

THE WEEK THAT WAS

Magazine programme on IT: Daffodil Institute of IT (DIIT), Chittagong branch organised an extraordinary magazine programme at the auditorium of Engineers Institution in the city on February 27 evening.

The programme was featured by rendering songs, joke, animated football match, animated cockroach dance, three quiz competitions on Information Technology (IT), talk show on IT with the audience present and staging drama.

Earthquake research agreement: The Research Centre for Mathematical and Physical Sciences (RCMPS) of Chittagong University (CU) and Lamont Doherty Earth Observatory of Columbia University of USA signed a joint research agreement on "the architecture, dynamics and earthquake hazard in GBM delta of Bangladesh".

Chittagong University Vice-chancellor AZM Nooruddin Chowdhury and Columbia University Leonardo Seiber research scientist signed the agreement on behalf of their respective sides at the VC's office on February 26. A committee was formed to run the research works.

Hill allowance for teachers: Initiative would be taken soon for immediate implementation of Hill Allowance for the teachers working at different educational institutes in Chittagong Hill Tracts.

Deputy Minister for Education Abdus Salam Pintu said this while addressing a rally of private teachers at TUFA auditorium in Khagrachhari on February 27. Announcement would be made in this regard after discussing the matter with the prime minister, he said. He also announced enlistment of educational institutes of Khagrachhari in the MPO.

BSTI drive to check fuel oil fraud: Bangladesh Standard Testing Institute (BSTI) in its drive against fraud in fuel oil supply corrected the measurements of 415 dispensing units sealing off their plug controlling devices at 86 petrol pumps in Chittagong, Feni and Comilla last month. Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation (BPC) and BSTI jointly started the dispensing unit examining drive on January 21.

Inter-college sports: The First Inter-college Sports Competition of Secondary and Higher Secondary Education Board, Chittagong, (CEB) started at Chawk Bazar Parade ground on February 27.

Commerce Minister Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury inaugurated the competition as the chief guest with CEB chairman Prof AJM Shahidullah in the chair. CEB secretary Prof Quazi Shahadat Hossain and Muhammad Nurul Huda also addressed the inaugural ceremony.

Demand for decreasing water level: Rangamati district Jamaat on February 27 demanded decrease of water level of Kaptai Lake by at least 10ft within a week.

President and general secretary of Jamaat-e-Islami, Rangamati district unit in a statement said the decline in water level would help some 20 thousand distressed families grow crops worth around Tk 60 crore through Irri-Boro cultivation on 35 thousand acres of land surrounding the lake.

USTC Teachers' Assoc meet: The first general meeting of Teachers Association of University of Science and Technology, Chittagong (USTC) was held at the university auditorium on February 26.

The meeting discussed issues related to bonus and USTC Pay scale, co-option of five new members and fixing the date for the annual excursion of the university. Association president Dr. Mulkur Rahman chaired the meeting.

Full-fledged HC bench demanded: Chittagong City Corporation (CCC) mayor ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury demanded a full-fledged bench of High Court division in Chittagong to ensure speedy trial and legal facilities. He demanded this while addressing a rally at Chittagong Bar Council auditorium after the city mayor got an interim-bail in a case. Mohiuddin Chowdhury and CCC chief engineer Rezaul Amin Khan got the bail in a case filed by district Anti-corruption Bureau. The Court of Metropolitan Sessions judge Md. Fazlul Karim granted the interim bail till March 30.

WASA for bottled water project: State Minister for LGRD and Cooperatives Ziaul Haq Zia urged WASA, Chittagong to take initiative for reducing its expenditure and increasing income. He asked the Chittagong WASA to take up a water bottling project in this regard.

He was exchanging views with the WASA officials and employees on implementation of different project. To solve water crisis of the port city, he said projects taken by the WASA, Ctg would be implemented soon with the government fund. WASA, Ctg chairman Azizur Rahman presided over the meeting at WASA Bhaban here.

Australia to reduce duty: Australia has decided in principal to reduce import duty on Bangladeshi goods.

Australian High Commissioner Loren Barker disclosed this at a meeting with the leaders of Women Entrepreneurs (WE), Chittagong on February 27.

Replying to a query made by WE, Chittagong president Monowara Hakim Ali, the High Commissioner said Bangladeshi goods have a good demand and market in Australia and assured of his all out cooperation for export from here. The meeting discussed different aspects of Bangladesh Trade Show to be held in Australia in June.

CU ex-students' reunion: A 33-member committee was formed with Chittagong University (CU) Vice-chancellor AJM Nuruddin Chowdhury as its convener to hold CU Ex-student Reunion 2003.

The committee was formed at a meeting organised by the CU authorities at a city restaurant on Sunday night.

2nd Regional Scouts Convention: A five-day Second Regional Scouts Convention organised by Bangladesh Scouts, Chittagong region, began at Chittagong Collegiate School premises on Friday.

Food Minister Abdullah Al Noman inaugurated the convention as the chief guest while Deputy Commissioner and Bangladesh Scouts, Chittagong region president Shafiqul Islam was special guest. Rahenara Begum regional commissioner and deputy director of Secondary and Higher Education Office, Chittagong region, presided over the inaugural ceremony.

Seventy-three scout teams and two Girls in Scout teams of Chittagong, Cox's Bazar, Rangamati, Khagrachhari and Bandarban are participating in the convention.

Minhar Cup Golf ends: The third Minhar Cup Golf Tournament 2003, ended at Bhatary Golf and Country Club here on Saturday evening.

Commerce Minister Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury gave away prizes among the winners as chief guest. The prize giving ceremony was addressed by Minhar Group of Companies Managing Director Habibullah Khan and Chairperson Begum Yeasmin Khan. Tournament Committee chairman Captain (ret'd) Ahsan Aziz Shelly conducted the ceremony.

Earlier, the tournament sponsored by Minhar Group of Companies was inaugurated by the Golf and Country Club senior vice-president and GOC of 24, Infantry division, Major General Moinuddin Ahmed. A total of 162 golfers including 10 women from home and abroad took part in the tournament.



Patients staying on the floor is a common sight at almost every ward of the Chittagong Medical College Hospital. The snap was taken from Cardiology Department.

Hospital needs treatment

SHAHIDUL ISLAM

PATIENTS at the overcrowded Chittagong Medical College Hospital face immense inconvenience due to shortage of surroundings, nurses and beds.

More than 1800 people seek outdoor treatment daily and there are 1400 inpatients in the hospital that has a capacity of only 1000 beds.

The additional 400 patients have been staying on the floors and corridors of the hospital, creating a chaotic situation. As a result, the patients do not receive the desired medical services.

Moreover, shortage of doctors and nurses adds to the woes of the patients. Still, the hospital is the only means of healthcare for the poor of Chittagong.

Established in 1960, the

Chittagong Medical College Hospital began its journey with only 120 beds. It is now the second largest public hospital of the country.

Construction of its five-storey building was completed in 1969. And the renovation work was carried out from 1993 to 1997 with the financial assistance of Asian Development Bank (ADB).

The hospital was upgraded to 1000-bed in the seventies. At present, it has 45 cabins, 30 paying beds and 925 general beds. Over 10 lakh patients receive treatment a year, according to a survey.

There are 22 wards under 17 departments in the hospital.

According to a statistics, the hospital has one doctor for every seven patients, one specialised doctor for every 25 patients and one nurse for 12 patients.

Although the figures are quite satisfactory, insiders say, they are confined only to papers. It does not represent the real situation, they say.

Often patients are found groaning with pain while their attendants look for a doctor or a nurse, but to no avail.

"Some nurses and ward boys work at will and don't respond to emergency calls," said Sirajul Islam, a patient's attendant.

Even some nurses and other staff demand tips openly in exchange for their services, alleged patient.

The patients who are staying on the floors and corridors said that the hospital authority could not provide bed sheets, mosquito nets, blankets or pillows to them. On the other hand, most iron beds have been rusting away.

Some wards are unable to cope with the heavy rush of patients. Worst is the situation at surgery, medicine, orthopedic surgery, neurosurgery and gynaecological departments.

On an average, about 80 patients seek treatment at the surgery-1 ward daily, but it has only 54 beds.

With a 90-bed capacity, the orthopedic surgery department witnesses a rush of about 120 patients each day.

The hospital authority, however, has recently taken up initiatives to restore discipline. Under its 'clean-up' drive, vendors and other unwanted elements were driven out from the hospital premises.

Now the patients want to see more effective steps to mitigate their sufferings.

CSE launches informal Internet trading

Salman Ispahani tells *The Daily Star*

NURUL ALAM

I n a bid to restrict further slide in trade volume, Chittagong Stock Exchange (CSE) President Salman Ispahani said, the bourse has already launched Internet trading informally.

He said such trading would help investors from remote areas as well as foreign investors to place orders for share trading and for offloading of their holdings in the market through their PCs from anywhere.

He said investors' confidence was the key to a vibrant stock market and at present there appears to be lack of such confidence.

"But we have taken various measures to restore investors' confidence in the share market," CSE President Salman Ispahani said.

During an interview with *The Daily Star*, the CSE president said the market has been witnessing lackluster trading due to fear of war in the Middle East.

He said the CSE could do little to help in that context. "But we are trying to ensure transparency, fair play and efficient operation of the bourse," he said.

"We have a very strong surveillance team to monitor and detect any manipulation attempt on CSE," he said. "We have already delisted some companies after detection of their lapses," he added.

"If investors are confident of good return then they will come forward to invest in the share market with confidence," Ispahani said. "We believe money for shares and shares for money".

Speaking on the 1996 share market debacle, he said Security Exchange Commission (SEC) has tightened rules and regulations to restore the shaken confidence. "Besides, we are continuing nationwide awareness programmes so that the investors can engage in share trading confidently," the CSE president said.

"We send our officials to different organisations and academic institutions to conduct awareness programmes on stock share market operations," he said. "We organised 75 seminars and symposiums in different places in this regard. This awareness programme will continue," he added.

He said presently there is dearth of supply of good stocks in market. "By ensuring supply of good scrips, the market could make a turnaround and trading could see a big boost."

The profitable and multinational companies should come up in this regard, he said.

He said the CSE is presently operating from three cities -- Chittagong, Sylhet and Dhaka -- through automated trading system. Eight brokers have already



Salman Ispahani

started Internet trading informally, he said.

The CSE president said Internet trading will begin in full swing after formal inauguration by the finance minister.

He said the bourse is currently awaiting for time from the minister's office.

A total of 185 companies were listed with CSE so far while its market capital stood at Tk 58.6 billion. "We hope the number of listed companies to reach 200 by the end of this year," he said. CSE started its journey in 1995 with only 14 listed companies.

Salman Ispahani said trading volume on CSE had declined in the past three months due to slowdown in global economy. The trading volume came to around Tk 2.50 crore a day in average from an average of over Tk 5 to 6 crore three months back, he said.

"We hope it would pick up again," he added. "Actually war fear has not affected trading here much. It is the overall global economy that left an influence here," he said.

Free, but not for all

ATAULGANI SUMON

T HE books meant for free distribution among the primary school students are being sold in the open markets of port city.

The shopkeepers are demanding higher price for the books.

The books with seal 'for free distribution' and 'printed, financed and supervised by the government' are being sold at Andarkilla, Chawkbazar, and New Market.

A set of books for class four is being sold at Tk 180. A set of books

for other classes is being sold between Tk 120 and 220.

"The government could not supply sufficient books for the students and many schools in the city and its surrounding areas received only 50 per cent of their requirements," a teacher of a city primary school told while he was talking to this correspondent.

Somehow the books had reached the markets to create an artificial crisis, he said.

A section of unscrupulous government officials had supplied those books to the markets for making money, he added. Though the students were supposed to get

those free of cost.

Some of the headmasters of the city's primary schools in collusion with a section of dishonest government officials managed to get sanction of more books than the actual number of students, sources said. They reportedly drew the additional books showing fictitious students and sold it on the open markets for money, sources added. "The books have huge demand as many of the students are yet to get books from their schools," a shopkeeper said. "The demand has increased as the schools could not provide the books to the students even after two months of academic

year," the shopkeeper at Andarkilla said.

"The guardians have to buy the books at higher price as they are worried about their children," he added.

The books have also not reached most of the primary schools in 14 upazilas under Chittagong district as yet. According to rule, the government has to provide books to all students of class one and class two and 50 per cent for the students of class three, four and five.

Binihara School in Patiya upazila got 55 sets of books against 69 students for class one and 66 sets against 70 students for class two. The school got only 36 sets of books against 72 students for class three. Thirty-five sets of books have reached the school against 69 for class four while 29 sets for 60 students of class five. Many students did not get mathematics, Poribesh Porichiti, Biggan, and Poribesh Porichiti Samaz.

Besides, students of many primary schools including New Rangamati Government Primary School, Kathalitali Government Primary School, Shah Primary School, and Rani Dayami Government Primary School did not get books yet.

One assistant teacher of a primary school told this correspondent that due to artificial crisis of books the students are reading the old books of previous years.

He expressed great regret that the 'free books' are being sold on the open markets of the city. The government should find out the culprits responsible for the artificial crisis, he added. The government should also take initiative for fair distribution of books among all students as soon as possible, he said.

"If books with the seal of any thana are seen for sale in the open markets of the port city, we would take stern action against the officials concerned," district education officer Nurul Amin said.



PHOTO STAR

A devotee renders *kirtan* (religious song) during Shib Chaturdashi Mela atop Chandranath Pahar at Sitakunda.

Dr William Radice in Chittagong

MOHIT UL ALAM

DR William Radice is the most well known modern orientalist, who often comes to Kolkata and Bangladesh to deliver lectures on Michael Madhusudan Dutta and Rabindranath Tagore.

An Englishman by birth, Dr Radice did his PhD from Oxford on Madhusudan Dutta. He is now teaching at SOAS, London.

Of the many books to his credit, one recent is Penguin edition of Tagore's short stories, translated by him. Dr Radice has also published the translation of Madhusudan's poems including parts of the poet's epic *Meghanad Badhakabya*.

He speaks Bangla fluently, though he writes in English. He is also an English poet of note, and his latest book of poems is called "The Gifts".

Dr Radice is a great friend of poets and litterateurs from Kolkata and Bangladesh.

Whenever he comes to Bangladesh, he never fails to make his journey to Chittagong. He says that Chittagong has a special place in his heart. It is because one of his ancestors, an uncle or so, worked in Chittagong.

On his visit to Chittagong this time he presented a paper at the monthly seminar of the Bangladesh Research Society at the Chittagong University Club (City) on February 28. The paper was on Madhusudan and was well read, and as Dr Radice recited his translation of parts from the poet's epic work, audience present could feel the rhyme and rhythm of the original even in translation.

Dr Radice in his speech said that Madhusudan was the classic poet proper, and that his use of the Indian myths was aimed at contextualising them in the modern India. He felt that more widespread translation of Madhusudan should have been there as he was still the most representative poet of the Bengal Renaissance.

The last time he came to Chittagong was in 1998. He was then interviewed by Kaldhara, a well known literary journal published

from Chittagong. In that interview he frankly discussed his literary aims, opinions on translation, views about cross-cultural phenomena in world literature.

He said that though he was a committed academician, his real passion was poetry, and he felt that maybe one day he would decide to do less of research work and more of poetry writing.

In answer to a question, he said that when a nation is making progress, it is the middle-class, which takes the initiative. But he was a little concerned seeing that in Bangladesh such leadership is not in the hands of the middle-class intelligentsia, and he thought that as a result an all spreading social malaise could be noticed everywhere. About translation his views are that works in Bangla literature should be translated in greater numbers. For him translation is as much creative as the original itself, for the phase of cross-fertilisation between the two languages during the act of translation is very satisfying a job.

He thought that Tagore's poems were easier to translate than his short stories. And, he said that Tagore's own translation of his poems into English was often plain bad.

He criticised Yeats for misrepresenting Tagore to the western readers. Yeats's introduction to the "Song Offerings" presented Tagore as only a poet of rivers and birds, and of spirituality. That, according to Dr Radice, was responsible to give birth to a negative reaction to Tagore's poetry.

Of slight build, Dr Radice is very tall, 6.5 feet. He stoops a little, and with his wide placid eyes he actually looks very gentle and courteous, which he is.

As he is a great admirer of Bangladeshi food, he is also adept in our eating habits. He eats with bare hands like us, and does not mind drinking water served at the table in the restaurant.

Dr Radice is a great asset for us as he has been doing so much for Bangla literature.