

DHAKA TODAY

Film show

In collaboration with Alliance Francaise, Zahir Raihan Film Society will screen three films to pay tribute to French filmmaker Maurice Pialat who died recently. On the first day 'Loulou' (1980) will be screened. Venue: Alliance Francaise, Dhanmondi. Time: 6.00pm.

Movie show

Academy Film Society will screen a movie titled 'Full Metal Jacket'. Venue: 21/C, Jigatola. Time: 6.30pm.

Drama festival

As part of the week-long drama festival, organised by Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy, Monu Theatre of Maulavibazar will stage a drama titled 'Dukhia Sukhia'. Venue: Shoukat Osman Memorial auditorium, Central Public Library. Time: 7.00pm.

Musical evening

A solo musical evening of Sanjeeda Khatun, organised by Jatiya Rabindra Sangeet Sammilan Parishad, will be held. Venue: WVA auditorium, Dhanmondi.

Seminar

Iranian Embassy organises a seminar on 'Shah-Namah of Abul Quasem Ferdowsi and translation of poet Moniruddin Yousuf'. Venue: Office of the Cultural Counsellor, Dhanmondi. Time: 4.30pm.

MMC seminar

Mass-line Media Centre (MMC) in cooperation with Bangladesh Crime Reporters Association, organises a seminar on 'Official Secrets Act: Access of journalists in information sector' with Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Moudud Ahmed as chief guest. Venue: National Press Club. Time: 3.00pm.

Lecture

National Museum of Science and Technology (NMST) organises lectures on Popular Science Series. On the first

day, Prof Ali Asgar, president of Bangladesh Physical Society, will deliver a lecture on 'Science and War'. Venue: NMST auditorium, Agargaon. Time: 3.00pm.

Certificate giving ceremony

The certificate giving ceremony of Shishu Swasthya Foundation, Bangladesh, will be held. Venue: Mirpur Section-2. Time: 4.30pm.

Consultation meeting

In cooperation with UNFPA, Khan Foundation organises a consultation meeting on ICPD +10 Bangladesh Report. Venue: Democracy auditorium, Momenbagh. Time: 9.00am.

Roundtable

A roundtable on HIV/AIDS, organised by Women and Children Affairs ministry, will be held with Health and Family Welfare Minister Dr Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain as chief guest. Venue: Hotel Sheraton. Time: 10.00am.

UFGTW meeting

A meeting of the United Federation of Garments Tailoring Workers (UFGTW) will be held with Leader of the Opposition in Parliament and Awami League President Sheikh Hasina as chief guest. Venue: 23, Bangabandhu Avenue. Time: 4.00pm.

Rotary meeting

Weekly meeting of the Rotary Club of Dhaka North will be held. Venue: Sonargaon Hotel. Time: 6.00pm.

Meeting

A meeting of the executive committee of Uttarbanga Janakalyan Samity will be held. Venue: 54, Dilkusha. Time: 5.00pm.

Blood donation

Jagannath University Robber Scout organises a voluntary blood donation camp. Venue: University campus. Time: 10.00am.



PHOTO: STAR

Awami League President Sheikh Hasina calls on visiting Sri Lankan President Chandrika Kumaratunga at Sonargaon Hotel yesterday.

US blocks relief in northern Iraq

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struggling against the odds for weeks to continue saving lives, but now the help we have promised them is being endlessly delayed."

Save the Children said it had been trying to land a plane in Arbil in northern Iraq with medical supplies to treat 40,000 people and emergency supplies for malnourished children.

Humanitarian agencies warned the situation is critical. The World Health Organisation said the main hospitals in Mosul had been looted and were operating at about 50 per cent of capacity.

Khaled Mansour, a WFP spokesman, said: "Time is running out for the 60 per cent of the Iraqi people who are entirely dependent on food handouts, and our goal is to restore the system by the beginning of May."

The Red Cross reported that while Baghdad continued to be a serious problem, it was gaining improved access to hospitals in the south and centre of the country, including the cities of Basra, Umm Qasr, Nasiriyah and Zubayr.

"There are 10 main hospitals in Baghdad and most of them were totally ruined," said a Red Cross spokeswoman, Tamara al-Rifai.

In the north, a US military spokesman insisted that while the area around Arbil was safe for military planes, which could defend themselves, civilian planes might be in danger.

DEBATE OVER UN ROLE

The European Union foreign policy chief, Javier Solana, took a swipe at the United States in a newspaper interview, saying it should use its clout to form consensus among its allies rather than impose its will by force. He renewed calls for a major UN role in Iraq.

The United States resents the UN Security Council's refusal to support its invasion of Iraq.

The United States has promised to pull out its troops and hand over control to an Iraqi government when it considers a US-led interim administration has completed its job.

UNINSEPECTORS

The EU believes UN arms inspectors must return to Iraq to verify any weapons of mass destruction found by allied forces, EU external affairs commissioner Chris Patten said in Sydney yesterday.

Patten also supported a plea by United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan for a fresh Security Council mandate for the UN to play a role in post-war Iraq, including adequate resources to do its job.

"In my view there's no question that having as much international legitimacy for a post-conflict situation as possible makes sense in everybody's interest," said Patten, who arrived in Australia last week for EU-Australia ministerial talks.

He told commercial television in an interview screened Sunday that there should be as wide as possible belief in the reports of inspectors as possible.

"Obviously it must be a worry that if things are simply found by the coalition which has been fighting the war, people in Arab countries, the Islamic world, will be less inclined to believe it than if it was done by the UN."

"So I think there's an interest for everyone in getting the UN back at some stage to verify anything that's discovered."

Australian Foreign Minister Alexander Downer said he agreed with Patten on the need for UN arms verification.

He said there were some issues to be sorted out by the UN Security Council before the arms inspectors could return to Iraq.

EASTER SUNDAY, KARBALA PILGRIMAGE

Iraqi Christians observed a sombre Easter Sunday, praying for an end to postwar chaos and uncertainty.

While Christians prayed, tens of thousands of Shi'ite Muslims, Iraq's majority population, beat their chests as they streamed toward the holy central city of Karbala, in a pilgrimage banned by Saddam Hussein for nearly a quarter of a century.

Dozens of tents were set up along the 50-mile route where Shi'ite groups scooped up water from oil drums and handed it to pilgrims to sustain them on their tough walk. The pilgrimage reaches its climax on Wednesday.

Protocol

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Lankan President Chandrika Kumaratunga and Prime Minister Khaleda Zia at the Prime Minister's Office.

Sri Lankan High Commissioner in Dhaka Gaminis S Munasinghe and Bangladesh Foreign Secretary Shamser Mobin Chowdhury signed the protocol papers.

Kumaratunga, Khaleda, Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan and State Minister for Foreign Affairs Reaz Rahman were present at the signing ceremony.

Later, Khaleda hosted a luncheon in honour of the Sri Lankan president. Senior ministers, Chief Justice Mainur Reza Chowdhury, diplomats and chiefs of the three services also attended the luncheon.

Larger HC bench formed to hear writs on judges' service

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A larger bench with three judges of the High Court was constituted yesterday for hearing the writ petitions challenging the government's non-confirmation of the service of additional judges despite recommendation of the chief justice.

The bench is comprised of senior judges Hamidul Haque, Syed Amirul Islam and M M Ruhul Amin. They are likely to take up the writs in a couple of days.

Three former additional judges -- Faruque Ahmed, Hassan Fayez Siddique and Shamsul Huda jointly filed the petitions.

The other writ was filed by Advocate Idrisur Rahman in the form of Public Interest Litigation (PIL) on behalf of two former additional judges -- Abdus Salam and Mottazuddin Ahmed.

Chief Justice Mainur Reza Chowdhury formed the larger bench following suggestion of a division bench on Saturday that referred the writ petition to him saying it called for constitutional interpretations.

Trucks ram fish market, kill 5

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Five people were killed and three others injured when a truck hit another and the two crashed on a crowded fish market in Jatrabari yesterday.

Only one of the dead was identified till yesterday evening. His name is Nurul Islam.

The accident occurred when a Dhaka-bound truck rammed into another standing at the roadside after unloading fish at 4:30am.

Both trucks rolled on the fish traders, buyers and labourers at the market, leaving five dead on the spot.

The seriously injured three were under treatment at Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

Arrested RAT man sent to jail

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Kazi Iqbal Shafiq, an assistant commissioner (AC) of the Rapid Action Team (RAT), arrested on charge of extortion, was sent to the Dhaka Central Jail yesterday after one-day remand.

The Detective Branch (DB) of Police brought him to the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's (CMM) Court at 4:00pm Sunday.

In the forwarding report the DB said they had gathered important information from the AC during the interrogation. There was no further remand prayer.

A bail petition was submitted on behalf of the AC but the magistrate, Moksdur Rahman Patwari, rejected it and ordered him to the jail.

Hasina

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US\$ 100 million mostly in textile, garments and the service sectors in Bangladesh during the previous AL rule," the AL leaders said.

The annual trade volume between the two SAARC countries is about 10 million US dollars now, they added.

They also hoped for immediate 'peace and stability' in Iraq.

Party General Secretary Abdul Jalil MP, Political and Organising Secretary of the party Saber Hossain Chowdhury and International Affairs Secretary Syed Abul Hossain MP was accompanied Sheikh Hasina in the 45 minutes talk.

President Chandrika Kumaratunga also invited Sheikh Hasina to Sri Lanka.

HC judges

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minister," said a source.

Political consideration in the appointment of judges to the highest court has emerged as an important issue recently.

After taking office in 2001, the present government declined to confirm the service of 11 additional judges, appointed during the Awami League rule, despite recommendations from the chief justice.

The move sparked protest from Bar members who termed it a sheer political step.

The number of judges at the High Court now stands at 48, of whom five would retire this year.

Besides, confirmation of nine additional judges is still lying in the government's in tray with a July deadline.

The government is considering non-confirmation of the service of some of the judges as they were appointed at the fag end of the Awami League rule, sources said.

Engr murder

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Rakshit also confirmed the identity, police said.

Police believe Srikanta might have been killed following abduction at gunpoint. However, they could not say what was the reason behind the killing.

Family sources said a land dispute with an influential neighbour adjacent to their city residence at Hazarigoli might have been the reason behind the murder. "We believe this is a cold-blooded murder," said Aporop.

Shikha Rani Rakshit, Srikanta's mother, told journalists that the neighbour and his mother had forcibly occupied a portion of their land on December 25, 1998 and threatened them of dire consequences only a month ago.

Anti-graft body

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He said the commission would have independent budget and run within a legal framework. The law ministry is drafting a bill to be placed in the budget session, he said.

"We think the formation of the commission is urgent to combat corruption," said the minister, referring to the last year's Paris meet where the donors expressed their concern over growing corruption.

Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Barrister Moudud Ahmed also attended the meeting and reflected the view of the finance minister. He said setting up of the commission was the government's election pledge.

The finance minister meanwhile hinted that the government would initiate a dialogue with the opposition political parties in the process of passing the bill in the Jatiya Sangsad.

Principal secretary to the prime minister, cabinet secretary, finance secretary and law secretary also attended the meeting.

SARS epidemic Beijing sacks health minister, Musharraf's visit postponed

REUTERS, Beijing

China sacked Health Minister Zhang Wenkang and Beijing deputy party boss Meng Xuenong yesterday, just hours after officials disclosed a tenfold leap in the number of SARS cases in Beijing.

"Zhang Wenkang was removed from the post of the secretary of the leading Party members' group of the Ministry of Health of the Communist Party of China (CPC)," the official Xinhua news agency said in a terse one-paragraph report.

"Meng Xuenong was removed from the post of the deputy secretary of the CPC Beijing Municipal Committee", it said.

No reason was given. Rumours had been circulating over the past several days over the fate of both men over their handling of the outbreak of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) which has killed 79 in China and infected 2,209.

Yesterday, China increased its number of SARS cases in Beijing to 339, and added 402 suspected cases and 18 deaths. City officials had previously maintained there were only 37 cases in the capital and the minister had declared it "safe to travel to China."

AFP from Islamabad adds: Pakistani

President Pervez Musharraf's scheduled visit to China next month has been postponed as Beijing put off an Asian economic forum meeting due to outbreak of killer SARS, state media said yesterday.

The president's visit has been postponed until November, state-run Associated Press of Pakistan (APP) reported.

Musharraf was invited to visit China to address the second conference of Boao economic forum scheduled in Beijing for May 18-19.

The news agency quoted a Boao official as saying in Beijing yesterday that the conference had been put off due to Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) virus.

"The decision to this effect has been taken, since the participation of some foreign guests was doubtful in wake of the recent outbreak of SARS," the Chinese official said.

The news agency said the organisers of Boao Forum for Asia, an Asian equivalent of the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, were now considering re-convening the conference in October or November.

Beijing also cancelled the week-long May Day holidays to prevent the spread of the epidemic.

Consultations on policy

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finalised at a National Forum held in October 2001.

A meeting of the chairpersons and member secretaries of the task forces, held on January 14, 2003 at the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) with Professor Rehman Sobhan in the chair, decided to undertake a new initiative to review the recommendations.

Two years after the elections, the task forces have been reconstituted to review the initiatives taken by the government to implement the recommendations of policy briefs prepared by the task forces before the election.

The newly constituted 17 task forces are on trade policy, financial sector, transport, education policy, information and communication technology, gender equality and women's empowerment, budgetary discipline and fiscal programmes, development and governance of the energy sector, administrative reforms, urban governance, rural economy, agriculture and non-farm activities, poverty eradication and employment generation, health and population policy, environmental policy, corruption, democratic process, and industrial policy.

Members of the task forces, numbering 215, include eminent specialists, business leaders and representatives from civil society and grassroots organisations. Till now

these task forces have met in about 40 meetings to discuss the draft task force reports.

The CPD, the Prothom Alo and The Daily Star have supported this national initiative and are facilitating the consultation process. The first dialogue on foreign trade, financial sector and transport will be held in Chittagong followed by consultations in Sylhet, Rajshahi, Barisal, Dhaka, Mymensingh, Narayanganj and Khulna.

Local elected representatives, civil society leaders, grassroots organisations, specialists and journalists will participate in these regional consultations where the various draft task force reports would be presented.

The policy review initiative is aimed to provide an opportunity to the civil society to voice its concerns and interests. It is also expected to help the government to make mid-course corrections and take up new initiatives.

The completion of the regional consultations will be followed by a National Policy Review Forum 2003 on June 3-5, 2003 on the eve of the presentation of the national budget for 2003-2004. The national forum will finalise the final recommendations of the task forces.

National Policy Review Forum 2003 Organised by the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) in association with the Prothom Alo and The Daily Star

Schedule of the Regional Consultations and National Forum

Date	Location	Task Force
April 26, 2003 (Saturday)	Chittagong	Trade Policy/Financial sector Transport
May 3, 2003 (Saturday)	Khulna	Education Sector Policy Information and Communication
Technology		Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment
May 8, 2003 (Thursday)	Dhaka	Budgetary Discipline and Fiscal Programmes
May 10, 2003 (Thursday)	Mymensingh	Rural Economy: Agriculture and Non-farming
May 17, 2003 (Saturday)	Rajshahi	Poverty Eradication and Employment Generation
May 24, 2003 (Parliamentary, Judiciary)	Barisal	Health and Population Policy Environmental Policy
May 26, 2003 (Monday)	Narayanganj	Corruption Democratic Processes
June 3-5, 2003 (Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday)	Dhaka	Industrial Policy, Privatisation SMEs National Forum

What's the tiger truth?

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animals due to deforestation.

"Last year the villagers killed one tiger at my Joymoni village and other two in 2001," recalled Abdul Latif, a forest trader for 30 years in this region.

As the Kharma Khal (canal) in Joymoni has dried out, tigers come to this village more often, he added.

Whenever villagers kill a tiger the forest department goes over there and skin it before burying the body.

In the last seven years, the forest department collected 80 tiger skins, of which 30 are lying with them now. The department gifted 50 skins in the year 2000 to the different government agencies as decoration piece, a source in the department alleged.

No authentic statistics on poaching and death because of salinity could be obtained.

Tigers meanwhile killed 427 people from 1984 to 2001. Of the dead, 53 per cent are fisherman, 16 per cent 'goran' wood trader and 13 per cent honey collectors, said Nurul Islam Howlader, Deputy team leader of Sundarban Biodiversity Conservation Project.

County	Early 1990s	Late 1990s
Bangladesh	300-460	362
Bhutan	50-240	67-81
Cambodia	100-200	500-700
China	30-80	71-97
India	2750-3750	2500-3750
Indonesia	600-650	400-500
Lao PDR	present	present
Malaysia	650-650491-510	
Myanmar	Present	230-465
Nepal	150-200	93-97
North Korea	<10	>8
Russia	150-200	330-371
Thailand	150-600	250-501
Vietnam	200-300	<100
Total	5090-7390	5421-7555

Exports

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from readymade garments and knitwear, according to the Export Promotion Bureau (EPB).

SARS has so far claimed 81 lives in Hong Kong, which has over 1,300 positive cases. Hong Kong forecasts a one per cent drop in GDP because of the flu.

Cabinet: Flag rule

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top chamber bodies including the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry and the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association in separate letters urged the government to scrap the ordinance immediately.

The commerce minister also gave his opinion in favour of cancellation of the ordinance, the proposal said, adding that it was promulgated in the interest of the state-owned Bangladesh Shipping Corporation (BSC).

But sources said the government move to cancel the ordinance followed pressure from the Singapore-based Chittagong Feeder Trade Committee (CFTC) -- the main platform of foreign feedervessels.

The CFTC is ruled by Chairman of the QC container Limited and Parliamentary Affairs Advisor to the Prime Minister Salahuddin Quader Chowdhury.

Protesting the government's move, local ship owners said it would ruin the shipping sector. The foreign shipping companies have been doing monopoly business in Bangladesh and became desperate to cancel the ordinance as the local shipping sector started to flourish of late, they said.

They said such protective laws exist in at least 58 countries, some of them highly developed and pioneers of free economy.

The cancellation would also establish dominance and control of the foreign ship owners over the local shipping business.

The local ship owners claimed that some agents of foreign shipping companies were spreading misleading information and were engaged in propaganda campaign against them.

They also claimed to have the full capacity of container carrying from Bangladesh ports to deep sea port hubs where the mother vessels anchor. Currently, 13 local oceangoing container ships can carry around 15,720 twenty equivalent units (TEUs) in a month

against the requirement of 14,238 TEUs.

The local ships can also reach the hub as quickly as the foreign flag vessels, they said. The local ships are also providing quality service and would develop tremendously if the ordinance is enforced properly, they claimed.

2 school students drowned

BSS, Rajshahi

Two school students drowned in the river Padma near Kumarpara area under Boalia police station here yesterday afternoon.

Quoting eyewitnesses hospital and police sources said they were playing cricket near the Padma at about 1.30 pm. At one stage the cricket-ball fell in the river. When they tried to pick up the ball from the river, both of them drowned.

The victims were identified as Shaishab Paul alias Topu, 15, and Pranab Kumar Saha, 14, students of class ten of local Bholanath BB Hindu Academy.

One shot dead at Badda

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Armed gangsters shot dead a man at Badda Saturday night.

Police recovered the body of Mamun Hossain, 32, of Barura Ranjanipara at 7:30am yesterday.

The gangsters shot him in the head and left his body on the Barua road, police said. However, they could not confirm the motive behind the murder.

The victim's body was sent to Dhaka Medical College Hospital for autopsy.

spoke at the workshop.

Dr Mahabub Hossain told the workshop that while the incomes generated through farming activities were distributed equally to a certain extent, earnings from non-farm sector were unequally distributed, further widening the gulf between the rich and poor in rural Bangladesh.

Noting that rice's contribution to household income declined from 39 per cent to 24 per cent in '90s, Dr Hossain said: "Though rice is losing profitability in terms of high input costs and low output price, homegrown rice still got economic advantage over imported rice."

Both Dr Hossain and Prof Abdul Bayes noted that while rural income had been accelerating from non-farm sector, the farm sector was providing backup support and playing the role of 'equalizer' in healing the unequal distribution of income generating from the non-farm sector.

Dr Mahabub Hossain and co-authors argued in favour of more public sector investment for promotion of rice research and development of low-cost input management technologies so that farm and non-farm sectors could grow hand-in-hand for the flourish of rural economy.

SAARC still has future

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Prime Minister Ranil Vikramasinghe on the peace process, Kumaratunga said the president in the Sri Lankan system of government exercised executive power and could do anything except turning a "man into a woman and a woman into a man".

Khaleda and Kumaratunga had a common view that the UN should play the central role in Iraq rebuilding and the situation in Iraq should stabilise soon with the Iraqi people enjoying their sovereignty, the secretary said.

The leaders of the two SAARC neighbours also resolved that a durable solution to problems in Palestine must come, he said.

Terming the Sri Lankan president's visit useful, friendly and productive, Chowdhury said Kumaratunga had a hour-long discussion with Khaleda yesterday and both the leaders discussed the entire gamut of bilateral, regional and international issues of common concern and interests.

Sri Lanka has a 100 million dollars investment