

NEWS
in brief

IMO secy general due Jan 12

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Secretary General of the International Maritime Organisation (IMO), Efthimios Mitropoulos, will arrive here on January 12 on a three-day visit to discuss how the shipping industry can reduce sea pollutions.

Discussion on rescue of hijacked Bangladeshi ship MV Jahan Moni with 26 crew, security at the sea, and climate change will dominate agenda of his meeting with Foreign Minister Dipu Moni, Shipping Minister Shahjahan Khan, and other senior government leaders and officials.

BSMMU, US varsity sign MoU

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A memorandum of understanding (MoU) was signed yesterday between Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU) and University of Chicago, USA for co-operation in teaching, training, research, exchange of students and teachers, and other related fields.

The signing ceremony was held at the vice-chancellor's office of BSMMU.

Tk 25 lakh govt support to Shamsur Rahman's family

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Government has donated Tk 25 lakh to the family of late poet Shamsur Rahman.

Finance Minister Abul Mal Abdul Muhith handed over a cheque for Tk 10 lakh to Zohra Begum, wife of the poet, at her residence in the city on Saturday. The rest of the money will be given as saving certificates.

"Shamsur Rahman was one of the greatest poets of Bangla language," said Muhith while handing over the cheque.

Information Minister Abul Kalam Azad, State Minister for Cultural Affairs Promode Mankin and the poet's family members were present on the occasion.

Book stall gutted in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A book stall was gutted in a fire on RK Mission Road at Tikatuli in the city early today.

Fire fighter sources said the fire originated from a mosquito coil from the bookshop at about 12:30am and soon gutted the books. Local people doused the flame.

MOMIN MURDER

OC Rafiq, criminal Taj charged

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday brought charges of conspiracy against the then officer-in-charge (OC) of Motijheel Police Station AKM Rafiqul Islam and top listed criminal Habibur Rahman Taj for killing college student Kamrul Islam Momin in September 2005.

Judge Mohammad Rezaul Islam of the Speedy Trial Tribunal-4 passed the order after Special Public Prosecutor SM Rafiqul Islam submitted a petition for including the accused as conspirators in the killing.

The court fixed January 6 for next hearing of the case.

The previous court on October 5 last year framed charges against the two accused without bringing any charges of conspiracy even though they were the masterminds behind the killing.

Earlier, another tribunal recorded statements of 16 prosecution witnesses, including complainant of the case. But it sent the case back to its previous court, as it could not complete its trial within the stipulated time in 135 workdays.

Seven other accused Monir Howlader, 'Thotkata' Babu, Hasibul Haq Jony, Tareq alias Zia, Shakhawat Hossain Jewel, Zafar Ahmed and Sharifuddin -- are still at large. They went into hiding since the case was filed.

Kamrul Islam Momin, 22, a student of Dhaka Commerce College, was shot dead near his Ibrahimpur house in the city on September 13 of 2005.

WEATHER TODAY

Temperature may fall

UNB, Dhaka

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

Light to moderate for may occur over Rajshahi and Rangpur divisions and moderate to thick fog may occur over the river basins of the country during mid-night till morning, Met Office said.

Mild cold wave may sweep over Rajshahi and Rangpur divisions.

Night temperature may fall by 1-2 degree Celsius over the country.

The sun sets in the capital at 5:24pm today and rises at 6:42am tomorrow.

Country's highest temperature 27.8 degrees Celsius was recorded yesterday at Cox's Bazar and lowest 10.4 degrees Celsius at Rajshahi.

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	23.5	16.4	76	63
Chittagong	25.0	13.9	85	74
Rajshahi	21.2	10.4	91	75
Rangpur	19.4	12.8	94	89
Khulna	22.5	16.0	68	74
Barisal	23.1	15.4	89	86

Reach consensus on nat'l issues

Speakers urge AL, BNP for the sake of democracy and economic development

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A political consensus between the ruling Awami League (AL) and the main opposition BNP on major national issues is a must to strengthen democracy and economic development of the country, observed speakers at a roundtable.

Although the government has become successful in some sectors in last two years, a number of existing challenges must be addressed in the upcoming years through coordinated efforts by both the government and the opposition party, they opined.

They also urged both the AL and BNP to make the parliament functional to ensure that the democracy is not threatened in the future.

Bangla daily Prothom Alo organised the roundtable titled 'Two years of the government' held at its office in the city. Editor and Publisher of the newspaper Matiur Rahman moderated the event.

"The two major parties must reach consensus to accomplish major priority works of the country," said Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid. He said it is opposition's responsibilities to join parliament and cooperate and correct



PHOTO: STAR

Speakers at a roundtable titled 'Two years of the government' at Prothom Alo office in the city yesterday.

the government's mistakes through constructive criticism.

"We will have to come out of the culture of blaming each other."

He said there are many achievements of the government even after number of errors. "But we are trying our best."

Praising the government for its good performance in the agriculture and education sectors, BNP

Senior Joint Secretary General Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir said the government would have to come forward to create a way for national consensus.

He alleged that the government is trying to oppress opposition political parties instead of creating congenial atmosphere and building political culture in the country to reach consensus.

The editor of Prothom Alo feared that the country might face crisis again if coordination, consensus and agreement is not held between the political opponents. "We will have to make the consensus happen with courage."

Debapriya Bhattacharya of Centre for Policy Dialogue said it is not possible to implement the government's development

programmes with narrow political approach. Rather a broader national consensus will have to be developed to this end, he opined.

Former Adviser to a caretaker government Sultana Kamal said politicians are responsible for polluting politics and they forget about their responsibilities when they assume power.

FBCI President Abul Kalam Azad said the government and the opposition must work jointly to increase investment and generate employment. No parties should go for any programme like hartal that might hamper economic development.

Dilara Chowdhury, professor of the Government and Politics dept of Jahangirnagar University, said both the AL and BNP must develop a good will within themselves to reach a consensus and make the parliament functional.

Human Rights Commission Chairman Prof Mizanur Rahman, Supreme Court Bar Association President Khandaker Mahbub Hossain, Transparency International Bangladesh Executive Director Iftekharuzaman and Dhaka University Prof Asif Nazrul also spoke on the occasion.



Atiur, Jamilur Reza selected for Sheltech Award-2010

METRO DESK

Bangladesh Bank Governor Dr Atiur Rahman and noted engineer and former adviser to a caretaker government Prof Dr Jamilur Reza Chowdhury have been selected for Sheltech Award-2010.

Each winner will be awarded Tk 2 lakh and a crest, to be handed over on March 12 of 2011, says a press release.

Sheltech has been awarding country's eminent personalities since 1998 for their outstanding contributions to different sectors.



Salim elected Uttara club president

METRO DESK

Salim Gaffar was elected president of Uttara Club Limited on December 25, says a press release.

The newly elected executive committee members of the club are Nasir U Mahmud, Kazi Golam Mobin, Liaquat Hossain Moghul, Mohammad Masudul Alam, M A Hassan, Raquib Uddin Ahmed, Dr M Saidur Rahman, Shafiqur Rahman Porag, Ahmed Sharif and Jharna Chowdhury.

Threat to AG's family

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Attorney General (AG) Mahubey Alam received a phone call yesterday afternoon on which miscreants threatened to harm his family if he did not quit office in five days.

Khair Ahmed, secretary to the AG, filed a general diary with Shahbagh Police Station last evening.

Earlier, the AG was issued threats over phone several times.

MV JAHAN MONI HIJACK

No contact with pirates

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Somali pirates who hijacked Bangladeshi flagged vessel MV Jahan Moni again stopped contact for the last two days till yesterday afternoon.

After a six-day interval, the pirates contacted officials of Brave Royal Ship Management, the ship's operating firm, last Friday for ransom.

The firm's General Manager Meherul Karim confirmed it saying the pirates called them to give a phone number and asked to call back on that number. He disagreed to give any details about the conversation.

He said the last conversation with the pirates was comparatively positive and they became hopeful of settling the problem soon.

"Pirates did not make any contact on Saturday and today (Sunday)," he said while talking to The Daily Star yesterday afternoon.

Several family members of the crewmen said the pirates also allowed several crewmen to talk to them on Friday and Saturday.

Mother of one of the ship's crew preferring anonymity said she was able to talk to her son for a couple of minutes on Friday evening.

"My son told that all the crewmembers were well but the pirates were pressing them to pursue the owners for immediate payment of ransom," said the mother.

The ship's Chief Engineer Matiul Maola and his wife Ruksana Gulzer were recently shifted to another room of the ship while the rest of the 24 crewmembers were confined to one room, told crewmen to their relatives.

On pirates pressing crewmen for ransom, Meherul denied any sort of ultimatum given by the pirates and said the pirates could do so to keep pressure on the crewmen.

He, however, said they were ready to pay the ransom and made all necessary preparations to bring the ship and the crew back.

"But at first we need to be sure of the person whom we would hand over the money and see if he is trustworthy," he said.

IMAM MURDER

Police still clueless

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Mystery still shrouds the killing of Maulana Hafez Mohammad Ishaque, as police is yet to unearth clues regarding the people who abducted him on a CNG-run auto rickshaw on December 20.

Ishaque was the Pesh Imam of the police officers' quarters Jame Mosque adjacent to Ramna Police Station.

Sher-e-Bangla Nagar police on Thursday recovered his decomposed body from a flat of a six-storied building at West Shewrapara in the city.

Ishaque's relatives were frustrated as police were still clueless on the murderers.

Officer-in-Charge Reaz Hossain of Sher-e-Bangla Nagar Police Station said a man producing a fake identity and national identity card rented the flat.

Reaz said they were investigating into why the man made such elaborate preparations to kill Ishaque, suspecting that several people were involved.

Two women murdered

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two women were killed in separate incidents in the city yesterday.

In an incident, police recovered the body of Sonia, 22, wife of Omar Hossain Saiful, worked as a part-time domestic help, from her house with her eyes blindfolded and her body wrapped with a sheet in Kalyanpur area.

Jorina Begum, a neighbour said Sonia's husband wanted her to give up her only child, one-year-old Shakil to his first wife to which she refused leading to a heated argument on Saturday night.

Saiful used to live with his first wife at

Savar and visited Sonia, his second wife once a week, she added.

He married Sonia as his first wife was unable to bear a child, said Jorina.

In another incident, police recovered body of another woman from a residential hotel at Fakirapool yesterday.

Tofazzal Hossain, OC of Motijheel Police Station, said the woman who had identified herself as Dilruba to the hotel registrar had checked in with a man called Nurul Alam whom she claimed to be her husband. They had been staying in the hotel since December 28 last year.



PHOTO: STAR

Different human rights organisations form a human chain in front of the National Press Club in the city yesterday demanding arrest and punishment to the culprits who maimed and forced children into begging.

CHILDREN FORCED INTO BEGGING

Call to punish culprits

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Activists of different human rights organisations yesterday demanded punishment to culprits who maimed and forced children into begging.

They placed their demand at a human chain in front of the National Press Club in the city.

Speakers alleged that Kadamtali and Kamrangirchar police favoured the culprits and harassed the victims' family members by implicating them in false cases.

The gang members also abduct and rape

young girls whom they later force into prostitution for money, they said.

They said arrested Korban revealed their ringleader's name as Omar Faruq and his cohorts Salahuddin, Emran, Rony, Saddam and Kawsar who take the guise of political activists to continue their heinous activities.

The protestors demanded immediate arrest of the culprits.

Activists of Bangladesh Shishu Odhikar Forum, Projanma Bachao and Aparajeya Bangladesh with banners, festoons and placards took part in the human chain followed by a rally.

Woman shot in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A woman was hit by a stray bullet during a gunfight between two local gangs at Mohammadbagh in the capital's Kadamtali yesterday.

Injured Maksudha Begum, 27, wife of Mohammad Shaheen of the area, was on way to bring her kid from a local school at the time.

Sub-Inspector AKM Sultan Mahmud of Kadamtali Police Station told The Daily Star that two groups -- one led by Anwar, a CNG-run auto-rickshaw driver, and another by ambulance driver Rajib -- got into a clash around 1:30pm over previous enmity.

Anwar sustained stab wounds during the clash. The SI said the auto-rickshaw of Anwar had a collision with Rajib's ambulance a few days back in the area and yesterday's clash was a sequel to that.

Police said no case was filed with the police station but they were trying to recover the firearms used in the clash.



PHOTO: STAR

Jatiyatabadi Mahila Dal, women wing of BNP, stages a demonstration in the city yesterday protesting price hike of essentials.