

What's on today . . .

Rally and discussion: Association of Development Agencies in Bangladesh (ADAB) has organised a rally and discussion meeting to mark the International Women's Day.

Photo exhibition: A photo exhibition on survivors of acid violence by Kiron of MAP Photo Agency will be held on the occasion of International Women's Day.

UNAB symposium: United Nations Association of Bangladesh (UNAB) has organised a symposium in observance of International Women's Day.

Drama Festival: 'Adhuh Vhut', 'A Kaman Raja' and 'Khyatir Birambana' will be staged on the 5th day of the National Child-Juvenile Drama Festival.

Seminar: Commonwealth Society of Bangladesh has organised a seminar on 'The Commonwealth for Cooperation and Development' on the occasion of Commonwealth Day.

Film show: 'A Mother's Lament: The Rape and Death of Shima Choudhury' by Yasmin Kabir will be screened on the occasion of International Women's Day.

Discussion: Bangladesh Mohila Parishad has organised a discussion meeting and cultural programme to mark the International Women's Day.

Concluding ceremony: The closing ceremony of the 43rd convention of Engineers' Institution, Bangladesh will be held.

Seminar: Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS) has recently completed a study on 'Towards Industrial Competitiveness in Bangladesh: Addressing the Technological Factor'.

Conference: The third international plant tissue culture conference will be held.

Discussion: Commonwealth Student and Youth Organisation has taken up various programmes to mark the Silver Jubilee of Commonwealth Day.

Certificate giving ceremony: The certificate giving ceremony of the training course on 'Lending Risk Analysis' will be held.

Audio-Visual presentation: Refugee and Migratory Movement Research Unit (RMMRU) has organised an audio-visual presentation on 'Travels Along the Tsanpobrahmaputra'.

Workshop: A five-day regional workshop on Institutional Management in Higher Education will be inaugurated.

Photo exhibition: British Council has organised a photo exhibition on 'Creation of Women in Bangladesh'.

Discussion: Sanjukta Mohila Parishad has organised a discussion meeting to mark the International Women's Day.

Club meet: The weekly meeting of the Rotary Club of Dhaka North will be held.

President, PM greet new Amir of Bahrain

President Shahabuddin Ahmed and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday congratulated the new Amir of Bahrain and expressed their firm convictions that the relations between Bangladesh and Bahrain would be strengthened and consolidated in the years to come.

In separate messages sent to Shaikh Hamad Bin Isa Al-Khalifa, President Shahabuddin and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina recalled the excellent relations between the two countries which are based on common religion, history and culture.

Shaikh Hamad, took over as the new Amir of the tiny sheikhdom Bahrain on Saturday after his father Shaikh Issa Bin Salman Al-Khalifa died of a heart attack in Manama, the capital.

The Bangladesh leaders also wished good health and happiness of the new ruler of Bahrain and peace, progress and prosperity of its people.

Commonwealth countries must remain committed to goals: PM

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has said that the Commonwealth countries must remain committed to the goals of raising the quality of life of their vast majority of peoples.

This should be done through eradicating poverty and illiteracy and undertaking social development programmes including development of women and youth, she said in a message yesterday on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the modern Commonwealth.

Termining the Commonwealth as a model organisation of co-operation among peoples of diverse culture, Hasina said that over the past 50 years it has grown in size and collectively comprises a quarter of the world population.

"Today, as we stand on the doorsteps of the 21st century, our resolve must be to infuse a more vigorous type of cooperation to enrich our societies."

The Prime Minister also underlined the need for institutionalising democracy and upholding human rights.

Indian cultural programmes begin today

Noted Indian artist including Pundit Shiv Kumar Sharma will perform in a nine-day cultural programme beginning in the city today, says a press release.

The High Commission of India, Indian Council for Cultural Relations, and India Trade Promotion Organisation in collaboration with the Ministry of Cultural Affairs have organised the event that will coincide with the on-going Indian Trade exhibition being held at the Osmani Memorial Hall.

The artists will perform at the Osmani Memorial Hall and the National Museum auditorium at 7 pm everyday. Free passes for the programmes are available at the Indian High Commission.

Dance exponent Pratibha Prahalad will present Bharatnatyam Kuchipudi at Osmani Memorial Hall today while the theatre personality Ratan Thiyam's group will perform a play, Chakravayuta tomorrow.

BPUP central body formed

The central committee of Bangladesh Puja Udayan Parishad (BPUP) was formed on March 5 at its council with Prof Lalit Mohan Nath as president and Kajaldeb Nath as general secretary.

Announcement of the committee was made at the council of the parishad held in the Dhakeshwari National Temple premises at Labagh in the city.

Other office bearers of the committee are: Prafulliya Kumar Hawlader, Anil Chandra Nath, Chittaranjan Mazumder, Bimal Roy Chowdhury, Santosh Kumar Saha, Ranjit Dey, Dhirendranath Dutt, Radhika Mohan Goshwami (vice president), Nirmal Kumar Dey, Joyanta Sen Dipu, Dhirendranath Saha (joint secretary), Bires Chandra Saha, Gopinath Das, Shymal Halder, Priyaranjan Dutt, Santipada Dutt, Santosh Mukherjee (divisional joint secretary), Joyanta Kumar Dev (treasurer).

Ershad leaves for Saudi Arabia today

Jatiya party chairman H M Ershad leaves for Saudi Arabia today for medical check-up, reports UNB.

The JP chief will undergo medical check-up at the King Faysal Specialist Hospital and Research Centre in Riyadh.

There is a speculation in the political arena that the former President would meet BNP chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia before his departure for Saudi Arabia.

Ershad will perform Umrah offer munajat at the Rouja Mubarak of Prophet Hazrat Muhammad (SM) in Medina. He will be accompanied by party leaders Kazi Shah Mofazzel Hossain Kaikobad MP, Golam Mosih and Maj (ret'd) Mohammad Khaled Akhter.



A discussion meeting on the historic speech of Bangabandhu was held at the National Museum in the city yesterday. Tofail Ahmed, Minister for Commerce and Industries, Abdur Razzak, Minister for Water Resources, Prof Muntasir Mamun of Dhaka University, Shamsuzzaman Khan, DG, National Museum, seen.

'Govt giving equal treatment to develop all areas of country'

Minister for LGRD and Cooperatives Zillur Rahman yesterday said the government of Bangladesh is giving equal treatment to develop all areas of the country, reports BSS.

Replying to questions and supplementaries in the Jatiya Sangsad, he said the government is implementing a broad-based rehabilitation programme all over the country to redress the damage caused by the country's worst floods.

Responding to a question from Syed Mehedi Ahmed Rumi of BNP from Kushtha, the minister said Taka nearly five crore was sanctioned for repair and rehabilitation of roads and other infrastructures which were damaged by the last year's flood in the district. Besides, he said Taka about 28 lakh was sanctioned for the district administration for the same purpose.

On supplementaries raised by Syed Mahibur Rahman Manik of Awami League, Alamgir Md Mahfuzullah Farid of BNP and Kamrunnahar Putil of Awami League, Zillur Rahman said the government has already taken measures in their respective areas for the repair of damaged roads, bridges and culverts.

Replying to another question from Alhaj Dr Mohammad Ali of BNP from Netrakona, the LGRD Minister said the rest of the work of Dhobaura-Purakandulla road under Myensingh district would start during the current fiscal year.

Replying to another question from Mustafizur Rahman of Awami League from Chittagong, the minister said five roads in Sandwip would be carpeted by the Local Government Engineering Department.

'Govt to take all steps to make Ctg commercial capital'

Commerce and Industries Minister Tofail Ahmed said in the Parliament yesterday that the government was determined to take all necessary steps to make Chittagong the commercial capital of the country, reports UNB.

Replying to a call attention of Gazi Mohammad Shahjahan (BNP-Chittagong), the minister listed the steps taken so far, including transforming the Chittagong airport as international one by the year 2000 and setting up of a container terminal.

Referring to a feasibility study to transform Chittagong as an economic zone, he said a lot of steps have been taken in this regard.

Tofail Ahmed informed that the government has taken up a 100 million US dollar project to modernise the Chittagong Port and to establish another as a deep-sea port.

He said the Tourism Ministry has taken steps to establish a 5-star hotel in Chittagong by transforming the Parjatan Motel.

Steps have also been taken to establish a World Trade Centre while work is underway to establish a private Export Processing Zone with foreign investment, the minister added.

Shops gutted in Jhalakati

JHALAKATI, Mar 7: A fire gutted some shops and an engineering workshop at Nalchhiti thana headquarters yesterday, reports APB.

The shop owners claimed that property worth over Tk fifteen lakh have been gutted by the fire originating from the kitchen of a nearby house.

Local people extinguished the blaze before Fire Brigade teams came from Jhalakati and Barisal.

There is no Fire Brigade station at Nalchhiti.

Mar 7 observed in Rajshahi

RAJSHAHI, Mar 7: Historic March 7 was observed in a befitting manner here today with renewed call to make Bangladesh a real Sonar Bangla as dreamt by the father of the nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, reports BSS.

Rajshahi City Awami League chalked out an elaborate programme in observance of the day. National and party flags were hoisted in the morning at Gonokpara party office to mark the occasion.

Leaders and workers of Awami League garlanded the portrait of the father of the nation and held a discussion at local party office.

Bangladesh Chhatra League, Rajshahi Medical College branch, brought out a colourful procession in the city which paraded different city streets chanting various slogans.

Later, a discussion was held with Sheikh Shahidullah, president of Chhatra League, Rajshahi Medical College branch in the chair.

Khulna

The historic March seven was observed in Khulna in a befitting manner.

Various organisations and political parties observed the day through separate programmes.

Awami League and its front organisation chalked out a day-long programme in observance of the day which included hoisting of national and party flag atop the Awami League office here in the morning.

Floral wreaths were placed at the portrait of Bangabandhu.

A discussion meeting was held in the evening at the Awami League office. Presided over by the president of Khulna district Awami League and former whip of the Jatiya Sangsad Shaikh Harunur Rashid, the discussion meeting was addressed, among others, by Sabir Ahmed Kamruzzaman Jannat Monowara Begum, Sarder Mizanur Rahman, Moniruzzaman Khokon, Malik Abid Hossain Kabir, Wahidur Rahman Jinnah, Prof Fakir Abu Hossain, Prof Hosnara Runu, AFM Maksudur Rahman and Chisti Sohrab Hossain Sikder.

Khulna station of Bangladesh Betar held an open air programme on the Khulna Betar Bhavan premises highlighting the significance of the day.

ActionAid official in city

Gonzalo Crespi, founder and President of Ayuda en Accion, ActionAid's Spanish partner, and a member of ActionAid's Board of Trustees is now in Dhaka on a two-day visit, says a press release.

During his stay, Gonzalo will visit some of ActionAid Bangladesh's partners and will talk to the communities that these partners work with. He will also exchange his views with the journalists and BRAC's Founder Executive Director Fazle Hasan Abed.

Ayuda en Accion in the past provided relief support to victims of the cold wave arising due to the 'el nino' in 1997 and to victims of the 1998 flood. Gonzalo will go to Nari Maitree, a partner NGO of ActionAid Bangladesh conducting programmes for adolescents, and talk to some of the members of the community in Goran who received assistance during the flood.

He will also discuss details of the programme for adolescents at Nari Maitree. Ayuda en Accion is providing funding to ActionAid Bangladesh's Adolescent programme.

In Lalbag, Mr Gonzalo will briefly stop over at Bangladesh Council for Child Welfare (BCCW) where a novel programme of 'peer sensitisation' has been initiated.

Mohiuddin Alamgir to attend ADB workshop in Manila

State Minister for Planning Dr Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir left for Manila Saturday night to attend a two-day ADB workshop on the 'Study of Rural Asia' beginning there tomorrow (Monday).

Experts at the workshop will review a report, drawn up in the light of transformation of the rural areas of the region over the last 20 years, to work out a sustainable policy for socio-economic development.

Dr Alamgir is attending the meet in the Philippines capital at the invitation of the ADB, said an official handout today (Sunday).

3 rescued, 40 feared dead Two boats carrying illegal immigrants into US sink

MIAMI, Mar 7: Two boats carrying as many as 43 Haitians in an apparent bid to smuggle them into the United States sank on the South Florida coast, and rescuers found only three survivors, reports AP.

A helicopter located the first survivor at 5 am and took him to a medical centre in West Palm Beach, where he was in stable condition hours later. Two other men were rescued at 8:30 am, clinging to a barrel. They were taken to the Border Patrol office in West Palm Beach, Bullock said.

None of the men was wearing life jackets and it was believed they were trying to sneak into the country, officials said.

"Generally that many people don't get on a boat to cross the middle of the night," petty officer Jeff Hall said. "From what we've seen in the past, they generally leave from the west end of the Bahamas and come across into West Palm Beach."

The Coast Guard was searching for the others in the waters between Florida and the Bahamas with boats, two helicopters and a Falcon jet.

The two vessels that sank a 5-metre boat and a 6-metre boat, apparently casted off from the Bahamas.

Tributes paid to emir of Bahrain

DUBAI, Mar 7: Tributes to Bahrain's Emir Sheikh Issa Ibn Salman Al-Khalifa, who died suddenly on Saturday, poured in from around the region and a number of Arab countries declared periods of mourning in his honour, reports AFP.

The United Arab Emirates and Kuwait have ordered 40 days, Jordan — itself still in mourning for the death King Hussein last month — seven, while Egypt, Qatar, Oman, Yemen, the Palestinian autonomous territories, Lebanon, Libya and Syria will mourn for three days.

Kuwait's Emir, Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmed Al-Sabah, and Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah Ibn Abdel Aziz went to Manama and offered their condolences to the Emir's son and successor, Sheikh Hamad Ibn Issa Al-Khalifa, as did a high-ranking delegation from the Emirates.

Amla reduces cholesterol levels

NEW DELHI, Mar 7: Fruits of the Indian gooseberry, popularly known as amla, can reduce cholesterol levels by more than two-thirds, studies on animals indicate, reports PTI.

Students in Rajasthan have shown that amla or emblica officinalis fruit pulp extract, when fed to rabbits with high fat levels, had beneficial effect.

The blood cholesterol levels declined by 67.5 per cent and low density lipoprotein (LDL), which is linked to the serious arterial disease atherosclerosis, by 75.3 per cent.

Cholesterol and fat levels in the liver decreased significantly after two months of administration of the extract, a joint report by Ritu Mathur and Arti Sharma from MDS University at Ajmer and VP Dixit from R R Government College at Alwar, said.

Qatar urges Iraq not to threaten its neighbours

DOHA, Mar 7: Qatar urged Iraq to desist from threatening its Gulf Arab neighbours and called for an international conference to discuss ways of ensuring security in the Gulf, reports Reuters.

"Any threat to a member of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) is tantamount to a threat to all GCC member states," Foreign Minister Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim bin Jabr Al-Thani said.

"Iraq must desist from threatening any member of the GCC and implement all UN Security Council resolutions on elimination of weapons of mass destruction and Gulf security," he told a news conference.

Baghdad in February warned it could retaliate against Saudi Arabia and Kuwait for allowing the United States and Britain to use their military bases to launch air raids on Iraq.

Both Saudi Arabia and Kuwait as well as Qatar are members of the Gulf Cooperation Council, a Gulf Arab alliance that also includes Oman, Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates.

King Abdullah reshuffles cabinet

AMMAN, Mar 7: King Abdullah reshuffled his cabinet Saturday, bringing in advisors known for their loyalty to his late father, King Hussein, reports AP.

The shuffle comes two days after Abdullah swore in a cabinet of technocrats and liberals, urging it to pursue reform and better ties with the United States, Israel and Gulf Arabs. The changes appear to be aimed at ridding the hierarchy of loyalists to Abdullah's uncle, Prince Hassan, who was deposed as crown prince in a January shakeup. King Hussein had accused Hassan of power grabbing.

But palace sources say the changes were planned before Hussein's death on Feb 7 and were intended to bring in new blood.

In a royal decree carried by the official Petra news agency, Abdullah named his cousin, Prince Talal, as his National Security Council advisor.

Abdullah Touqan was named as scientific advisor and assistant to Talal at the security council. Petra reported: Touqan was a member of the Jordanian delegation that negotiated the peace treaty with Israel in 1994.

Faisal Fayezi, a palace protocol officer for the past nine years, was promoted to chief of protocol.

The palace sources, insisting on anonymity, said Abdullah also designated two other aides, whose appointments would be announced soon.

Adnan Abu-Odeh is to become the king's political advisor — a job he held for more than two decades under Hussein. Nabil Ammari, who was planning minister in the outgoing cabinet, will become economic advisor.

Urs of Hazrat Shahjalal begins

SYLHET, Mar 7: The three-day holy urs mubarak of renowned Muslim saint and preacher of Islam in the sub-continent Hazrat Shahjalal (RA) began here today at the dargha premises on the occasion of his 679 death anniversary, reports BSS.

The programmes of the three-day urs include khatam-e-Guran, uzav mahfil, placing ghat on the mazar, zikr azkar, milad mahfil, akheri munajat and distribution of shirni.

Thousands of followers of the great saint in the country and abroad have already assembled at the venue of the holy urs.

Many stalls of arts and crafts and handicrafts have been set up adjacent to the premises of the mazar on the occasion of the holy urs.

Japanese Boy Scouts team leaves

A 21-member Boy Scouts of Nippon (Japan) Rover contingent left Dhaka yesterday. Led by Tomomichi Goke, the team came here on a visit under Bangladesh-Japan joint ORT Project, says a press release.

The Rovers actively took part in a work camp with the local 144 Scouts and Rovers including 48 Girl-in-Scout members in six villages under Kazipur Thana and Sirajganj Sadar Thana of Sirajganj District to promote Oral Rehydration Therapy for the prevention of diarrhoea including primary health care.

The evaluation meeting of the project was held at the National Scouts Bhaban on Saturday. The meeting was addressed by Manzoor Ul Karim, Chief National Commissioner, Bangladesh Scouts, Dr Tomomichi Goke, and Hisain Sikder, executive secretary.

Bid to improve situation MMC holds meet with guardians

MYMENSINGH, Mar 7: The Academic Council of Mymensingh Medical College (MMC) today held meeting to exchange views with its students and their guardians to improve campus situation, reports UNB.

A statement was created on the MMC campus following the cancellation of its examination centre.

Dhaka University authorities cancelled the centre as well as its January 24 MBBS professional examinations following complaints of irregularities.

Since then the MMC students have been observing token strike on the campus from 11 am to 1 pm everyday, demanding withdrawal of the decision.

The MMC authorities today formed an eight-member guardian forum to discuss the matter with the Dhaka University authorities.

The Bhutanese Foreign Secretary also observed, "his death is not only a great loss for Bangladesh, but also for the entire region."

He conveyed his deep sympathy to the members of the bereaved family and prayed for the eternal peace of the departed soul.

Bhutanese foreign secy condoles Mustafiz's death

The Foreign Secretary of Bhutan, Ugyen Tshering, has expressed his profound shock at the demise of his Bangladesh counterpart Mustafizur Rahman, who died in Singapore recently, reports APB.

In a message of condolence to Acting Foreign Secretary Mohiuddin Ahmed on Sunday, Ugyen Tshering said, "During our association with Rahman we have been deeply impressed by his outstanding qualities as a diplomat as well as a gentleman."

The Bhutanese Foreign Secretary also observed, "his death is not only a great loss for Bangladesh, but also for the entire region."

He conveyed his deep sympathy to the members of the bereaved family and prayed for the eternal peace of the departed soul.



Children performing at a function of the annual cultural week of Oxford International School in the city recently. Poet Shamsur Rahman was the chief guest at the programme.

British MP in Sylhet

SYLHET, Mar 7: British Parliament Member Un King, who arrived here this morning, has said she would try for relaxation of her country's immigration policy so that more Bangladeshi citizens can enter Britain without any hassle, reports APB.

She was speaking before a cross section of local people at the Press Club here today.

The British MP, who represents Bethnal Green Constituency in Tower Hamlet where Bangladeshis are in majority, also called for ensuring rights for children and women in Bangladesh.

"Sylhet is my favourite place," said Un King who came here as a member of the Select Committee of British House of Commons.

President of local Press Club Muktabis Un Nur was in the chair.

Four shops gutted, 10 injured in Magura

MAGURA, Mar 7: A devastating fire gutted four shops and injured 10 people at Chawlia bus stand in Sadar thana today, reports UNB.

The losses from the fire were estimated about Tk 10 lakh.

The fire reportedly originated from a grocery shop at about 11 am when its owner, Batu, was allegedly selling petrol illegally.

The flame soon spread in the area and gutted three more adjoining shops.

Fire fighters from Magura and Jhenidah rushed to the spot and brought the blaze under control with the help of local people.

Ten people received burn injuries while trying to extinguish the fire.

Five of them, identified as Kalam, S.J. Abu Zafar, 25, Milan, 20, Sujon, 28 and Siddique, were admitted to Sadar Hospital with critical burn injuries.