretaker government Akbar Ali Khan, ACCA's Executive Director (Markets) Laurie Gillow and another Executive Director (Markets) in ACCA, UK Pitter Aston will also attend the inaugural session.

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The winners of the First National Speech Contest in Japanese Language pose with Japanese Ambassador Tamotsu Shinotsuka and other guests at the closing ceremony of the contest at Spectra Convention Centre in Gulshan on Friday. The competition was organised by the Japanese Universities Alumni Association in Bangladesh (JUAAB). PHOTO: COURTESY