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SSC exams begin today

By Staff Correspondent
The Secondary School Certificate examinations under five education boards begin today.

Examinations of theoretical subjects will continue till March 23 followed by examinations. There will be no examinations on Fridays, March 7 and 17.

The examinations will be held in separate question papers for the boards this year. The decision was taken following incidents of frequent question leakage in the last two years' examinations with same question papers for all the boards.

Around 8.36 lakh students under Dhaka, Rajshahi, Chittagong, Comilla and Jessore boards will appear in the examinations. Of them, 2.50 lakh will sit for examinations under Rajshahi Board, 2.36 lakh under Dhaka Board, 1.50 lakh under Jessore Board, 1.40 lakh under Comilla Board and 60 thousand under Chittagong Board.

Under Dhaka Board, examinations will be held in 220 centres including 19 in the city and five outside the country. The overseas centres are Riyadh, Abu Dhabi, Jeddah, Tripoli and Bahrain.

Appointment of next FS being considered

By Staff Correspondent

The government is considering the names of several diplomats for appointment as foreign secretary following the death of Mustafizur Rahman.

Among them are Mahmood Ali, high commissioner to U.K. Shafi Sami, high commissioner to India; Anwarul Karim Chowdhury, permanent representative to the United Nations; and Moazzem Ali, ambassador to France, sources concerned said.

Both Mahmood Ali and Shafi Sami are among the senior most officers under the foreign ministry, belonging to the 1966 batch. Sami joined the Civil Service of Pakistan in 1966.

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Khaleda calls on Mahathir

Leader of the Opposition in parliament Begum Khaleda Zia paid a courtesy call on Malaysian Prime Minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad at his hotel suite yesterday, reports UNB.

The two leaders endorsed the view that the projects being undertaken by the D-8 countries would yield due benefits to their peoples provided the respective governments and private sectors take up these projects in all earnest.

Mahathir apprised the

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Prayer Timings

March 4		
Fajr	Azan	Jamaat
5:29	5:34	
Johr	12:45	1:15
Asr	4:30	4:35
Maghrib	6:05	6:08
Esha	7:25	7:30

Source: Islamic Foundation

9-yr WB ban goes, power sector to get \$600m for reform

The World Bank proposed a 600 million-dollar loan for Bangladesh's power sector reform, ending a long moratorium, reports UNB.

With yesterday's offer for credits, the World Bank resumes financing the sector after nine years of suspension slapped after the power authorities failed to meet the donor's condition for cutting down high system loss that once shot up to 40 per cent.

Leader of the visiting WB power delegation and principal energy specialist of the Bank Marc L Heitner placed the credit proposal to Commerce and Industries Minister Tofail Ahmed at a meeting with him at his office, officials said.

Welcoming the proposal, the minister said Prime Minister

Sheikh Hasina is determined to provide electricity to every household of rural people with the help and support of the World Bank and other donors.

"It's true that only 15 per cent people of Bangladesh are now getting power... we have taken steps to generate more electricity to cover more areas and meet growing demand for our industrialisation process," he told the team.

Tofail said the government had already privatised the energy sector and many foreign companies were now participating in power generation.

Now the government is implementing a project at a cost of Tk 105 crore for the rural electrification in eight new districts, the minister informed.

Responding to power sector

reform proposal of the WB, he said the government is in favour of reforms in various sectors, including power sector.

"We want to involve private sector with the distribution system in addition to generation of electricity."

Explaining various elements of their proposed reform package, the Bank officials said with the implementation of the reform programme, the power sector of Bangladesh would benefit from high-quality service, consumer protection, a sector able to attract private capital, additional resources made available for social programmes and public support.

The minister said the people of Bangladesh have minimum demand to government. They

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Hasina, Sharif may hold talks today

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif are expected to hold bilateral talks today, official sources said last night, reports BSS.

The talks will take place before Sharif leaves for Islamabad ending his three-day visit to Bangladesh. It is likely that the two leaders will hold talks at the Zia International Airport.

Sharif, who arrived here Monday to attend the D-8 summit, was staying at Rangamati last night, the sources said. Before flying to the hill tracts, the Pakistani leader visited the Sundarbans yesterday.

In the morning he flew to Hiron point of the Sundarbans and had a river cruise in the deep forest to see the scenic beauties of the world's largest mangrove forest and the abode of world famous Royal Bengal Tigers and spotted deer, according to UNB.

After taking lunch in Sundarbans, Nawaz Sharif went to

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Call to resolve issues in parliament

Hartal, political violence to harm economy, warns EU

The European Union, an important development partner of Bangladesh, is "seriously concerned" about the country's deteriorating political situation that is "making effective cooperation increasingly difficult," reports UNB.

The anxieties were let out through the European Union Declaration on the political situation in Bangladesh issued yesterday by the government of Germany on behalf of the Union.

"Hartals and other forms of violent political confrontation endanger the lives and the well-being of innocent citizens, disrupt public life and inflict serious losses upon the economy which has not yet fully recovered from the effects of the catastrophic floods of 1998," the EU noted.

However, the European Union and its member states reaffirmed their strong interest

in cooperation with Bangladesh for the purpose of its democratic, social and economic development including the ultimate goal of elimination of poverty.

In this context, they recalled that on February 17 this year, negotiations on a new cooperation agreement between the European Community and Bangladesh were successfully concluded.

And respect for human rights and democratic principles are among the most essential elements of this agreement, says the text of the EU Declaration released in Dhaka by the German Embassy.

They called upon all parties and political officeholders to show restraints and moderation and to abstain from the use of all forms of violence as a political weapon.

Lack of respect for elementary principles of democratic

governance seriously hampers prospects for development," says the EU.

"If political violence and intolerance should continue, foreign trade and investment will be negatively affected and collaboration in development will necessarily suffer to the detriment of all," the European Union said in a note of caution.

The EU and its member states, a major destination for Bangladesh's exports, appealed to all political parties to resolve their differences in Parliament and through other legitimate ways.

They called upon the government and political leaders of the opposition alliance to exercise "responsible leadership" on the basis of democratic principles, which require respect for decisions of the parliamentary majority as well as respect for the legitimate rights of the opposition.



President Shahabuddin Ahmed and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina saw Turkish President Suleyman Demirel off at Zia International Airport yesterday. — PID photo

Demirel, Mahathir leave

Turkish President Suleyman Demirel and Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir bin Muhammad left the capital for home yesterday after attending the second D-8 summit that concluded here on Tuesday, reports UNB.

President Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina saw off the Turkish President at the Zia International Airport at 9:30 am.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina saw Mahathir off at the Airport at 10 am.

The two D-8 leaders were given guard of honour at the airport tarmac by a smartly turned out contingent drawn from the three services. They were presented bouquets by the tiny tots.

Ministers, diplomats and high government and military officials were also present at the airport during the departure of the two D-8 leaders.

D-8 summit resolution

Opposition walks out of JS

By Staff Correspondent

The Jatiya Sangsad yesterday heard a brief but noisy debate about the adoption of a Treasury bench resolution concerning the just-held D-8 summit in Dhaka.

The Opposition bench termed the procedure illegal and did not find any justification for making the resolution about a routine matter.

Opposition lawmakers of the BNP also staged a stormy walk-out soon after the House accepted the resolution for future discussion.

Awami League MP Suranjit Sengupta moved the resolution that congratulated prime minister Sheikh Hasina for being the chairperson of the D-8 grouping and praised her role in the success of the summit.

The resolution said the summit would contribute to the uplifting of socio-economic conditions of the member countries

and usher in a new horizon in Bangladesh's trade and economy.

Placing of the resolution was marked by continuous shouts from the Opposition bench where all the members rose on their feet. At that stage, Deputy Leader of the Opposition Prof. AQM Badruddoza Choudhury and Chief Whip of the Opposition Khandakar Delwar Hossain were asking the Chair to allow BNP lawmaker, Faruk to speak.

Faruk demanded the floor to speak on a Point of Order before Sengupta moved his resolution. Given the floor, B Choudhury criticised Deputy Speaker Abdul Hamid for not allowing them to speak on the resolution before its adoption. Quoting article 147 of the JS Rules of Procedure, Choudhury claimed that

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Ctg polytech Rivals beat BCL boy to death

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Mar 3: Tense situation is prevailing in and around Chittagong Polytechnic Institute at Nasirabad following the death of an activist of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) in a factional rivalry last night, police said.

Police found the injured BCL activist Abdul Kader in a critical condition from a place near the polytechnic institute at 9 pm last night.

He was immediately rushed to Chittagong medical hospital where he succumbed to his injuries.

Kader was abducted along with four others at 2 pm yesterday at gunpoint allegedly by Sera Akbar group of BCL from a hotel near the institute, police said.

The abductors took them to Tulatali near the institute and beat up Kader mercilessly. They left the place, leaving Kader in a critical condition.

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HC judge, defence lock in debate over 'fair hearing'

By Staff Correspondent

The High Court (HC) yesterday witnessed a debate between a judge and defence lawyers when the lawyers expressed their fear that they might not get fair hearing in his court.

The fear of the defence lawyers, representing Arab Bangladesh Bank and the Bangladesh Bank was expressed when they found that the plaintiffs — Salman F Rahman, Sohel F Rahman, MA Quasem and Iqbal Ahmed of Beximco Group — had their cases suddenly listed for hearing with court number 23 when all the bank directors' cases for removal under Section 17 of the Bank Company Act were already being heard in court 6.

The judge of court 23, Justice Fazlul Huque, was a junior lawyer of Barrister Rafique-ul Huq before becoming a judge. He also served as a lawyer of Beximco in his capacity as a junior to Barrister Rafique-ul Huq.

These facts clearly made AB

Bank apprehensive about holding the hearing of the case at court 23. They feared that they might not get a fair hearing in the court of Justice Fazlul Huque.

More interestingly, Barrister Rafique-ul Huq is a legal adviser of AB Bank and since the case is against the same bank, AB Bank had requested Barrister Huq to refrain from appearing against it in the case.

But Barrister Huq did not entertain the objection of AB Bank, which accused him of professional misconduct in a letter, and appeared on behalf of the four directors against AB Bank, making it a clear case of conflict of interest, according to AB Bank.

It may be mentioned that Barrister Huq also acted in a similar manner when he appeared in a case against the IFIC Bank last year while still being its legal adviser.

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Embargo on on-arrival visas goes today

By Staff Correspondent

The embargo on issuance of on-arrival visas imposed earlier by the government for incoming foreign passengers, will be lifted today, immigration sources said.

Government decided not to allow foreign nationals to enter Bangladesh without prior visas from missions abroad for what it said is a security measure for the D-8 Summit since February 23. No prior notice to airlines or no travellers' advisory was issued before withdrawing the facility of on-arrival visas. The sudden move saw dozens of foreigners being refused entry into Bangladesh at the Zia International Airport. Airlines had to carry them back on the first available flight.

A government handout imposing the ban on on-arrival visa facility was issued a day after some newspapers reported about the plight of the foreign travellers including businessmen from US, UK, The EU countries, Korea and Nepal who were being sent back.

Interview with The Daily Star

Biharis were never considered as Pakistanis, says Sharif

By M Anwarul Haq

Asked about repatriation of stranded Pakistanis in Bangladesh, he said "I am dealing with the subject since 1990. This is not a new subject so far we are concerned."

Pakistan, he said, has never

accepted them (stranded Biharis) as Pakistanis. But on humanitarian grounds, we are taking them. In 1991, when I was prime minister, I made efforts to take them. There has been resistance, particularly in Sindh.

We had 1000 homes constructed in Mianchannu in Punjab. Sixty-three families have been taken. 900 families could be accommodated there."

Sharif added, "Our efforts are now directed at raising funds and request has been made to Rabeta."

Speaking on Pakistan-India relations, he said, "I think that ice has started melting. The recent visit of the Indian Prime Minister to Pakistan has been useful. We had been able to discuss all the issues concerning our bilateral relations, including Kashmir. The issue of command and control regarding nuclear safety was also discussed."

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Nawaz Sharif

Bomb hurled at residence of EC: Two held

By Staff Correspondent

A gang of miscreants hurled a bomb at the residence of an election commissioner at Banani in the city yesterday evening.

Police arrested two of the miscreants from the spot during the incident. They were identified as Rokoniuzzaman, 22, and Rafiqul Islam alias Russel, 22.

The arrested two claimed that they were students of Jagannath University College while police claimed that they belonged to a political party.

The incident took place at about 3:30 pm yesterday when a gang of six went in front of the residence of Abdur Rahman at House No 36, Block F, Road 7 at Banani and hurled at least 12 crackers. Six of the crackers were exploded leaving the windows broken.

After hurling the crackers, they started to run away from the spot. Gulshan thana mobile police chased the gang and managed to arrest two of them. DB police later took the two for interrogation.

BGMEA polls today

By M Shamsur Rahman

Garment exporters and manufacturers will elect their new leaders today for a two-year term amid a new polarisation in BGMEA politics.

Unlike previous years, the entire 27-member executive committee will be elected this time.

A strong breakaway faction of the ruling "Sammita Parishad" joined hands with "Forum" led by Anisur Rahman Sinha, changing the outlook of the election.

The joint panel of Forum-Sammita Parishad led by Anisur Rahman Sinha and Nurul Huq Sikder will face the Sammita Parishad led by Mostafa Golam Qudus, the incumbent president of Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA).

The group winning the majority will form the cabinet. Of the 27 executive committee seats, seven are reserved for members from Chittagong while the rest for those from Dhaka.

A feud between the incumbent BGMEA president and the vice-president Nurul Huq

Sikder, both elected from the Sammita Parishad, led to the defection of Sikder.

A triangular fight had seemed certain as Nurul Huq Sikder refused to step out of the race after Qudus did not honour a pledge made before the last election that Sikder would succeed him in this election.

After repeated attempts, stalwarts of Sammita Parishad, currently holding the top BGMEA posts, failed to reach a consensus as to who would vie for the top slot from the group. Their failure finally resulted in two separate panels under the Sammita Parishad.

The Sammita Parishad led by Nurul Huq Sikder later joined the Forum of Anisur Rahman Sinha.

Last year, Anisur Huq ran for presidency from the Forum panel led by Sinha but Qudus-led Parishad bagged all nine seats at stake. Until last year, nine members used to retire every year.

A total of 1,992 voters, 1,614 from Dhaka and 378 from Chittagong, will cast their votes.

Professor Ali Ashraf, MP, is heading the Election Board.

Extortionists kill manager, loot petrol pump in Chittagong

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Mar 3: Extortionists gunned down the manager of a petrol pump on Nur Ahmed Road near Love Lane today, police said.

The victim was identified as

Blaise, 35.

Police said, a group of extortionists came to Apollo Petrol Pump and asked the manager to give them money.

As he refused to do so, they fired at him, leaving him dead on the spot.

They looted about Tk one lakh from the cash box and fled the scene.

The incident sparked tension in the area.

Alleged mugger beaten to death in Khulna

From Staff Correspondent

KHULNA, Mar 3: An alleged mugger was killed in mob beating at Chhoto Boyra in noon today.

The mugger was identified as

Rabul Islam, 28.

According to police, he was caught red handed while muggering a woman in Chhoto Boyra area and beaten up severely by the mob.

He died on way to Khulna Medical College Hospital. A case has been lodged with Sonadanga thana in this connection.

3 electronics shops gutted in city

By Staff Correspondent

Three shops were gutted in a fire at Baitul Mukarram Electronics market in the early hours of yesterday.

The fire originated from an electric short circuit at around 4 am, and gutted three electronics shops — Bangladesh Enterprises, Rushko International and Konika Electronics in the market, police said.

The shop owners claimed property worth about Tk 4 crore were gutted in the fire while Fire Brigade estimated the loss at about Tk 25 lakh.

Five fire fighting units rushed to the spot and extinguished the blaze within two hours.

A case was filed with Moti-jheel police.



Thirteen-year-old Parvez, who received head injury during hartal last week, fighting death at the DMCH.— Star photo

Parvez still in coma, his condition deteriorating

By Staff Correspondent

After six days of head injury, Parvez was still fighting death at the neurosurgery department of Dhaka Medical College Hospital late last night.

The 13-year-old boy was in a coma.

Parvez was hit by a brick on the last day of the 66-hour hartal from February 23 called by the opposition, leaving a deep cut in his head. Profusely bleeding, he was brought to the DMCH from the city's Sayedabad area on Thursday.

An attending doctor yesterday afternoon said, "Through further brain haemorrhage, Parvez may have developed clot in the frontal part of his brain. This indicates that the patient may not recover."

Another doctor said, "We are fearing that Parvez has oedema (fluid in tissue spaces) which is causing a lot of complications. Oedema could also be one of the

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