

What's on today...

Seminar and cultural function: The National Museum authorities have organised the programme to mark the 85th founding anniversary of the Museum. Venue: National Museum auditorium. Time: 5 pm.

Recitation : Boikuntho Abridge Academy will hold a recitation programme titled "Bede Kahin" to celebrate 12 years of its foundation. Venue: Public Library auditorium. Time: 7 pm.

Regional Workshop: The concluding session of the workshop on "Improving the Availability of Power in South Asia - Search for Optimal Technological Options" will be held. Chief guest: State Minister for Power, Energy and Mineral Resources Prof Rafiqul Islam. Venue: IEB Auditorium. Time: 5 pm.

Condolence Meeting: The Arabic Department of Dhaka University has organised a condolence meeting in memory of late Prof Khandoker Abdur Rahman. Venue: DU Arts Building. Time: 12:30 pm.

Open Forum: Women For Women, a research and study group, has organised an open forum on "Is prostitution work?". Venue: WVA auditorium, House-20, Road-16, Dhanmondi. Time: 10 am.

Rotary Club of Dhaka Central: The weekly meeting of the club will be held. Guest Speaker: Rtn Mosharraf Hossain. Topic: Management. Venue: Dhaka Club.

ABC Meet: The Special General Meeting of Assistance for Blind Children (ABC) will be held. The half-yearly activities of the agency will be reviewed in the meeting. Venue: ABC Head office. Time: 10 am.



Finance Minister S A M S Kibria inaugurated an exhibition at the National Museum yesterday. Organised on the occasion of 85th founding anniversary of the museum, the exhibition will continue till August 11.

1500-line exchange opens in Gopalganj
Digital telephone exchanges to be set up in 70 thanas

GOPALGANJ, Aug 7: Post Tele-communications, Housing and Public Works Minister Mohammad Nasim today said Bangladesh Awami League respects the fundamentals of true democracy and will guard against any conspiracy to destabilise normalcy in the country, reports BSS.

"Though we lost in Manikganj and Barisal by-elections, the democratic values in the country have been consolidated as the party (AL) did not interfere in the election conducted independently by the Bangladesh Election Commission," he said.

The minister said this while inaugurating the 1500-line digital tele-communication exchange here which will be installed by the Chinese Great Dragon Telecom Group.

Chinese Ambassador to Bangladesh Wang Chungui, president of China National Construction and Agricultural Machinery Import and Export Corporation, Jiangcheng Zun, Sheikh Fazul Karim Selim, MP, Mohammad Farook Khan, MP, Chairman of the Bangladesh Telephone and Telegraph Board (BTTB) M A Mannan Chowdhury, president of the district Awami League to provide assistance in setting up one lakh 89 thousands digital telephones in the country," he said.

Nasim said apart from 1200 lines of normal switching, there will be 300 lines of wireless local loop-line in Gopalganj and 400 lines in the remote UBS unit in Tungipara.

The Chinese Ambassador Wang Chungui said the Chinese communist party had good relation with Bangladesh Awami League and Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman had a deep friendship with comrade Mao.

"The close and cooperative relations between Bangladesh and China has entered into a new phase and the Chinese government will make all possible efforts for materialising the dreams of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman," he said.

Earlier, the minister along with the Chinese Ambassador visited Tungipara where father to the nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was laid to eternal rest. They placed wreaths at the mazar of Bangabandhu and offered 'munajat' seeking divine blessings for the departed soul of father of the nation.

The minister said telephone was a luxury item even in the last decade, but now it has become a weapon of development in the age of technology-based modern world.

The minister said the country needs speedy development in the information technology (IT) sector.

He said different countries including China, Germany, the USA and Japan have expressed their willingness for assisting the sector of the country.

"The Chinese government has already expressed its desire

Foreign diplomats visit frontier regions
Five Indian civilians killed in Kashmir in Pak attacks

NEW DELHI, Aug 7: Foreign diplomats today toured the frontier regions of Kashmir where Indian and Pakistani troops fought a seven-day artillery duel, the Press Trust of India said, reports AFP.

Military attaches from 25 countries and regions including Britain, the United States, the Gulf, Eastern Europe and Africa toured the troubled regions of Rajouri and Poonch where the fighting had been intense.

The guns fell silent Thursday morning at most places across the 1,300 kms (800-mile) line of control, a de facto border which divides the Indian and Pakistani zones of divided Kashmir.

The officials were also briefed by Indian commanders at a military post called Nagrota, 12 kms (eight miles) from the Kashmiri winter capital of Jammu, a defence ministry spokesman said.

India says more than 50 people have died since the firing began on Thursday last week, while Pakistan has reported 75 deaths. Scores have been injured in both sides of the border.

India and Pakistan have blamed each other for precipitating the artillery exchanges, which began last week as the prime ministers of the two sides met for fruitless talks.

Another AFP report from Srinagar adds: Five Indian civilians were killed today in Kashmir as Pakistan resumed cross-border artillery attacks after a brief lull, Indian officials here said.

Four of the victims died in the frontier region of Kargil, some 240 kilometres (150 miles) southwest of Srinagar, when their truck was destroyed by a Pakistani shell.

The other was killed in the northern district of Poonch, one of the sites of an artillery duel between Indian and Pakistani troops over the past eight days which has left around 125 dead.

Officials here said that except for the mountainous region of Kargil, the shelling had subsided at most places in the Indian zone of the divided Himalayan territory.

"A stretch of six kilometres (four miles) is under direct (Pakistani) fire, which is delaying our military convoys," an Indian army official told AFP from Kargil.

Indian officials in Uri, one of the worst-hit areas in northern Kashmir, say hundreds of houses, crops and fruit orchards had been damaged.

Weather

Light rain, gusty wind likely

Light to moderate rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty wind is likely to occur at a few places over Chittagong, Barisal, Dhaka and Sylhet divisions and at one or two places over Rajshahi and Khulna divisions with moderately heavy falls at one or two places over Chittagong and Sylhet divisions in the next 12 hours till 6 pm today, reports UNB.

Met Office said, day temperature may remain nearly unchanged over the country during the period.

Country's highest temperature 34.4 degree Celsius was recorded yesterday at Srimangal and the lowest 25.0 degree Celsius at Cox's Bazar.

The sun sets today at 6:37 pm and rises on Sunday at 5:31 am.

Maximum and minimum temperatures and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

City/Town	Temperature in Celsius		Humidity in percentage	
	Max	Min	Morn	Even
Dhaka	31.0	27.8	86	81
Chittagong	33.3	26.4	80	79
Khulna	33.2	27.3	84	77
Rajshahi	32.2	26.5	95	86
Barisal	31.4	26.8	84	89
Sylhet	33.8	26.0	88	75
Cox's Bazar	32.4	25.0	77	85

Repeal 5th and 8th amendments: Puja Parishad

By Staff Correspondent

Bangladesh Puja Uddhapan Parishad (BPUU) at its extended meeting yesterday demanded the repeal of the 5th and 8th amendments to the Constitution, says a press release.

The parishad also urged the government to repeal the Vested Property Act and take steps to stop its use immediately.

Held on the Dhakeshwari Temple premises, the meeting was presided over by P K Haolader, acting president of the parishad.

The meeting urged the government to establish a Hindu Foundation, dismantling the present Hindu Kalyan Trust.

The meeting condoled the death of Brojen Das, Ranesh Dasgupta, Anil Mojumder, Shibendu Chakraborty, Naresh Chowdhury and Monindra Goswami.

Attack on Gazipur AL office: 5 held

GAZIPUR, Aug 7: Police today arrested five people from Gazipur, poura area in connection with attack and damaging the poura Awami League office, reports BSS.

Earlier, police arrested five persons in connection with the incident.

Police said the arrested men are Alamgir, Saiful, Abed, To-fael, Anwar, Shamim, Shaiful, Aklas Uddin Shipon and Abdul Latif.

The arrested men, police said, belong to a political party. They clashed with another group of the same party on Tuesday.

2625 cartons of cigarettes seized

COMILLA, Aug 7: Comilla police today seized 2625 cartons of Benson and Hedges cigarette loaded in a Dhaka-bound truck from Alakhar Char on Dhaka-Chittagong highway, reports BSS.

Police arrested the driver and a passenger of the truck for their alleged involvement in smuggling the cigarettes.

Police said acting on a tip off, they stopped the truck at Alakhar Char and seized the contraband worth about Taka 28 lakh. The arrested persons were identified as: Mohammad Ali Azam and Mohammad Bilal Hossain.

Boy crushed under wheels of bus in Munshiganj

MUNSHIGANJ, Aug 7: A 10-year old boy Russel was crushed under the wheels of a speeding bus and about 10 persons were injured in a clash between two groups of people over the control of the Louhajang-Mawa Ferry Ghat on Dhaka-Mawa road today, reports BSS.

According to police and eyewitnesses, the clash began soon after the local administration had handed over the charge of the Mawa Ferry Ghat to its lessee Mawa Chat Boat Owners' Society yesterday at around 9:30 am. Three buses and one car were damaged in violence at Mawa crossing.



Seven organisations including Bangladesh Krishak Federation brought out a procession in the city yesterday protesting the recent killing of peasants in Sathkira. — Star photo

Quader visits flood hit areas of Munshiganj

State Minister for Youths, Sports and Cultural Affairs Obaidul Quader visited the flood-affected areas of Srinagar and Louhajang thanas of Munshiganj district yesterday, reports UNB.

The State Minister talked to the flood victims and distributed relief materials, including rice and cash money among them.

Some 15,000 families of 14 unions in Srinagar thana have been affected by the flood which damaged a vast tract of standing crops and seedlings, and dwelling houses and infrastructures.

He said the government has already taken post-flood rehabilitation and development plans along with the relief work.

Quader called upon all to come forward to remove the miseries of the flood-stricken people.

Parliament member Segufta Yasmin and secretary general of Muktiyoddah Sangsad Central Command Council Enamul Haq Chowdhury were, among others, with the state minister.

Homeless people to be rehabilitated under Asrayan projects: Khaleque

NARAYANGANJ, Aug 7: State Minister for Disaster Management and Relief Talukdar Abdul Khaleque today visited flood affected areas in five unions under Fatullah thana in the district and distributed relief materials among the victims, report BSS.

The minister addressed a number of wayside meetings in the areas and assured the flood victims of all possible government help to mitigate their sufferings.

He said homeless and destitute people would be rehabilitated under Ashrayan projects by building houses on government khas land in post flood rehabilitation programmes.

The minister distributed rice and cash to the flood affected people.

Later he visited Shitalkhya flood shelter camps in Narayanganj pourashava in the afternoon.

BDRCS chairman visits flood-hit areas of Sirajganj

Chairman of Bangladesh Red Crescent Society (BDRCS) Abdus Salam MP, yesterday visited the flood hit areas under Sirajganj and personally supervised the relief operation there, reports BSS.

In a giant exodus, villagers streamed out the flood-threatened area, leaving their homes behind. Many carried belongings on their back and took livestock with them as they walked "solemnly" away, Xinhua, the state-run news agency, reported.

Local authorities in badly flooded Hubei province declared an around-the-clock curfew over the area designated for possible flooding, Xinhua said. Only military personnel were permitted in the area.

A decision to deliberately flood towns and villages at the Jingjiang section of the Yangtze in Hubei would require the approval of the State Council, or Cabinet.

The worst moment of the year's flood control efforts is probably coming," the official newspaper China Daily quoted unidentified Yangtze River officials as saying.

The crisis was precipitated by a surge of floodwaters headed down river Friday that officials feared could cause sodden levees weakened by weeks of rain and floods to collapse.

In a nightmare come true for officials, embankments protecting Jiujiang city, down the Yangtze in southeast Jiangxi province, partly collapsed Friday, releasing a torrent of

Relief for flood-victims

Interact Club of Motijheel distributed cooked food and saline among the flood-affected people at city's Kadamtal area yesterday, reports UNB.

The club, sponsored by Rotary Club of Metropolitan Dhaka, served the food to more than 450 people sheltered at Kadamtal High School.

President of Rotary Club of Metropolitan Dhaka Farid Hossain and its secretary Magfir joined the interactors in distribution of relief materials.

Japan's opposition parties attack Obuchi's inaugural policy speech

TOKYO, Aug 7: Japanese opposition parties attacked Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi's inaugural policy speech today, saying he had failed to understand the critical state of the economy, reports AFP.

"Everything is the same as his predecessor did," Naoto Kan, leader of the largest opposition Democratic Party of Japan, told reporters.

Obuchi delivered his first policy speech to parliament since being chosen leader of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party and Prime Minister in late July following ex-premier Ryutaro Hashimoto's resignation.

The prime minister said tax cuts would far exceed six trillion yen (42 billion dollars) and extra government spending would total more than 10 trillion yen (69 billion dollars).

Obuchi promised to seek support from the opposition parties which dominate parliament's upper house to pass critical rescue legislation for the debt-ridden finance sector.

But Kan said the premier's speech did not clarify "what was actually wrong with the LDP-led administration, which was responsible for the current recession."

"From the speech I really cannot tell what he wants to do," the opposition leader said. "I will give just 35 points out of 100 to his speech."

Takenori Kanzaki, leader of new party Heiwa, another opposition party, said: "such a speech makes me doubt his will. His recognition of the status of the current economy is really poor."

Vajpayee sending envoy to China to improve ties

NEW DELHI, Aug 7: Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee plans to send a special envoy to China to improve ties strained by New Delhi's recent nuclear tests, newspapers reported here today, says AFP.

Jaswant Singh, who heads the Planning Commission and is a confidant of the prime minister, "is likely to visit China shortly," The Times of India said.

The Hindustan Times also said he was likely to go to Beijing, and added his engagements from Saturday had been cancelled to facilitate the trip.

But there was no independent confirmation of the report. Spokesman for the prime minister and Jaswant Singh, who enjoys Cabinet rank, could not be reached for comment.

"Due to the sensitive nature of the visit, the government is keeping it (visit) under wraps," The Times of India said.

Jaswant Singh, a leading member of the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has been used by the prime minister for confidential diplomatic contacts since the Indian nuclear tests in May.

Singh has held talks with US officials and travelled to Europe. He was the prime minister's special envoy last month at the meeting of the foreign ministers attending the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) in Manila.

Singh also held talks with Chinese Foreign Minister Tang Jiaxuan and Japanese Vice Foreign Minister Masahiko Kumura on the sidelines of the Manila meet.

He later joined Premier Vajpayee at a South Asian regional summit in Colombo, where the prime ministers of India and Pakistan held talks for the first time since their rival nuclear tests in May.

Russia expels 30 foreign intelligence officers

MOSCOW, Aug 7: Russia expelled 30 foreign intelligence officers and detained seven Russian nationals who worked for foreign spy agencies in 1997, the interfax news agency reported today, reports Xinhua.

The Federal Security Service (FSB) had exposed more than 400 "career" agents of foreign special services and others "legitimately suspected of being affiliated with them," said Alexander Zadanovich, chief of the FSB public relations centre.

They were under "strict surveillance," he added.

He singled out the FSB's success in foiling attempts by representatives of Sanam, an Iranian industrial group, to collect data on Russia's latest advances in space, aviation, nuclear and laser fields.

In addition, the FSB anti-terrorism department thwarted 134 terrorist plots and exposed 34 arms trading gangs, seizing 92 bombs, Zadanovich said.

China evacuates 330,000 from land along Yangtze River

BELJING, Aug 7: China began evacuating more than 300,000 people Friday from land along the raging Yangtze River that could be deliberately flooded in a desperate bid to safeguard areas downstream, reports AP.

With the Yangtze at record levels and rising, officials were preparing to open floodgates and even blow up a dike to divert floodwaters away from one of the most threatened sections of the 6,300-kilometer (3,900-mile)-long river.

In a giant exodus, villagers streamed out the flood-threatened area, leaving their homes behind. Many carried belongings on their back and took livestock with them as they walked "solemnly" away, Xinhua, the state-run news agency, reported.

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NATO to hold war games to warn Milosevic

WASHINGTON, Aug 7: NATO and European troops will hold exercises in the week after next and in Macedonia in September to warn Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic to end military action in Kosovo, the Pentagon said on Thursday, reports Reuters.

"I don't think that he should doubt our ability to move forces in very quickly, whether they be air forces or ground forces," defence department spokesman Ken Bacon said.

The announcement came after Secretary of State Madeleine Albright told Milosevic his offensive against ethnic Albanian guerrillas in Kosovo increased the threat of NATO military intervention.

President Bill Clinton and British Prime Minister Tony Blair also talked for 30 minutes by telephone on Thursday about ways to halt the Serb offensive.

"They discussed ways to increase the pressure on Milosevic and ways to put a stop to the offensive that is going on," White House spokesman Joe Lockhart said.

Lockhart said the two leaders agreed that a negotiated solution to the conflict was preferable but that contingency planning for dealing with Kosovo was "intensifying" within the NATO military alliance.

Bacon told reporters NATO contingency plans for possible military intervention in the Kosovo crisis were "largely done" and the patience of the allies was wearing thin over the continuing violence in the south Serbian province. He said the plans could be completed by today.

"NATO will have to decide what triggers its intervention," he said. "I think that every day the violence continues, it brings the NATO community closer to consensus on this."

Indo-Pak medical scientists try to bridge the gap

NEW DELHI, Aug 7: While guns boom in the border, medical scientists of India and Pakistan are trying to build bridges of cooperation, P Ramalingaswamy, former chief of Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) said here yesterday, reports PTI.

"This is a scientist-to-scientist programme to solve the common health problems of the subcontinent, he said while inaugurating a meeting on "seeking peace to live" organised by faculty members of the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) to mark the 53rd anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima.

Ramalingaswamy said a meeting between six Indian and six Pakistani doctors was held six months ago in a European capital to work out the programme. It was about to take off, then came the nuclear tests.