



Elderly people, all aged above 65, wait for hours to obtain Tk 900 as old age allowance provided by the government every three months. The photo was taken from in front of Sonali Bank's Tejgaon branch in the city yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

ELEVATED EXPRESSWAY

Deal with Ital-Thai company today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government will sign a contract with Italian-Thailand Development Public Company Ltd today for construction of the much-talked Dhaka Elevated Expressway.

The signing ceremony will take place at Sonargaon hotel at 11:00am in presence of ministers and senior government officials of Bangladesh and Thailand.

The Ital-Thai company has been awarded the task of building the expressway from Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport to Kutubkhali on Dhaka-Chittagong highway under public-private partnership (PPP). The construction will cost about Tk 8,703 crore.

Meanwhile, the government as per recommendation of an expert committee has chosen the costlier box-type option for the expressway, as it will be more beautiful to look at in cities.

"The 20.5km of the main elevated expressway will be box-type while the rest will be of I-type," said Prof Shamsul Hoque, a member of the expert committee.

He said all the 35 ramps (the entry and exit points) will be of I-type. "People from all over the city would be able to use the expressway using sufficient number of ramps."

The Ital-Thai company will collect toll from the expressway for 25 years before handing it over to Bangladesh government. The lifespan of the expressway has been estimated at 100 years.

PRESS CLUB ELECTION

HC order challenged

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A petition was filed yesterday with the Supreme Court challenging a High Court order that allowed the newly elected managing committee of National Press Club (NPC) to take charge from its outgoing committee.

After a brief hearing, Justice SK Sinha, chamber judge of SC, sent the petition to the regular bench of Appellate Division for its hearing today.

Senior journalists Golam Sarwar and Saiful Alam, who contested the election on December 31, yesterday filed the petition with the SC, seeking stay on the HC order.

The HC on January 16 stayed a Dhaka court order that on January 10 halted the functioning of the newly elected committee and directed to hand over the charges of the club to its outgoing committee.

Barrister M Amir-Ul Islam appeared for Sarwar and Saiful.

BANK ACCOUNTS

HC rejects writ petitions of Mosharraf, wife Bilkis

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday rejected two writ petitions filed by former BNP minister Khandker Mosharraf Hossain and his wife Bilkis Akter seeking direction from it on government to release their bank accounts seized during the regime of caretaker government.

An HC bench of Justice AHM Shamsuddin Chowdhury Manik and Justice Sheikh Md Zakir Hossain delivered the verdict after hearing arguments from counsels for the petitioners and the government and Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC).

Attorney General Mahubub Alam told The Daily Star that Khandker Mosharraf Hossain and his wife could not use the bank accounts following the HC verdict.

He said the government seized the bank accounts since the ACC found corruption allegations against Mosharraf and his wife while investigating into a criminal case against them.

Mosharraf and Bilkis filed the writ petitions with the HC in November last year challenging the action by the military-backed caretaker government seizing their bank accounts.

Advocate Khurshid Alm Khan appeared for ACC while Barrister Moudud Ahmed argued for the petitioners.

Road crash kills one hurt 40

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A garment worker was killed and around 40 others were injured, seven of them critically, in a road accident on Dhaka-Aricha Highway at Sutipara in Dhamrai of Dhaka last night.

The identity of the deceased could not be known immediately.

The accident occurred at around 8:45pm as the driver of the bus with 50-60 garment workers of Graphics Textile lost control over the steering, said Israfil, helper of the bus.

Thirty-two of the injured were admitted to the Enam Medical College Hospital in Savar.

Biscuit feeding scheme for children launched

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A school feeding programme was launched at Mohakhali in the city yesterday for urban working children to improve attendance and completion rates at learning centres.

Under the programme, all working children at learning centres will receive a 75-gram packet of eight biscuits six days a week, said a press release.

A total of 73,326 children enrolled in the Basic Education for Hard to Reach Urban Working Children (BEHRUWC) project will be reached through the programme.

Under the programme, gradually micronutrient-fortified biscuits will be provided to the children in 3,333 learning centres in Dhaka, Chittagong, Rajshahi, Khulna, Sylhet and Barisal, it said.

Secretary of the ministry, WFP Bangladesh representative Christa Rader and Unicef representative Carel de Roony spoke at the function.

HOUSEWIFE MURDER Alleged killer arrested

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) yesterday arrested the alleged killer of Dilara Begum, the wife of a Saudi expatriate, who was strangled at a hotel room in the city's Fakirapool on January 2.

Rab said Dilara's extramarital paramour Mohammad Abdul Aziz, 30, of Chakoria of Cox's Bazar killed her as he admitted his involvement in the killing at primary interrogation.

The elite force held Aziz from Bottoli of Chittagong at about 2:30am. He narrated the incident to the journalists at Rab 3 office.

Pro-BNP lawyers demand CJ's resignation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) faction loyal to BNP and Jamaat at a sit-in yesterday demanded resignation of Chief Justice ABM Khairul Haque.

The sit-in was held in front of the CJ's office in protest against his recent move fixing cases for hearing on priority basis and reconstituting some High Court benches for hearing.

SCBA President Khandker Mahubub Hossain and Secretary Badruddoza Badal led the programme joined by a few hundred pro-BNP and Jamaat lawyers.

A High Court judgment of 2005 prohibits holding of any meetings, processions or gatherings on the SC premises, said Additional Attorney General MK Rahman.

"Nobody should violate an HC verdict," he told The Daily Star.

In the hour-long protest that started around 1:00pm, the lawyers also chanted slogans against the CJ.

SC sources said the chief justice has recently classified some cases for disposal on priority basis to reduce the huge backlog of cases in the HC, and has reconstituted some benches for hearing of those.

The cases were mainly filed under the jurisdiction of writ, criminal, civil, anticipatory bail and motion (petitions on which any rule was not issued).

During the sit-in, Khandker Mahubub urged the chief justice to change his decisions within seven days.

He told reporters the CJ has to allow the HC judges discharge their constitutional duties. Otherwise the SCBA will go for tougher movement against him.

Additional police personnel were deployed around CJ's Supreme Court office during the sit-in.

Another Bangladeshi dies in Mauritius

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

One more Bangladeshi worker, who sustained serious injury in a tragic road accident in Mauritius on January 12, died yesterday, said the foreign ministry sources.

Dead is Md Elias Gazi, 28, passport no F 0723931. He was son of Md Huzu Gazi of Uttar Madartak under Bahsabo in Dhaka.

Elias was declared clinically dead immediately after he was admitted to a hospital in Mauritius. He was pronounced dead yesterday.

Director General (Africa Wing) of Foreign Ministry M Wahidur Rahman confirmed the death of Elias Gazi.

He told The Daily Star that another injured worker was also declared clinically dead who is still undergoing treatment.

The foreign ministry hoped the body of Elias Gazi will be home in next couple of days. Necessary steps have already been taken in this regard, it said.

Some 10 Bangladeshis and a Mauritian national were killed on the spot and four other Bangladeshis injured critically as a lorry collided with their vehicle en route to office.

The Bangladeshis migrants went to Mauritius on December 30, 2010 with job as garment sewing machine operator at Pandemonio Company Ltd.

FAZLUL HUQ MURDER Police hunt killers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police have been conducting drives in different places in search of Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) ward no 41 unit Awami League President Noor Mohammad's son Mintu on suspicion of his involvement in Friday's killing of the unit AL's general secretary Fazlul Huq.

Noor Mohammad's three sons died earlier and Mintu is his only surviving son. Mintu had been absconding in India to escape arrest in different cases against him on charges drug peddling and other criminal activities.

Sher-e-Bangla Nagar Police Station OC Syed Ziauzzaman told this correspondent that Mintu is the prime suspect in Fazlul Huq murder case. Several groups of law enforcement agencies are trying to nab him.

Police could not glean any information on the second day of the interrogation in five day remand of three arrested including Noor Mohammad's son-in-law Jahangir.

Local AL leaders and common men assume that those who shot and injured ward unit AL president Noor Mohammad on January 8 might have also killed Fazlul Huq. Miscreants shot Noor Mohammad at West Agargaon. He is now undergoing treatment at Chest Diseases Hospital at Mohakhali.

Saarc fails to fulfil peoples' expectation

Speakers tell int'l seminar

Sunila Abeyskera, a human rights activist of Sri Lanka, speaks at an international conference at Brac Centre Inn in the city yesterday. On her right are Neera Chandoke, Rokeya Kabir, and Joy Chavez.



PHOTO: STAR

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Saarc was established to boost cooperation among South Asian nations but it does not fulfil the people's expectation due to the leaders of the region lacking political commitment, speakers told an international seminar yesterday.

"This forum could serve a vital role to empower people, develop economies, establish rights of women and minorities, and eradicate militancy and terrorism from South Asian countries," said educationist Prof Anisuzzaman.

Though Saarc was established years back, it still is not playing any vital role to solve all the common problems of the region, he told the inaugural ceremony of the two-day seminar.

Titled "Envisioning new South Asia: People's perspective", it was jointly organised by Equity and Justice Working Group-Bangladesh (EquityBD) and South Asia Alliance for Poverty Eradication (SAAPE) at the city's Brac Inn.

Indian feminist and social movement activist, Kamla Bhasin, chaired the opening ceremony. Pakistani labour leader Karamat Ali and Kapil Shreshta, chairman of Human Rights Commission, Nepal addressed it.

"It is people's demand for visa-free Saarc countries, but the government could not make it free," said Shaheen Anam, executive director of

Saarc still is not playing any vital role to solve the common problems of the region

Manusher Jonno Foundation. "So, they should think about simplifying the visa process."

She also stressed the job migration that is taking place in this region, especially between Nepal, Bangladesh, and India.

"As an advocate of migrant workers, we demand the migration with

dignity and respect to ensure exploitation-free life for the migrants."

Participants from the Maldives, Sri Lanka, India, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines, and Afghanistan also addressed the seminar.

The discussion includes the regional integration in the age of globalisation; trade and investment policy; conflicts in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India; conflicts in ethnicities and religions; and climate change and livelihood.

Pakistani labour rights activist, Karamat Ali, said people of this region are peace loving; they do not like conflicts. The conflicts in this region should be stopped for development and progress of South Asian nations.

Kapil Shreshta said Saarc country people lost their trust as it was inactive for long, but recently there are some steps to re-activate the forum.

Meena Menon, labour and human rights activists of India, said the conflicts between India and Pakistan is the main reason for the inactivity of Saarc, which has an adverse impact on other countries.

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