

DHAKA TODAY

Photo exhibition

The inaugural ceremony of 'RC Inter-University Photography Exhibition-2003, organised by North South University Photography Club, will be held. Venue: Drik Gallery, Dharmondi. Time: 3.00pm. The exhibition will remain open till February 1.

Folk drama

As part of a week-long folk drama festival, organised by Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy, Bangarupa Opera, Brahmanbaria, will stage a drama titled 'Modhu Mala'. Venue: Showkot Osman Auditorium of the Central Public Library.

BCL reunion

Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) organises a reunion and discussion on the occasion of its 55th foundation day with Leader of the Opposition in parliament and Awami League President Sheikh Hasina as chief guest. Venue: Paltan Maidan. Time: 2.00pm.

Human chain

Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal will form a human chain demanding the cancellation of Indemnity Ordinance 2003. Venue: Mukhtangan, Ramna. Time: 4.00pm.

Discussion

A discussion on the Role of teachers, guardians and civil society to contain disaster in educational arena' will be held with State Minister for Cultural Affairs Begum Selima Rahman as chief guest. Venue: National Sports Council Auditorium, Purana Paltan. Time: 3.00pm.

FICCI meeting

Annual meeting of the Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) will be held. Venue: Sonargaon Hotel. Time: 12.30pm.

A meeting of Foreign Investors' Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) will be held. Venue: Sonargaon Hotel. Time: 12.30pm.

Award giving ceremony

Press Institute of Bangladesh (PIB) organises a programme in connection with the distribution of Sohel Samad Smriti Purushkar-2002' with Information Minister Tariqul Islam as chief guest. Venue: PIB Seminar Room. Time: 11.00am.

Rotary Midtown

Regular weekly meeting of the Rotary Club of Dhaka Midtown will be held. Venue: Dhaka Club. Time: 5.30pm.

DHAKA TOMORROW

Musical evening

Alliance Francaise will present an evening of classical music by Kalpana Bhattacharya. Venue: Alliance Francaise Auditorium, Dhanmondi. Time: 7.00pm.

Meeting

The first meeting of the new committee of Commonwealth Society of Bangladesh will be held. Venue: Hotel La Vinchi, Karwan Bazar. Time: 3.00pm.

Seminar

Bangladesh Institute of Bank Management (BIBM) organises a seminar on 'Loan Classification, Provisioning Requirement and Recover Strategies: A Comparative Study on Bangladesh and India'. Venue: BIBM Bhaban, Mirpur. Time: 11:30 am.

Sony murder

FROM PAGE 12 police submitted a charge sheet in the case on January 4 against Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) cadre Mokammel Hayat Khan Muki and 14 others.

Of the accused, three are now on bail, six in jail custody and the rest five including Muki have been absconding since the incident.

Sony, a student of Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET), was killed on the BUET campus during a gunfight between two factions of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) on June 8 last year.

Meanwhile, the tribunal will hear the petitions on charge framing against the accused in the case today.

Case framers

FROM PAGE 12 last year acquitted Abbas Uddin and sentenced Nuruddin to five years' imprisonment and Rima to one years' imprisonment.

After acquittal, Abbas Uddin filed a case against complainant Nuruddin and Rima with the same court. But they had been absconding.

Yesterday, as they appeared before the court for bail, Judge Dudu Miah Sarkar after hearing rejected their bail petition and sent them to Dhaka Central Jail.

BGMEA polls

FROM PAGE 12 challenges of post-multi-fibre arrangement regime.

"As we are facing various domestic problems and intense international competition, the BGMEA leadership needs to be more dynamic," a joint panel leader told reporters earlier.

On the other hand, the Oikya Jote leaders promise a 'strong progressive leadership' in the BGMEA also to face the most-MFA challenges.

14 die

FROM PAGE 1 Munshiganj Ibrahim Fatmi told The Daily Star last night.

Soon after the accident, district administration of Munshiganj with the help of fire brigade and local police began the rescue operation.

Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA) has sent its rescue launch "Rustam" to the spot. Even though the launch reached the spot in the evening the operation could not begin. The operation will start today morning, said a BIWTA official.

Sources said Sagar-10 fled the scene immediately after the accident. Keraniganj police however got hold of it in river Buriganga and has kept it under custody.

BIWTA sources said Sagar-10 might be charged with reckless maneuvering.

Hundreds of people from Gazipur rushed to the Munshiganj Police Station where the bodies were kept. On identification, they took the bodies for burial. Munshiganj police said.

Serena wins

FROM PAGE 12 ceremony as tears rolled down her cheeks.

"You know all my life I have dreamed of being the best and doing the best. It hasn't always been easy for me and it is just so special the fact that I am making history right now."

The 21-year-old picked up 1.13 million Australian dollars (669,073 dollars) for her victory and joins Maureen Connolly, Margaret Court, Martina Navratilova and Steffi Graf in an exclusive pantheon of champions.

Court, Navratilova and Graf were in Melbourne to witness the newest member of the grand slam club.

"Winning four in a row... It doesn't happen every day, I can't believe I can now be compared to these women because they are just the greats. To be in their category is just amazing," said Serena.

She has now won five Grand Slams, the US Open in 1999, the French Open, Wimbledon and US Open in 2002 and the 2003 Australian Open.

Kahn's dream

FROM PAGE 1

views and said that when Kahn had visited the country in 1973, he had asked the authorities to remove all structures in the area.

Explaining the then government's stand in this regard, official sources said the government had already built some housing units nearby and that it would not be 'viable' for a 'newly born country' to remove those. However, the then government promised not to go for any more structures.

This time Housing and Public Works Minister Mirza Abbas inaugurated construction of the two housing units on October 8. But it was suspended on November 29 in the face of protests from various organisations, which demanded that Kahn's plan be kept unchanged.

Meanwhile, the government is now building a mausoleum on the grave of president Ziaur Rahman, a mosque and a conference hall inside the nearby Chandrima Udayan, tampering with the original plan of the Sangsad Bhaban area.

Hasina blames govt

FROM PAGE 12

Hasina claimed that the BNP (when in the opposition) had written letters to the US government before the then president Bill Clinton's visit to Bangladesh, alleging Taliban presence in the country. "Now they (BNP) have fallen in their own trap."

Jahangir Kabir Nanak and Mirza Azam MP were elected Chairman and General Secretary respectively of Jubo League at the national congress. They would form the full executive body of the organisation, outgoing chairman Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim MP said.

Raising questions about the recent Operation Clean Heart, Hasina said, "We want to know from (prime minister) Khaleda under which law she ordered the army to conduct the operation. Just because of her unilateral decision, the army killed 53 people and injured thousands. Thousands of innocent people were sent to jails. Can she explain

this?"

About the recent indemnity ordinance, the AL chief said, "By using the army in killing and harassing innocent people, Khaleda has taken the onus of this on herself. And for this, she has gone for the indemnity ordinance to save her own skin."

But the prime minister would not be able to escape the responsibility of so many custodial deaths. The ordinance cannot save her, Hasina said.

Referring to different incidents of bomb blast in the past, she said the then AL government was investigating those incidents and also found some clues. But the present government suspended the investigations. "Besides, this government formed a probe body on the recent Mymensingh blasts, headed by a retired judge who is biased towards BNP," she alleged.

Giving an overview of politics in the country, the opposition leader said 'politics of fundamentalism' started soon after the

killing of Bangabandhu in the mid-seventies. And in the following years, the image of the country continued to be tarnished. Awami League restored the image after coming to power in 1996, she said.

The former prime minister claimed that during the AL rule, prices of essentials did not rise at all and per capita income rose to 400 US dollars. But the prices of these goods has gone beyond the reach of the common man, she said.

"People should now evaluate what the Awami League government had done for them and what the alliance government is doing now," the AL chief said.

The Jubo League congress was presided over by outgoing chairman of the organisation Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim MP. Outgoing general secretary Kazi Iqbal Hossain read out the organisational report. AL presidium member and a former chairman of the organisation Amir Hossain Amu gave the welcome address.

Sangsad goes into session

FROM PAGE 1

However, Hamid hinted that his party might boycott the presidential address on the question of his neutrality. "Boycotting the presidential address by the opposition has become a tradition. Should we break it?" he asked while talking to The Daily Star.

On the opening day, the government will lay the controversial Joint Drive Indemnity Ordinance 2003 that shut the door for legally challenging actions of all concerned for deaths in the army-led anti-crime crackdown.

A bill seeking to make it a law would be placed later in the session, according to the law ministry.

The session may be adjourned for two days after the presidential speech.

The sixth session is likely to continue for over a month with short breaks for Eid-ul-Azha and the International Mother Language Day apart from the weekends, ruling party sources indicated. Also, there would be a brief recess after the opening sitting.

"It may have some 20 working days spreading over more than a month's time," a Treasury Bench whip said, seeking anonymity.

A number of bills on human rights commission, energy regulatory commission, alternative dispute resolution, labour code,

consumer rights protection and private bank rules amendment, among others, are being prepared for submission before the parliament during the session, officials concerned said.

The traditional general discussion on the presidential speech is likely to draw heated political debates over contemporary issues. Moreover, the opposition plans to have a go at the government over such crucial matters as the indemnity ordinance, US' listing of Bangladesh as a terror-risk country, price spiral of essentials and rise in fuel prices, the deputy opposition leader said.

"We will seek general discussions on these issues and have already submitted notices seeking discussions," Abdul Hamid said. "We will know whether we would be allowed to discuss the crucial issues only when we join the Business Advisory Committee (BAC) meeting."

The BAC headed by the Speaker is due to meet at 5:00pm today to decide on the session's duration and business.

Protests like walkouts would follow should the opposition be barred from speaking on such issues, the AL said.

Parliamentary parties of the ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party and AL are going to meet to

thrash out their strategies in the House.

The AL Parliamentary Party meets at 11:00 this morning while its counterpart is yet to fix the schedule.

Over 600 notices of various categories and some 1200 questions have so far been submitted to the Jatiya Sangsad Secretariat for disposal in the session.

Since it came into being on October 1, 2001, the eighth parliament had 99 working days spread over five sessions and 39 bills have been passed. The last session only had 10 working days against four of the previous one.

BSTI to seize

FROM PAGE 12 Meanwhile, the owner of Starship brand of condensed milk and Chairman of Partex Group, MA Hashem, claimed that the milk producers have become victims of a political conspiracy.

"All of a sudden, they imposed the ban although we have been producing the items for the last 12 years with the BSTI testing certificate," he said.

According to the commerce ministry sources, the companies used vegetable fat because it was much cheaper than milk fat. The price of one kilogram of vegetable fat is only Tk 35-40 while the volume of milk fat costs Tk 190.

Price control plea

FROM PAGE 1

price list is displayed in every market, half the problems will be solved, Khosru observed and sought help from the Khoka.

The meeting decided that price list of the essential items will be put on display in 29 Dhaka City Corporation (DCC)-approved markets in the first phase in a bid to curb manipulation in the retail market. In the second phase, 20 to 30 more DCC-approved markets will make public the price list while DCC inspection teams and the market committee concerned would jointly enforce the decision, the meeting was told.

"Soybean oil price is now down to Tk 46 from Tk 52 per kg but we are not satisfied with the market feedback. If the retailers profit Tk 2 per kg, [they] should now profit Tk 1 to ensure that the people's suffering is minimum," Khosru suggested. He also warned that the government would extensively monitor the market situation.

Food Secretary Khairuzzaman Chowdhury said the average rice price this year is Tk 1.50 to Tk 2 higher than last year's.

"But we couldn't detect the reasons. Production of Aman paddy this year is around five lakh tonne more than that of last year and import is also liberal now."

"Food grain import in last five months of this fiscal has doubled compared to the total import of last fiscal. We don't understand why rice prices shot up although there is sufficient stock this year," the food secretary told the meeting.

Commerce Secretary Suhel Ahmed Chowdhury informed that a price difference of Tk 4 to 5 per kg for each essential item exists in the wholesale and retail market.

General Manager of Bangladesh Bank Golam Mertoza said opening letters of credit (L/Cs) for rice in the recent months have gone up although the margin of L/Cs increased. "We need to see whether any other items in place of rice are being imported."

President of New Market Retailers Association Liakat Ali said the retailers make up for the high transport cost and weight rip-off by wholesalers. That's why the retail price is Tk 3 to 4 higher than the wholesale price, as the retailers

have to offset the high cost and make a nominal profit.

He added that the transport cost has risen by 100 per cent in the last one year, which has an impact in the retail prices.

A retailer from the Khilgaon retail market said the turnover in the retail market has dipped with the increase in the prices of most essential items.

According to a report of Market Monitoring and Research Cell of the Trading Corporation of Bangladesh, prices of different qualities of rice, flour, pulses, soybean and palm oil, potato, fish, meat, egg and salt have increased as on January 23 from last year's.

Prices of fine, coarse and medium quality rice have increased between five to six per cent from those of last year, the report said. It added that prices of flour and pulses have gone up by six to 10 per cent.

Potato price went up by 53.33 per cent while soybean price increased by 21.33 per cent as on January 23 from last year's prices, the report added.

UP elections

FROM PAGE 1

They exploded homemade bombs and fired shots when law enforcers tried to resist them from stuffing. Twenty people, including some policemen and election officials, were injured in the mayhem. The presiding officer later postponed voting.

The same group, according to locals, also went to Dakkhin Ewaz Balia primary school and captured the polling station there. They snatched ballot papers and ballot boxes, prompting from the election officials to suspend voting.

In Kushtia, election authorities postponed election at the Baradi centre in Kaya Union when cadres of the outlawed Ganomukti Fouz (GNF) equipped with firearms attacked the polling stations.

They attacked the election officials and snatched ballot papers, rubber stamps and other election materials.

Our Mymensingh correspondent says polling was peaceful and no untoward incident was reported throughout the day.

In Khulna, elections to ten union parishes passed off peacefully.

According to our Rajshahi correspondent, barring an untoward incident at a polling centre at Kagipur upazila in Sirajganj, voting at 86 unions in 13 northern districts was largely peaceful.

Voting in the Chalkpara Government primary school polling centre at Maizbari union in Sirajganj was suspended after some 20 people were injured in clashes between police and supporters of a chairman candidate.

According to sources in the Rajshahi range police, police fired several rounds of gunshots and lobbed teargas shells to disperse the agitating crowd at the centre at noon.

Some hundreds of people there got agitated following the arrest of the chairman candidate Abdul Mannan.

Mannan was arrested at the Chalkpara centre while trying to stuff some fake ballots into the ballot box. At least 35 fake ballots were recovered from him.

However, voting at other unions in the north region was peaceful.

In Patuakhali, 25 people, including a member candidate, were injured in a clash when two rival groups attacked each other in front of the Charkhali high school centre at Mirzaganj. Among the injured 10 were sent to the Patuakhali Sadar Hospital.

Our Chittagong bureau reports that polling at 13 UPs on the offshore island of Sandwip was peaceful, barring some sporadic incidents at several centres of

Sarikait and Haramin unions that left three persons including a pregnant woman injured.

Clashes between supporters of rival candidates also took place at Purba Kachhiarpur school centre and Daittergo school centre, both under Haramia union. Gunshots were exchanged and bombs exploded during the clashes.

The clashes resulted from reported rigging and attempted capture of polling centres. Police also opened fire to bring the situation under control.

Besides, rigging and irregularities were also reported at some other centres in Baurila union.

AFP adds that, in the violence-prone southeastern Chittagong Hill Tracts region, local officials said by telephone that voting took place in a "festive mood."

The government has set up a law and order monitoring cell for the polls, the seventh since Bangladesh's independence in 1971, while the paramilitary Bangladesh Rifles, police and the auxiliary Ansar militia security force will be on duty.

"As the government is not providing the support of the army, we have to deal with the situation with existing law enforcing agencies," Election Commissioner Munsef Ali told reporters.

"I hope the elections will be free, fair and peaceful as there is a lot of enthusiasm among the electorate," he added.

Local Government Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan said the government was alert to the security situation.

"We are determined to hold free and peaceful elections... if needed the army will be sent out," he said.

The commission has issued a number of orders for the polls, including a ban on the use of cellphones in polling areas on election day as well as the day before and the day after. Violators could face seven years' hard labour as well as a fine, officials said.

A total of 198,704 candidates are contesting the local council seats, including 42,250 women vying for 2,684 seats reserved for them.

Some 200,000 local and several foreign poll observers will monitor the process.

The elections to 4,267 UPs or local councils, are officially held on a non-party basis, but political parties indirectly nominate candidates to ensure a foothold at the grassroots.

Blames fly

FROM PAGE 12

Bangladesh, Egypt, Indonesia, Jordan, or Kuwait are required to appear at an Immigration and Naturalisation Service (INS) office to register under NSEERS (National Security Entry-Exit Registration System) and provide additional information," says the attorney-general's notice (AG Order No. 2643-2003) dated January 9, 2003.

Despite its ongoing attempt to know the reason through diplomatic channel, the government has launched a two-pronged attack on the opposition and the media. Both were blamed for the US action.

In the past few days, the prime minister and some of her senior cabinet colleagues made similar statements holding opposition remarks and media reports responsible.

The prime minister said "irresponsible words and deeds of a particular political party" led to the US imposition.

She also accused the party (AL) of launching reckless anti-Bangladesh campaign both at home and abroad since it had lost the last general election. "This has apparently influenced the US authorities to slap the restriction on Bangladesh."

The media is also responsible for the terrorism tag, Khaleda hinted. "Information terrorism" unleashed under a planned campaign" has put Bangladesh in trouble, she said.

The BNP frontline leader, M Saifur Rahman, accused Hasina of masteringmind a campaign to portray Bangladesh as a terrorist country.

Asked if he was saying the warning was totally routine, he replied: "I didn't say it was totally routine. I said we are doing this and that we have done it before. We thought it was appropriate to remind people to take appropriate precautions."

On January 11, 1991, prior to the start of the 1991 Gulf War on January 16, the State Department warned Americans that if war were to break out "the threat of terrorism against American citizens would increase significantly."

In the run-up to the 1991 Gulf war, the State Department also ordered or authorised the departure of nonessential US government employees and dependents from countries including Jordan, Yemen, Algeria, Israel, the eastern province of Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Bahrain, and Qatar.

opposition political party was trying to portray Bangladesh as a haven for fundamentalists and the Taliban.

"Even they sent doctored photographs and reports to the US Department of Justice to substantiate their claim," he said before leaving for Washington.

Added Morshed: "some of the statements of the main opposition leader (Hasina) did not help the nation".

In fact, Foreign Secretary Shamsheer Mobin Chowdhury had set the tone of reactions on Jan 16.

"Irresponsible statements by some of our senior citizens and anti-Bangladesh media campaign might have a bearing on the US decision," he said while disclosing Bangladesh's inclusion in the list of terror-risk countries.

By contrast, the AL identified several factors leading to the US action.

The party chief, Hasina, attributed the US action to coalition government's lack of political far-sightedness, diplomatic failure, misrule, crime, corruption and political vengeance on opponents.

AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil said the country's international image was tarnished due to 'violation of human rights, wrong policy and misrule' of the BNP-Jamaat alliance government.

Unfortunately, the government-opposition divide on the US action, like any other issue, is gradually yawning despite the fact that both expressed concern and demanded withdrawal of the restriction.

Nevertheless, Jatiya Party Chairman HM Ershad, who blamed both sides, called upon all parties to cooperate with the government to overcome the crises.

The deposed president said a 'wrong foreign policy and false propaganda' invited the perils.

The Jan 9 US AG order was forwarded to the State Department on Jan 15 and Dhaka came to know about it on Jan 16.

The order is applicable to non-immigrant males of 16 years and older of the five countries who entered the US on or before September 30, 2002, and will stay there after March 28, 2003.

Such non-immigrants have to be registered, photographed and fingerprinted and provide other information to the INS between February 24, 2003 and March 28, according to the AG order.

Powell to take

FROM PAGE 1

which Bangladesh has been included in the list.

In reply to a question, he said "Powell listened to me very carefully and assured he will discuss the matter with US president and the cabinet."

AFP adds from Washington: US Secretary of State Colin Powell assured his counterpart from Dhaka Friday that new US anti-terror laws were not designed to target Bangladeshis.

Powell met Bangladesh's Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan at the State Department, officials said.

"The two had very useful discussions covering a wide range of topics of mutual interest," said State Department spokesman Richard Boucher.

Powell commended Bangladesh's contribution to the US anti-terror campaign, Bouchersaid.

Khan asked the United States for clarification about new immigration laws that expose residents of so-called high-risk states to new safeguards under US anti-terror precautions.

"Foreign Minister Khan expressed his government's concern over Bangladesh's inclusion in the programme," Bouchersaid.

"Secretary Powell reassured Foreign Minister Khan that this measure is part of a comprehensive programme similar to that in other nations to better track foreign visitors and in no way changes our long-standing friendship and cooperation with the government and people of Bangladesh."

Khan wrote to Powell before leaving for the United States to demand a lifting of fighter immigration scrutiny.

Bangladesh is one of more than 20 countries whose male nationals living in the United States without permanent residency status must be questioned and fingerprinted by authorities.

Bangladesh, the world's third largest Muslim-majority country, pleaded support to the US-led "war on terrorism" immediately after the September 11 attacks.

BSS adds: Senator John McCain has assured Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan that he would "do whatever I can do to see that people of Bangladesh are treated justly."

The assurance came from the US

DMP

FROM PAGE 12 mugging and dacoity have increased.

Detective Branch (DB) of police has also enhanced its vigilance and is keeping a close eye on some listed crime-prone areas.

A top DB official said patrol by DB personnel has been intensified in those areas and bus terminals.

Meanwhile, the 133-member Rapid Action Team (RAT) having special commando training went into action in the city yesterday to net criminals and seize illegal firearms.

Divided into separate units, the RAT will operate in some designated places round-the-clock under the supervision of the DMP Commissioner. They will have sophisticated firearms and special communication network.

Many in the police administration are very hopeful about success of the RAT. Sources said there are plans to raise more special police teams like RAT in future if it succeeds.

Mammi murder HC confirms death sentence of killer husband

BSS, Dhaka