

Thatcher granted Aquino asylum request: archives

AFP, London

British prime minister Margaret Thatcher granted Corazon Aquino's request for asylum at the height of the uprising that swept her to power in the Philippines, according to newly declassified files released yesterday.

Aquino headed the four-day 1986 People Power Revolution that ended the 21-year rule of totalitarian president Ferdinand Marcos.

He had declared victory in a snap election tainted by fraud allegations.

During the turmoil, Aquino sought sanctuary in the British embassy or the ambassador's residence in Manila, files released by Britain's National Archives indicated.

But Britain's protection was ultimately not needed as Marcos stepped down the following day and the Aquino government was officially recognised.

The asylum request was in a Downing Street file on Britain's relations with the Philippines spanning from 1981 to 1995.

On the evening of February 24, 1986, Foreign Office diplomat Len Appleyard wrote to Charles Powell, Thatcher's private secretary for foreign affairs.

He said Aquino had asked whether Britain would be prepared to offer sanctuary in the British embassy or residence at 8:00 am local time the following morning -- midnight in Britain.

Man killed

FROM PAGE 16

that they raided Nayapara Mochoni Rohingya camp to recover drugs.

A gang of robbers opened fire on Rab members while they were conducting the anti-narcotics drive, forcing them to retaliate, he added.

Sadek sustained bullet injuries and died on the spot, the Rab official said, adding that Sadek used to work for notorious robber Zakir.

Arms and drugs were recovered from the spot, he claimed, without providing any further detail.

The Daily Star, however, could not independently verify the Rab claims.

Earlier on the day, two Rab members sustained bullet injuries at the same spot when they were conducting an anti-narcotics drive.

Locals said criminals tend to hide into Rohingya camps as they were located in hilly areas.

Kerala passes

FROM PAGE 16

constitution has uphold the idea of unity in diversity," he said.

Vijayan also ensured the assembly that there won't be any detention centres in the southern state.

When the session began, O Rajagopal, the lone BJP member in the assembly, objected to the resolution stating that it was "illegal" as both Houses of the Parliament had passed the CAA Act.

The opposition Congress-led UDF had demanded the Left government to convene a special session and pass a resolution against the CAA during an all-party meeting convened by the chief minister on December 29 to discuss the issue.

CAA offers citizenship to Hindus, Christians, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis and Sikhs from Bangladesh, Pakistan and Afghanistan who took shelter in India till 2014 after fleeing "religious persecution" in those countries.

Vertical farming

FROM PAGE 16

in Japan at 67 and few candidates to replace those dying out, the country has been forced to become a pioneer in so-called vertical farming.

Globally renowned firms such as Panasonic, Toshiba and Fujitsu have tried their hand -- converting old semi-conductor production lines with varying levels of success.

One of the few companies to turn a quick profit, Spread produces 11 million heads of lettuce annually from its latest factory in Kyoto, a vast sterile area where the vegetables are stacked on shelves several metres high.

Machines shift the lettuces around the factory to areas where the light, temperature and humidity are ideal for that stage of growth. The process works without soil or pesticide, and only a dozen or so humans are employed to collect the lettuce at the end.

Other countries have employed vertical farming techniques -- notably in Denmark and the United States -- but Japan's population crisis means the farmers are dying out, with question marks over how the world's third-biggest economy will feed itself.

"Given the lack of manpower and decline in agricultural production, I felt a new system was needed," Shinji Inada, Spread's boss, told AFP.

Spread has taken some time to make the process nearly fully automated: an older factory in Kyoto still employs several dozen humans to move the lettuce -- a "difficult task", admits one staff member.

But the advantages are clear: "We can produce in large quantities and at a stable rate all year round, without being affected by temperature changes," said Inada.

"The other benefit is that we have few losses because our products are preserved for longer," added the vegetable tycoon.



Noab members, from left, Shah Hussain Imam, Dewan Hanif Mahmud, Tarik Sujat, Matiur Rahman Chowdhury, Riazuddin Ahmed, AK Azad, Matiur Rahman, ASM Shahidullah Khan, Mahfuz Anam, Naem Nizam and AMM Bahauddin pose for a photo at the annual general meeting of Newspaper Owners' Association of Bangladesh (Noab) at a city hotel on Monday.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Noab elects AK Azad new president

FROM PAGE 16

Noab for 2020-2021.

The executive members who were elected at the meeting are Matiur Rahman, editor and publisher of the Bangla daily Prothom Alo, Tasmima Hossain, editor of the daily Ittefaq, Mahfuz Anam, editor and publisher of The Daily Star, Naem Nizam, editor of the daily Bangladesh Pratidin, MA Malek, editor of the Daikin Azadi, Mozammel Hoque, editor of the daily Karatoa, M Shamsur

Rahman, editor and publisher of the Independent, Tarik Sujat, managing director at Mediascene Ltd that publishes the daily Bhorer Kagoj, and Dewan Hanif Mahmud, editor and publisher of Bonik Barta.

Senior journalist Reazuddin Ahmed, chief of the election board, announced the names of the new committee members.

AMM Bahauddin, editor and publisher of the Inqilab, Shah

Husain Imam, editor of the Financial Express, were the other members of the election board.

The meeting approved the financial reports and the audit reports of the years 2018 and 2019.

The meeting also discussed the prevailing crises in the newspaper industry worldwide including Bangladesh among other topics and has emphasised working with short and long term plan to overcome the adversaries.

Taskin and Naim star for Rangpur

FROM PAGE 1

Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) encounter under the lights at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

In chase of a challenging 182 for six posted by Rangpur, Rajshahi lost three of their top-order batsmen inside nine overs. Taskin, who had Afif Hossain caught in the fourth over, was on a hat-trick when he dispatched Shoaib Malik and Liton Das in consecutive deliveries in the ninth over. He later scalped the wicket of Forhad Reza, finishing with impressive figures

of four for 28. Meanwhile, Taskin's teammate Mustafizur remained wicketless but was very economical as the left-arm pacer allowed just 16 runs from his four overs, which included a maiden.

Earlier, Opener Mohammad Naim played the aggressor's role after Rangpur Rangers were asked to bat first. Rajshahi however suffered a minor blow in the first over when a bug flew into skipper Andre Russell's eye and forced the big West Indian to leave the field. Russell did come back on the field later but did not bowl again.

By the time Shane Watson miscued an Afif Hossain delivery to be caught at short third man in the fourth over, Naim had already smashed four boundaries and a maximum to ensure a fine start by Rangpur. After Watson's dismissal, Cameron Delpert and Naim strung together a 54-run stand. Delpert's quickfire 17-ball 31 ended when Afif caught him off his own bowling in the 11th over after being hit for two sixes and a four in the over. However, Naim's 47-ball 55 and another 17-ball 28 from Lewis Gregory helped Rangpur post the formidable total.

Send them to prison instantly

FROM PAGE 16

therefore recommended taking necessary actions so that people committing environmental crimes can be sent to jail instantly," ruling Awami League MP and the committee chairman Saber Hossain Chowdhury said.

The meeting was held at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban.

About enforcement of Environment Conservation Act, he said, "We have told officials of the department of forest and environment that no one is above the law and violators will be reined in, with no exceptions.

"We often see people are cutting trees indiscriminately or mills and factories are polluting the environment. But instantly we cannot send the offenders to jail..."

Saber, also former chairman of Inter Parliamentary Union said, "Environmental law enforcement is a major focus for us and we are also examining how best technology may be leveraged to this end."

About the Unesco's observations regarding the Sundarbans, the parliamentary watchdog asked the ministry to fulfil the UN body's requirement to keep the world's

largest mangrove forest on the world heritage list.

The committee also asked the ministry to take necessary preparations for taking part in the Convention on Biological Diversity which is scheduled to be held in Kunming in October this year.

The main theme of the convention is "Ecological Civilization: building a shared future for all life on earth."

Post 2020 biodiversity framework is likely to be adopted in the convention which will play an important role in saving bio-diversity and prevent main causes of the damage to ecology.

AL, BNP candidates

FROM PAGE 1

papers, while seven out of the 10 filed theirs for the Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC) mayor post.

AL candidates Sheikh Fazle Noor Taposh and M Atiqul Islam are contesting for the mayor post in the DSCC and the DNCC respectively. Ishraque Hossain and Tabith Awal are the BNP's contenders in the two city corporations.

Since 10:00am yesterday, hundreds of AL supporters and activists started gathering in front of a temporary office of the DSCC polls' returning officer, set up at Sadeque Hossain Khoka Community Centre in Gopibagh.

There, they brought out brief processions and chanted party slogans.

Around 12:15pm when Taposh arrived in an SUV -- accompanied by AL presidium members Jahangir Kabir Nanak and Abdur Rahman, Jubo league Chairman Sheikh Fazle Shams Parash and lawmaker Mahbubul Alam Hanif in three other sports utility vehicles -- the road in front of the community centre was crowded with party men.

As the cars approached, the AL men began chanting slogans.

Taposh and other leaders struggled to walk into the RO's office amid the crowd.

Surrounded by the top AL leaders and other activists, Taposh then submitted his nomination paper.

Any kind of procession or showdown is prohibited during the submission of nomination papers and candidates are not allowed to be accompanied by more than five people, according to the electoral rules.

Asked about breaching the rules, Taposh said, "Many councillors along with their supporters have come here to submit nomination papers. That's why the crowd was created."

Ishraque along with BNP leaders Mirza Abbas, Afroza Abbas and Abdus Salam and a host of activists and supporters came to the RO office around 2:40pm.

Asked, he told reporters that he did not break any code of conduct. "I'm

being accompanied by Mirza Abbas, Afroza Abbas, Abdus Salam and my brother. Only five persons have come with me."

"The rest are locals and councillors who came here for their own purpose," he added.

Returning Officer Abdul Baten said candidates were submitting nomination papers in a festive mood.

Asked about the violation, he said the magistrate would look into the matter.

"Councillors are submitting their nomination papers. Whenever a heavyweight candidate comes, they gather around the candidate," he said. "We've kept them under strict vigilance," Baten added.

Blocking the main road in front of the RO's office at the Election Training Institute in the capital's Agargaon, several hundred AL leaders and activists chanted party slogans surrounding Atiq, who went to submit his nomination papers.

Traffic movement came to a halt on the road. A vehicle carrying an election commissioner also got stuck there.

At one point, Atiq, who was accompanied by Dhaka North Awami League President Sheikh Bazlur Rahman, General Secretary SA Mannan, FBCCI President Sheikh Fazle Fahim, Bangladesh Football Federation President Kazi Salauddin and former BGMEA president Siddiqur Rahman, requested the party men to stop shouting slogans.

Atiq submitted the nomination papers to Abul Kashem, RO of the DNCC election.

Sources said a police van was seen in front of Atiq's motorcade while he left his residence for the RO office. There was around 30 cars and minibuses in the motorcade. The vehicles, however, did not come near the RO's office.

Talking to reporters later, Atiq, claimed there was no police van in front of his car.

Asked about the violation of the electoral code of conduct, he said, "I came to the returning officer's office with five people. There was no

procession outside. When they were shouting slogans, I stopped them."

He also said AL-backed councillor candidates came to the RO office to submit their nomination papers, which created the crowd.

Asked about the BNP's opinion against the use of EVMs in the city corporation polls, he said, "The whole world was opting to use technology. We're not out of it. The election will be free and fair if EVMs are used."

BNP mayoral candidate for the DNCC also violated the electoral code of conduct as more than five people were with him while he entered the RO's office.

BNP standing committee members Gayeshwar Chandra Roy, Iqbal Hasan Mahmud, were among those accompanying Tabith.

Asked, Tabith claimed he followed the electoral code of conduct and was accompanied by only five persons.

Talking to reporters later, he said "Although we have no confidence in the Election Commission, the administration and the law enforcement agencies, we are participating in this election keeping confidence in people."

He said they were in doubt whether people would be able to cast their vote in a fearless atmosphere.

The DNCC RO said both the AL and the BNP candidates submitted nomination papers following the code of conduct.

Responding to a query that the vehicle of an election commissioner remained stuck on the road due to the "showdown" by the AL candidate, he said although a candidate brought five people with him, soon the number reached to around 5,000.

As many as 2,260 mayoral and councillor aspirants had collected nomination forms to take part in the polls.

General councillor aspirants will contest in 75 wards in the DSCC. Also, there are 25 seats reserved for women councillors.

In DNCC, the number of general councillor posts is 54 and that reserved posts 18.

'I was released to be sent to jail'

Alleges Ducusu VP Nur after DMCH discharges him

DU CORRESPONDENT

Ducusu Vice-President Nurul Hoque Nur yesterday alleged that Dhaka Medical College Hospital authorities discharged him hurriedly so that he could be arrested in a case filed under the Digital Security Act.

Talking to journalists at DMCH emergency gate, Nur said the case was lodged under the Digital Security Act so that police could keep him in jail for at least two months as most of the sections of the law is "nonbailable".

The Ducusu VP has three months of his one-year tenure left. The case was filed against Nur and several others with Dhanmondi Police Station over spreading propaganda and false information against DU Chhatra League leaders through his Facebook page after Nur and his supporters came under attack on December 22.

Expressing dissatisfaction with his treatment at the DMCH, Nur also claimed that he was yet to recover fully and was feeling sicker three days after being admitted to the hospital.

Nur and his three supporters -- Faruk Hasan, Farabi Rahman, and Nazmul Islam -- injured in the December 22 attack were released from the DMCH on Monday night as their condition improved significantly, claimed the hospital authorities.

Talking to The Daily Star, DMCH Director Brig Gen AKM Nasir Uddin said they released Nur and the three others as per suggestions of the 13-member medical board that monitored them.

Asked about Nur's allegation, he said it was "sad" that Nur was dissatisfied with the treatment.

"Thousands of people are being treated at the hospital. No exception happened in his [Nurul] case. Doctors treated him as long as they thought it was necessary. They [injured] were discharged when they recovered," he said.

Hasan Al Mamun, convener of Bangladesh Sadharan Chhatra Adhikar Sangrakkhan Parishad, told this newspaper that Nur and the three others were admitted to a private hospital for better treatment.

But he did not disclose the hospital's name, citing security reasons.

At the press briefing, Nur alleged that there was a conspiracy to kill him.

"My condition started to deteriorate three days after I was admitted [to DMCH]. It could be a conspiracy to kill me because we always protest against Chhatra League's wrongdoings."

Asked about the December 22 attack, he said if justice was not ensured even after the attack, such incidents would happen again.

He said arresting three leaders of Muktijuddho Moncho, which launched the attack, was an "eyewash".

On December 22, Nur and his men came under attack from a faction of Muktijuddho Moncho, mostly comprised of BCL men, at his office at the Ducusu building.

Nur and at least 26 of his supporters were wounded in the attack. Four of them are still undergoing treatment at the DMCH.

In the case statement filed on 26 December, Arnob Hore, publicity secretary of Dhaka University's Jagannath Hall BCL, said Nur, Rashed Khan, and some others on December 22-23 spread hate speech against DU BCL leaders and disseminated false and fabricated information intentionally on social media to create chaos and make the law and order worse.

Besides the case under the Digital Security Act, an attempted murder case was filed against Nur and 28 others for their alleged involvement in the December 22 incident.

CONDEMNATION

Twenty-two eminent citizens yesterday condemned harassment of Nur and activists of Bangladesh Sadharan Chhatra Adhikar Sangrakkhan Parishad by implicating them in cases.

Soon after the approval of Digital Security Act, concern has been expressed from all sections of people that the law will be used to serve petty political interests and that has been proved through the lodging of the case, the statement read.

The signatories said students were coming under attacks and were being implicated in such cases when they had waged lawful movements.

This type of an evil attempt will have to be stopped immediately to uphold the citizens' human and constitutional rights, they added.

They also urged the government to ensure proper treatment of the injured with its own funds.

The signatories include Badiul Alam Majumdar, Shaheen Malik, Prof CR Abrar, Prof Asif Nazrul, Prof Parvin Hasan, Syeda Rizwana Hasan, Rehnuna Ahmed, and Shahidul Alam.

Ebtadayee, JDC

FROM PAGE 2

grade, which is equivalent to Junior School Certificate exam.

The pass rate in JDC exams increased by 0.73 percent this year.

The pass rate in the exams is 89.77 percent, which was 89.04 last year.

While the number of GPA-5 achievers dropped to 1,682 this year, a decrease by 305 from last year's 1,987.

The number of institutions with 100 percent pass rate was 1,843. It was 1,727 last year. The number of institutions with zero pass rate was 19 this year and 23 last year.

Both the exams took place in November.

Rape victims

FROM PAGE 16

In yesterday's report, ASK recommended forming an independent inquiry commission to investigate all sorts of rights violation including rapes, extrajudicial killings and enforced disappearances in the country.

It also demanded to ensure freedom of expression, make amendment in the Digital Security Act, strengthen National Human Rights, Anti-Corruption Commission and Information Commission so that they can work independently.

ASK Executive Director Shepa Hafiza, Senior Deputy Director Nina Goswami, and Senior Coordinator Abu Ahmed Fajlul Kabir talked on the report in the programme.

WOMEN'S RIGHTS SITUATION

Like the rape incidents, violation of women rights and incidents of sexual assault increased last year than that of 2018.

As many as 258 women were sexually assaulted last year. The figure was 173 in 2018 and 255 in 2017.

Eighteen of the 258 killed themselves following being assaulted, while 17 people, including four women, were killed in attacks for protesting such incidents.

On the other hand, at least 167 women were tortured over dowry. Of them 96 died in torture while three others killed themselves.

Extra-Judicial Killings

The ASK report said the extra-judicial killings including killing in the name of shootout and death in custody are continuing amid protest by rights bodies.

At least 388 people became victim of extra-judicial killings last year.

Of them, 356 people were killed in so-called shootout amid the anti-narcotics drive, and 14 others died in custody.

The number of killing in so-called shootout and death in custody was a record 466 in 2018 while the figure was only 162 in 2017.

The death of alleged rapists in shooting and notes of admitting the killing by so-called Hercules hanging