

What's on today . . .

Meeting: The Anti-Facism Democratic Committee will hold a meeting to protest the killings at Dighinala in Khagrachari. Venue: 68/2, Purana Paltan. Time: 6.00pm.

and tomorrow

Meeting: The organising committee of the Society for Care and Welfare of Schizophrenic (SCWS) will hold a meeting. Venue: Flat no 601, Building no 3, Eastern Circuit, 30 Circuit House Road. Time: 5.00 pm.

Cultural evening: A solo performance by singer Shumon Chowdhury will be held. Venue: Indian Cultural Centre, 758 Satmasjid Road, Dhanmondi R/A. Time: 6.30 pm.

Painting exhibition: The solo painting exhibition of Sarkar Nahid Nazma Manna Nipu titled 'Wooden Box' will be inaugurated. Chief guest: Rafiqun Nabi. Venue: Alliance Francaise de Dhaka. Time 5.30 pm.

The exhibition will remain open from 3.00 pm to 8.00 pm everyday till November 4.

Film show: Three French movies *My Mothers Courage*, *Au Revoir les Enfants* and *Le Plaisir* will be screened. Venue: Alliance Francaise de Dhaka. Time: 11.00 am, 4.00pm and 6.00 pm.

Premiere: Bangladesh Short Film Forum will hold the premiere of *The Long Wait*, an independent documentary on pioneer sculptress Novera Ahmed by N Rashed Chowdhury. Venue: Goethe Institut, House no 10, Road no 9, Dhanmondi R/A. Time: 7.00 pm.

Weather

Thundershowers likely

Light or moderate rain or thundershowers with temporary gusty wind is likely at a few places over Barisal, Dhaka, Chittagong and Sylhet divisions and at one or two places over Khulna and Rajshahi divisions till 6 pm today, reports UNB.

Moderately heavy falls is expected at places over Chittagong and Sylhet divisions during the period, according to Met Office.

It forecast that day temperature likely to rise one or two degree Celsius over the country while weather may improve gradually in the subsequent two days.

The country's highest temperature 33.0 degree Celsius was recorded yesterday at Cox's Bazar and the lowest 22.0 degree Celsius at Dinajpur.

The sun sets in the capital today at 5.28 pm and rises tomorrow at 5.59 am.

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

City/Town	Temperature in Celsius			Humidity in percentage	
	Max	Min	Morning	Evening	
Dhaka	31.7	23.1	93	88	
Chittagong	31.2	24.2	93	89	
Rajshahi	31.5	22.8	79	85	
Khulna	31.0	24.3	93	100	
Barisal	28.6	23.6	100	95	
Sylhet	27.2	23.9	88	98	
Cox's Bazar	33.0	23.3	88	92	

HERE and THERE

BCDJC

Swedish Ambassador Anders Johnson yesterday said that a democratic culture must grow from within "through an active civil society". He was speaking as the chief guest at a discussion on 'Deliberative Democracy in Bangladesh' organised by Bangladesh Centre for Development, Journalism and Communication (BCDJC) at Dhanmondi, says a press release.

Johnson emphasised on transparency, accountability and participation as the three basic means in consolidating democracy.

The discussion session was arranged by BCDJC to introduce and emphasise the concept and process of deliberation as a highly effective means in strengthening our fragile democracy.

In his address of welcome BCDJC chief Nayeemul Islam Khan said, "Deliberative Democracy is the solution that we were aggressively looking for to hold on and use to bring about positive changes in our society towards stability, peace and progress."

The lively discussion was moderated by Prof Ahaduzzaman Md Ali, Dr Karen L Casper, Representative of the Asia Foundation, and John Kincannon, Public Affairs Officer of the Embassy of the USA, were the special guests. Editor of Bangladesh Observer, Iqbal Sobhan Chowdhury and Prof Dr M Tawhidul Anwar were the designated speakers.

Among others the discussion meeting was participated by Zagul Abedin Chowdhury of BSS, Bulbul Manzurul Ahsan of Sangbad, M Anwarul Haq of The Daily Star, Abdul Matin of Janakantha, Muhammad Musa

of Inqilab, Ahmed Faruque Hassan of Manab Zamin, Anisul Haq of Prothom Alo, Syed Ishtiaq Reza of The Financial Express from the working journalists and by Abdur Rouf of PSTC, Mahfuz Ullah of CSD, Zillul Hye Razi of BU, Muhammad Jahangir of CDC, Zafur Karim of North South University, Dr Anwarul Karim of ECOMAC, Dr Nawshad Ahmed of the Asia Foundation, Barrister Manzoor Hasan of Transparency International, Masud Hasan Siddique of the Swedish Embassy and BCDJC members.

ICAP, SRRA

From Our Correspondent CHITTAGONG, Oct 20: ICAP and Social Restoration and Reformation Association (SRRA) as a part of their plan to set up a 500-bed hospital jointly in the port city for the drug addicted has decided to install the hospital with 50 beds in the preliminary stage by 2000.

ICAP — The Institute for Comprehensive Health, Research and Rehabilitation of Addicts and Psychopaths, Bangladesh and SRRA in a preparatory meeting at Hotel Agrabad last evening have also decided to collect the 80 pc of the required money from financial aids from national and international sources and remaining 20 pc from local sources.

Presided over by Advocate Amin Chowdhury the meeting was attended by ICAP central Committee president AFM Ataul Karim, FCA economic advisor Professor A Quasem, A K Chowdhury, Professor Rawshan Akter Hanif, Shahidullah Khan, Barrister Saifuddin Mahmood, Syed Murtaza Ali, Dr Moyeenul Islam and Iftekhar Uddin.

Chehlum

The chehlum of Ayubur Rahman, a former secretary of Ministry of Works and former chief engineer of Road and Highway Department, will be held tomorrow at his residence at 27/1 West Mallbagh after Asr prayers, says a press release.

All friend, relatives and well wishers of Rahman have been requested to attend the *milad mahfil* and pray for the salvation of his departed soul.

Bomb defused at Faridpur

FARIDPUR, Oct 20: An army team from Jessore Cantonment today defused the time bomb recovered from a movie house in Madhukhali Bazar on Tuesday, reports UNB.

The 12-member army team, led by Maj Zia, exploded the bomb on the bank of river Chandana near Akhchashi Mohila College this noon.

The bomb, weighing about 8 pounds, was found abandoned by a sweeper at the Neela-Borna hall before a show.

Several thousand villagers and bus passengers from nearby Dhaka-Khulna highway gathered in the area to watch the bomb being detonated.

Police Super of Magura Ali Akbar was present.



Firefighters trying to extinguish a fire at Dabiruddin Engine Oil Recycling Co. at Teigaon yesterday. — Star photo

Three held with cocktails in city

By Staff Correspondent

At least three people were arrested and nine were injured while carrying home made bombs in separate incidents in the city last night, said police sources.

The three arrested from Sutrapur area were identified as Monir, Kuddus and Shohag. Five cocktails were recovered from their possession, police said adding that the accused were being detained in the thana custody.

In separate incidents at Fakir Pool, Gullistan and near the Jatiya Press Club nine people were injured while carrying home-made bombs. Details of how they were hurt or their identities, however, could not be known immediately.

They were admitted to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital, police sources said.

President visits Prof Razzaque at BIRDEM

President Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed visited ailing Nazamuddin Professor Abdul Razzaque at BIRDEM Hospital yesterday, reports UNB.

The President talked with the attending doctors, inquired about his condition and prayed for his early recovery.

Doctors said Razzaque is being kept alive by means of artificial respiration in the intensive care unit of the hospital. Earlier, President Shahabuddin visited ailing Justice Devesh Bhattacharya, a former judge of the Supreme Court at the same hospital.

The President talked with him and inquired about his wellbeing with the attending doctors. He also wished him early recovery.

Obituary

Md Easin, founder of Deeder Comprehensive Village Society and Magsaysay award winner died of liver cirrhosis at Padma General Hospital at Dhaka on Tuesday at 6 pm. He was 64, says a press release.

He left behind his wife, four sons, 3 daughters and a host of relatives to mourn his death.

Easin formed a cooperative organisation under the guidance of BARD, Comilla during the early 60s. With the initial member of 8 richshawpullers and capital of 9 paisea Deeder Cooperative society organised 1800 cooperators and accumulated giant capital (more than 1 crore) and established a good number of rural industries.

He received various awards for his contribution in the field of rural development among which Magsaysay award for community leadership, President Award for the Best Cooperator and other national and international awards were worth mentioning.

Dr. BARD and the employees of BARD expressed their deep shock for the loss of a renowned cooperator leader and sent condolence messages to the bereaved family.

By Staff Correspondent

Aminur Rahman Nijhu, the General Secretary of Sangvet Bahaban and a Rabindra Sangket singer, died in a road accident yesterday.

Bangladesh Udichi Shilpi Gosthi in a statement condoled the untimely death of the singer and composer and expressed sympathy to the members of the bereaved family.

The country has lost a promising singer at his death, the statement added.

Mir Yakub Ali, general secretary of Rangamati pourasava unit of Bangladesh Human Rights Commission (BHRC), died of cancer at Rangamati Sadar Hospital yesterday. He was 47, reports UNB.

He left behind his wife, two sons and two daughters, said a press release.

BHRC President Kazi Abdur Razzak and Secretary General Saiful Islam Dildar have expressed their condolences at the death of Yakub Ali.

In a message, they prayed for the salvation of the departed soul and conveyed sympathy to the bereaved family members.

Sonia readies herself for a new challenge

By Pallab Bhattacharya

NEW DELHI, Oct 20: Congress' worst electoral defeat notwithstanding, party chief Sonia Gandhi's decision to accept the responsibilities of Leader of the Opposition in Lok Sabha, lower house of the Indian parliament, has placed her ideally to take up a new challenge.

Sonia Gandhi, 52-year-old widow of former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, has spearheaded Congress' campaign in two general elections in as many years and led the party from the front ever since she became its head in early 1998.

It is her turn now to do the same in the Lok Sabha where she will be asked to combine parliamentary acumen, oratory and floor strategy to face up to the BJP-led alliance armed with a comfortable majority and leadership of Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee.

In deciding to become leader of the opposition in Lok Sabha, Sonia Gandhi has responded as much to the demand of her loyalists in Congress as to prompting from her critics in the party, party sources say.

Ever since she was elected Chairperson of Congress Parliamentary Party including members of Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha (the upper house) a week ago, there was intense speculation if she would choose to become leader of the opposition in Lok Sabha or allow a veteran parliamentarian of the party to don the mantle and acquire necessary experience as a member MP before taking the plunge.

The line of thinking that Congress sources said swung Sonia Gandhi's mind in favour of becoming leader of the opposition in Lok Sabha was that she would gather on the job experience to ready herself for the time when the party would be in a position to rule India again under her leadership.

It will not only give exposure to parliamentary rules and procedures but also the rank of a

cabinet minister which is expected to help her shed the image of a political and administrative newcomer.

Secondly, Sonia loyalists in Congress did not want to open up the possibility of a power-centre in the party other than her else she nominated someone else as leader of the opposition. Nor did they favour a race in the party right now for the post in the event of her not coming forward to accept the new responsibilities, Congress sources said.

On the other hand, Sonia Gandhi's critics in the party feel if she fails to lead the party in Lok Sabha, her leadership will come under criticism. The critics both in the party as well as outside will be watching how Sonia, who mostly reads out speeches from prepared texts, fares as an extempore speaker in parliament. Her ability in this area will definitely come in for comparison with that of Vajpayee who has been a parliamentarian for over four decades.

By deciding to become the leader of the opposition, Sonia Gandhi will occupy the same seat which Rajiv Gandhi had taken in the same capacity when V. P. Singh was India's Prime Minister at the head of a National Front government in 1989-90.

Meanwhile, Sonia Gandhi has given up the Bellary Lok Sabha seat in the southern state of Karnataka and held on to Amethi seat in Uttar Pradesh. She had won Bellary by 56,000 votes against high-profile BJP leader Sushma Swara and emerged triumphant in Amethi by over three lakh votes.

One reason for choosing to retain Amethi, say political observers, could be to send a signal to voters in Uttar Pradesh where state assembly elections are not very far away. Capturing power in this most populous state, where BJP now rules at the head of an alliance, is considered crucial to Congress' regaining federal power.



Accused in 8 criminal cases held in Ctg

From Our Correspondent CHITTAGONG, Oct 20: A listed terrorist and an accused in eight criminal cases was arrested here last night.

The arrested was identified as Shagor alias Shagora, 25. Chandgona thana police arrested Shagor from Paschim Bakolia DC Road with the help of local people.

Shagor, a terrorist in West Bakolia DC Road area was wanted in eight criminal cases including dacoity, terrorism and extortion.

Ershad leaves for KSA today

Jatiya Party Chairman H M Ershad leaves for Saudi Arabia today for medical checkup at King Faysal Hospital, reports UNB.

During his stay in Saudi Arabia, Ershad will also perform Umrah in Makkah and offer fatha in Madina.

Party leaders Dr Rustam Ali Farazi MP, Golam Mohsin and Maj (ret'd) Khaled Akhter will accompany the JP chief.

Dance Hall fire Kills 14 in China

BEIJING, Oct 20: Fourteen people, including 12 women and a child, were burned to death and three were seriously injured when fire swept through a dance hall in the southeastern Chinese province of Jiangsu, state media reported today, reports Reuters.

The fire destroyed the three-storey dance hall in Shuyang County on Monday morning, the Beijing Morning newspaper reported.

The cause of the fire was still under investigation, it said.

Just eight days before, 15 women died in a fire in Southern China which destroyed four shops and a five-storey building.

Controversy over sealing of a guest house

By Staff Correspondent

A controversy has arisen over sealing of a guest house in the city's Baridhara area on Tuesday.

A joint team of Special Branch of Police, Dhaka City Corporation (DCC), Department of Narcotics Control (DNC) and Gulshan police raided the 'unauthorised guest house', Best Eastern, on Road-1 at Baridhara and sealed it, police and DNC officials said.

But the guest house owners last night claimed that it was 'very much open'.

Deputy Director of DNC Habibur Rahman told this correspondent last night they have 'officially sealed' the guest house as it does not have trade licence. But as a number of foreign guests were staying there, 'we have given the guest house owners a few days' time.

When contacted at about 8:30 last night, the receptionist at the guest house said four of their foreign guests left yesterday, two were still to leave and the process of fresh reservation was continuing.

Executive director of Best Eastern Ekramul Haq said they were not officially informed that their guest house was 'sealed'. He, however, admitted that they do not have any trade licence as the DCC was not been issuing trade licence for guest houses since 1997.

"There are about 60 guest houses without trade licence in the city. Why all those are not being sealed at a time?" he asked.

The DNC deputy director, when told about this, said they have shortage of manpower and the process of sealing guest houses requires time.

Japan's Matsuura new UNESCO boss

PARIS, Oct 20: Japan's ambassador to France, Koichiro Matsuura, was elected the new director-general of UNESCO on Wednesday, the secretary of the UN agency's Executive Board said, reports AFP.

Mohammad al-Shaabi said Matsuura's appointment for a six-year mandate at the helm of the agency would be proposed for approval to the UNESCO General Conference on November 12.

Matsuura, a 62-year-old career diplomat, won 34 votes against his closest rival, the candidate from the Arab world, Saudi Arabia's ambassador to Britain, Ghazi Algosaihi, who obtained 13.

The Japanese candidate's win came during a third round of balloting by the 58-member UNESCO Executive Board.

Karwan Bazar

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C's Zonal Office-6 has been totally taken over by one Abdul Ali. The market is known as Abdul Ali's foot, housing more than 100 wholesale stalls. Traders and DCC officials who requested anonymity said that the existing traffic problems in the area were caused mainly due to the existence of Abdul Ali's Foot market.

Like the park, Abdul Ali had also obtained a court injunction to block any official move to recover the passage until the matter is settled in the court.

"We are also moving to court to recover the road," said a DCC official who requested anonymity. The DCC officials admitted that none of these 'traders' doing transactions of crores of taka has any trade licence.

A senior police official of DMP's western zone covering Karwan Bazar told The Daily Star that the recent police eviction drive cleared all the pavements in the area. He said, requesting a customary anonymity, that a police officer was "suspended" recently after he was found involved in Karwan Bazar irregularities.

He said the police have recently arranged community policing in the area and some 40 Ansars have been posted at different points of Karwan Bazar. The law and order situation in Karwan Bazar is improving and we hope to clear the area of all irregularities.

The DCC officials emphasised the need for relocating the Karwan Bazar vegetable wholesale market to Aminbazar or elsewhere.

Official talks

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with USA, Canada and EU and as committed at WTO, ECOSOC and UNGA.

She appreciated the current preferential treatment of five per cent tariff concession by Australia to some items from the LDCs including Bangladesh.

Regarding developments in Asia and East Timor, Sheikh Hasina said Bangladesh always favours peace. "We are actively associated with the peace keeping mission of the United Nations," she added.

The Prime Minister referred to her country's total commitment to peace saying "we have suffered tremendously due to absence of peace." She recalled with deep gratitude the contribution of Australia in Bangladesh's war of liberation as well as post-liberation reconstruction initiatives.

"I myself had to struggle for decades against the authoritarian rules during the period the army overruled or covertly ruled the country. During this regime people's right of franchise was totally denied," she said, describing her struggle for restoration of democracy and economic emancipation of the people.

Referring to the peace accord signed on Chittagong Hill Tracts, the prime minister said, Bangladesh has brought back peace in one tenth of the country's total territory ending a two-decade old insurgency.

The prime minister said her government had initiated huge development activities in CHT region which is now totally free from ethnic confrontations.

Referring to the signing of 30-year Ganges water sharing treaty with India, the prime minister said we have reduced tension in the region through the agreement.

The prime minister also mentioned various programmes taken by her government for poverty alleviation and expansion of education.

The Bangladesh leader was assisted by State Minister for Foreign Affairs Abul Hasan Chowdhury, Principal Secretary to the prime minister Dr S A Samad, Foreign Secretary CM Shaif Sami, Press Secretary to PM Jawadul Karim and Bangladesh High Commissioner to Australia QAMA Rahim.

The Australian PM was aided by Minister of Trade and Foreign Affairs Minister Mark

EPZs

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on Bangladesh government to allow trade unions.

"Now the government has to implement the agreement, otherwise the facilities provided by the US government may be withdrawn" one source said. The US ambassador in Bangladesh came to the ministry several times and requested implementation of the agreement, he mentioned.

There are 126 factories in the two EPZs -- one in Dhaka and another in Chittagong -- with a total investment of 347.35 million US dollars. Another 130 factories are being set up.

MOU signed

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particularly the poor, women and children, and development of the Chittagong Hill Tracts.

State Minister for Foreign Affairs Abul Hasan Chowdhury and Parliamentary Secretary for Foreign Affairs of the host country Ms Kathy Sullivan MP inked the memo on behalf of the two countries.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and Prime Minister John Howard witnessed the signing ceremony in a Committee Room of the Parliament Building.

IG contradicts

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sire of leaving the top position of Police, unless Govt. so decides. The report is not based on fact as I never expressed such a desire and nor did I even utter this. I may humbly make it clear that I have over two years of service to my credit which I sincerely desire to utilise for the service of the nation."

"Publication of such incorrect reports is likely to create confusion in the minds of the police officers, which may ultimately affect the discipline of the force and hamper its effectiveness," the letter said.

Jiang Zemin

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a royal welcome yesterday from Queen Elizabeth, surrounded by a tight security blanket designed to avert embarrassing protests.

It was history in the making — Jiang is the first Chinese leader to make an official visit here and certainly the first to reside in Buckingham Palace as a guest of the monarch.

To the sounds of their respective national anthems, the Chinese president was welcomed by the queen, Prime Minister Tony Blair and other dignitaries in a ceremony at Horse Guards Parade.

Britain and China sealed a string of deals today worth a total of 3.5 billion dollars (3.24 billion euros).

The British government confirmed four major deals worth one quarter of total British investment in China to date and said that Britain was now "by far the largest European investor in China".

The China deal was a 2.5-billion-dollar energy pact between oil major BP Amoco and China Petroleum Corporation to undertake a feasibility study on a chemicals complex in Shanghai.

Stop withdrawal of army camps from CHT:

By Staff Correspondent

BNP secretary general Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan has expressed deep concern at the violence, killing and malicious incidents at Dighinala in Chittagong Hill Tracts over the last few days.

In a press statement yesterday, he also expressed concern at the news of withdrawal of the army camp from the CHT region. Terminating the incidents in CHT is an outcome of adverse effect and failure of the "black agreement", he asked to government to restore peace and stability there immediately.

He categorically said the CHT agreement had increased mistrust, suspicion and malice between the Bengali speaking and the tribal people. The violent incidents that took place in the last few days at Dighinala had clearly proved that the "peace agreement" had no foresight.

The BNP secretary general expressed grave concern at the loss of life and property, withdrawal of weapons from some eight thousand members of the security forces and withdrawal of 70 camps and three battalions of Ansars and VDP from the region.

Mannan Bhuiyan in his statement asked all concerned to refrain from conspiracies to jeopardise the image of the Army and demanded stoppage of withdrawal of army camps from there. He also demanded exemplary punishment for those responsible for the violent incidents.

Blood

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blood transfusion every year in the country, said a senior doctor.

"Steps should be taken for identification of the professional donors and for their registration. We have to stop spread of diseases through blood transfusion," he added.

Hartal today

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bus stand, Mirpur town hall, Shamapur, Uttara and Dhanmondi areas.

At the Dhaka Central Police Station, a

atral office at Nayapaltan at 5.52 pm, which terminated front of the Jatiya Press Club at 6.10 pm. BNP leaders Abdul Matin Chowdhury, Sadek Hossain Khoka MP and Joyanal Abedin Faruque MP led the procession.

BNP activists paraded Nayapaltan, Bijoynagar, Paltan crossing and Topkhana Road. A huge contingent of riot police followed the marchers