

What's on today....

Seminar : Dev Centre for Philosophical Studies will hold a seminar on 'Dr Muhammad Shahidullah's Philosophy of Life'. Venue: Room No 2028, Arts Building of Dhaka University. Time: 4.00 pm.

..... and tomorrow

Meeting : A general meeting of the Bangladesh T&T Board Retired Officers Welfare Association (ROWATEL) will be held. Venue: Conference room of the central office of BTB. Time: 9.30 am.

FPAB Awards in Journalism '99 : Family Planning Association of Bangladesh (FPAB) will award its Awards in Journalism '99. Venue: Jatiya Press Club. Time: 11.00 am.

Weather

Night temp likely to fall

Weather is likely to remain dry over the country in the next 12 hours till 6 pm today, reports UNB. Moderate to thick fog may occur over Rajshahi and Dhaka divisions and river basins of the country during morning. Met Office said forecasting 1 to 2 degree Celsius fall of night temperature over the country.

The country's highest temperature recorded yesterday was 29.0 degree Celsius at Cox's Bazar and the lowest 11.2 degrees at Rajshahi.

The sun sets in the capital today at 5.40 pm and rises tomorrow at 6.42 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	26.0	15.3	70	55
Chittagong	27.8	15.8	98	66
Rajshahi	24.5	11.2	83	72
Khulna	27.0	13.2	94	72
Barisal	26.4	13.5	77	61
Sylhet	26.5	13.5	77	71
Cox's Bazar	29.0	18.5	82	59

HERE and THERE

BCS coordination committee

By Staff Correspondent
A meeting of the steering committee of BCS Coordination Committee (26 cadres) on Monday reiterated their demand for withdrawal of the government order regarding upgradation of 321 posts of BCS (administration), said a press release last night.

The committee expressed anguish as no initiative has been taken to implement 'the eight-point demand which was mentioned in a memorandum. It was submitted to the prime minister on November 17 last year, it said.

The committee said inter-cadre discrimination will increase if 321 posts of a single cadre are upgraded without upgrading other similar posts of 28 BCS cadres.

Speakers also demanded cancellation of present the 'quota method' used to appoint deputy secretary and other higher positions.

Coastal Embankment Rehabilitation Project Workers and Officers Welfare Assoc

By Staff Correspondent
Leaders of Coastal Embankment Rehabilitation Project Workers and Officers Welfare Association yesterday demanded their pending salary for nine months and to provide them with work in other projects with the department.

They said that 323 employees are not getting salaries for nine consecutive months.

The president of the association Abdul Qayyum Niazat at a press conference at the Auditorium of Dhaka Reporters Unity yesterday said that there are provisions to place the employees in other projects. But the Forest department is recruiting new people which is a violation of project names.

The leaders also claimed that they were dispersed by police in front of the office of the Chief Conservator of Forest, when they went there to discuss their problems with the chief at Mohakhali, on Monday.

Among others Moinul Fuq, secretary, Abu Jafar, Tarek Khan, vice president of the organisation were present during yesterday conference.

DU Political Science Assoc

A meeting of ex-students of the Dhaka University Political Science Association was held at the Eastern Bank Limited head office on Sunday, reports B'S.

The meeting resolved that a reunion of ex-students of the department will be held on March 3, instead of January 28 at Ramna Green.

The next general meeting of the association will be held on January 30 at 5 pm at the EBL head office. All members of the association have been requested to attend, a press release said.

Agreement for research on pest management

A Bangladesh research body and an American university yesterday signed an agreement to conduct research on pest management, reports BSS.

A procedure for Collaborative Research Programme on Integrated Pest Management was signed between the Bangladesh Agricultural Research Council (BARC) and Virginia Polytech Institute and State University, (Virginia Tech) VA, USA. Dr Zahurul Karim, Executive Chairman of BARC, signed the procedure on behalf of his Council and Dr SK De Datta, Director, Office of International Research and Development College of Agriculture and Life Science, signed for

12 JS committees reconstituted

Twelve Parliamentary Standing Committees on different ministries were reconstituted by Jatiya Sangsad yesterday, reports BSS.

Out of the 12 committees, four were reconstituted for the first time. These are committees on Disaster Management and Relief Ministry, Forest and Environment Ministry, Education Ministry and the committee on Government Assurances.

The Standing Committee on Agriculture Ministry were re-structured for third time while the remaining seven for the second time. These are committees on Home Ministry, Planning Ministry, Food Ministry, Communications Ministry, LGRD and Cooperative Ministry, Health Ministry, and Youth and Sports Ministry.

The reconstituted Parliamentary Standing Committees on 12 ministries are as follows:

The Standing Committee on Home Ministry: Chairman — Md Sayedul Huq (Brahmanbaria) and members — the Home Minister (if he is an MP), Abdul Hasanat Abdullah (Barisal), Md Abdus Shahid (Moulvibazar), SM Mostafa Rashidee Suja (Khulna), Md Tajul Islam (Comilla), Jinat Hossain (Chittagong), Sadek Hossain (Dhaka) and Hafiz Uddin Ahmed (Bhola).

The committee was formed on May 12, 1998 and was reconstituted earlier on March 14, 1999.

The Standing Committee on Planning Ministry: Chairman — Enamul Huq (Habiganj) and members — Mohammad Nuruddin Khan (Narsingdi), HN Asiqur Rahman (Rangpur), Md Ali Ashraf (Comilla), Abdus Salam (Mymensingh), Jannatul Ferdous (Sirajganj)-Panna, Abdul Moyeen Khan (Narsingdi), Nurul Amin Talukder (Narail), GM Fazul Huq (Chandpur) and Abu Lais Md Mubtaz Chowdhury (Habiganj).

Formed on May 12, 1998, the standing committee was first reconstituted on July 8, 1998.

The Standing Committee on Food Ministry: Chairman — Md Abdul Hakim (Comilla) and members — the Minister in-charge of Food Ministry (if he is an MP), Alauddin Ahmed (Kishoreganj), Mirza Azam (Jamalpur), Md Jinal Abedin Bhuiyan (Comilla), Bharati Nandi Sarkar (Panchagarh), Thakurgaon and Dinapur, Jinal Abedin Sarkar (Lalmonirhat), Abdul Hai (Munshiganj), Md Shahjahan Mian (Nababganj) and Shamsuddin Ahmad (Naogaon).

Formed on November, 1997, the committee was last reconstituted on May 12, 1998.

The Standing Committee on Communication Ministry: Chairman — Asaruddin Ahmad Khan (Gazipur) and members — the Communication Minister (if he is an MP), S M Mostafa Rashidee Suja (Khulna), Mostafizur Rahman (Dinajpur), Khan Tipu Sultan (Jessore), Mokbul Hossain (Dhaka), Md Moqbul Hossain (Meherpur), Nazimuddin Alam (Bhola), M Ruhul Quddus Talukder Dula (Natore) and Md Shahidul Islam (Jhenaidah).

The committee was formed on November 16, 1997. It was last reconstituted on May 12, 1998.

The Standing Committee on LGRD and Cooperative Ministry: Chairman — Abdul Mannan (Tangail) and members — Mr Zillur Rahman (Kishoreganj), Rahmat Ali (Gazipur), Md Abdus Shahid (Moulvibazar), Ramesh Chandran Sen (Thakurgaon), Md Mujibul Huq (Comilla), Md Rustam Ali Farazee (Pirojpur), Nazmul Huda (Dhaka), Md Shahjahan (Noakhali) and Md Helauzzaman Talukder Lulu (Bogra).

Formed on November 16, 1997, the committee was last reconstituted on May 12, 1998.

The Standing Committee on Health Ministry: Chairman — Kazi Abu Yusuf (Faridpur) and members — the Health Minister (if he is an MP), Prof Dr M Amanullah (Mymensingh),

PM gives export awards

Four thrust sectors identified

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said that her government had identified four thrust sectors to boost export earnings and speedy industrialisation in the country, reports BSS.

Addressing a function at the Osmani Memorial Hall, she gave export awards to the recipients for the year '96-97 and '97-98, she said the four thrust sectors are leather and leather goods, new and higher value added readymade garment products, computer software and agro-processing industries.

The prime minister, however, regretted that despite huge export possibilities in those four sectors, we have failed to attain the desired goal. She said that her government had given incentives to boost up industrial and export import policies.

Sheikh Hasina said the government had taken liberal policy for industrialisation as well as for setting up export-oriented industries. She said her government had introduced five-year long import-export policy in place of one year.

The prime minister said that direct foreign investment now stands at 1000 crore dollars.

She said that 439 industries and factories were set up with foreign investment during the period from 1996 to June 1999, while some 4230 industries and factories were set up by local investors.

She said as a result 6,57,211 new jobs had been created. She informed that the inflation rate had come down to 3.4 per cent now.

Hasina advised the exporters not to resort to unfair means during export. She said due to adoption of unfair means by a section of traders, the export of shrimps had suffered a serious set back in the European Union. "We took up the matter with the importers and the problem was resolved," she said. She also warned that the government would take stern measures against the unscrupulous exporters, she cautioned.

The function was also addressed by Commerce Minister Abdul Jalil, Additional Secretary Golam Rahman and Vice Chairman of the Export Promotion Bureau AB Chowdhury.

The prime minister later handed over trophies and certificates to 70 exporters.

Anti-terrorism bodies at district, thana levels soon

Santrash Birodhi Shanti Andolan (SBSA), a non-political socio-cultural organisation launched by Bangladesh Bar Council, is considering to declare a day in a year against terrorism and extortionism in the country soon, reports BSS.

The committee was formed on November 16, 1997.

The Committee on Government Assurances: Chairman — M Rezaul Karim Heera (Jamalpur), and members — Sheikh Razzak Ali (Khulna), Dewan Farid Gazi (Habiganj), Mohammad Selim (Sirajganj), AKM Jahangir Hossain (Patuakhali), M Tajul Islam Chowdhury (Kurigram), Mirza Azam (Jamalpur) and Mosharraf Hossain Mongu (Barisal).

The committee was formed on November 20, 1996.

The meeting also decided to form anti-terrorism committees at district and thana levels and hold a day-long conference to aware people against rising terrorism in all spheres of society. Complain centres would also be set up in all the district headquarters so that the victims could report their sufferings which include gross human rights violation and repression on women.

It was also decided in the meeting that SBSA would pursue political party chiefs not to nominate identified terrorists in any elections and sack all the terrorists from the parties immediately. Training for law enforcers, judges and lawyers also came up for discussion to pave way for ensuring rule of law in society.

105 DU teachers urge Khaleda to change her stand

One hundred and five teachers of Dhaka University yesterday urged BNP chief Begum Khaleda to revise her stand against negotiation to settle the long running political stand-off for the sake of the hard earned democracy, reports BSS.

In a statement, they said Begum Zia's announcement at a business conference to paralyse the country through hartals stunned them as it came when the nation was expecting that the gap between the ruling and the main opposition parties would be bridged through the initiatives of the country's business community.

"Her (Begum Zia) announcement seriously concerned us along with the countrymen," the statement said.

It added: "We urge the leader of the opposition to give the countrymen a sense of relief responding to the Prime Minister's call to bridge their political gaps."

BCL protests BNP's 'threat'

By DU Correspondent
Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL), student wing of the ruling party, brought out a procession on the Dhaka University campus yesterday protesting BNP's 'threat' to call non-stop hartal.

Following the procession, BCL held a rally at Apejeyo Bangla on the campus at noon.

Leaded fuel

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taking over the market, the government wants motorists to consider another environmentally friendly alternative -- compressed natural gas.

"We have taken steps to increase the number of compressed natural gas stations from 4 to 50," said the Energy Ministry source. "The Nirapad bus service between Uttara and Gulistan also uses compressed natural gas."

Converting vehicles to compressed natural gas would expand the local gas market, reduce public fuel costs and ensure a cleaner environment, he said.

Dialogue a must

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tlements of disputes through discussions," Prof. Islam said.

"There should be a consensus that political activities would not stand in the ways of the nation's economic interests in any manner."

He feels the need for a 'third party negotiator'. "But I do not see any such individual to broker a negotiation between the conflicting camps right at the moment. I can only wish that good sense would prevail upon them."

Subed Ali Bhuiyan, a retired Major General, believes that dialogue between opposing political camps was an essential component of democracy. "But it depends on mutual confidence, which is conspicuous by its absence in our political culture. Presently, there is a big gap between the government and the opposition."

Arguing that it is very difficult for a government to run the affairs of the state without accommodating opposition views, Bhuiyan said that the government move for a dialogue should have been made much earlier. "However, an atmosphere for a dialogue we did perhaps be created if the government released political prisoners and withdraws politically motivated cases filed against opposition leaders and activists."

Apprehending that the country would head towards a serious chaos if the political crisis was not resolved immediately, the retired general said that a presidential move in this regard might produce a positive result.

Ataur Rahman, an NGO activist, believes that all political problems should be resolved through dialogue. Arguing that the government's indifference towards the opposition sentiments played the main role for the emergence of the present



Bangladeshi student dies in NY

Lutfia Ahmed Rimi, a brilliant student of City University in the USA, succumbed to her burn injuries on Sunday, says a press release.

Rimi, 23, sustained burn injuries when a fire broke out in her apartment in New York on January 14.

Rimi and her parents were sleeping when the fire started at around 1:30 am. Her parents, Kabir Ahmed and Taslima Ahmed, were burnt alive at the scene.

Kabir and Taslima went to New York to visit their daughter on her winter vacation.

An electrical short circuit sparked the fire.

Rimi was admitted to Colonel Hospital in Manhattan where she died after 10 days.

Her body will arrive in the city tomorrow. Her nama-e-janaza will be held at 32/1 Bha-johari Saha Street, Wari at 10 am on the day. Later, she will be buried at the family graveyard at Ibrahimpur Mia, Bari in Nabiganj thana under Brahmanbaria district.

Some changes

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Secretary of Establishment Ministry Azizul Haque Bhuiyan chairman of BRTA, Joint Secretary of Commerce Ministry Zia-an Islam, Chowdhury chairman of BSCIC and Officer on Special Duty (joint secretary) of Establishment Ministry Mohammad Musa Director General of Disaster Management Bureau.

Joint Secretary of Women and Children Affairs Ministry Shafigul Islam was transferred as Joint Secretary to the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare while OSD (joint secretary) of Establishment Ministry Deena Haque as Joint Secretary to Women and Family Welfare Ministry and Principal of National Hotel and Tourism Training Institute AKM Abu Bakar Siddique as Joint Secretary to Commerce Ministry.

Abus Samad was appointed Member (Engineering) of Rural Electrification Board for two years term on contractual basis with effect from the date of his joining after cancellation of his LPR.

Additional Secretary of Power, Energy and Mineral Resources Syed Tanvir Hossain was appointed Chief Insurance Controller of Insurance Directorate under the Commerce Ministry.

Teesta waters

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plemented their projects partially. India has implemented Phase-I of its project which includes the Gajaldoba barrage. We also implemented our project partially."

He said Bangladesh does not have data how much water India is diverting from the Teesta. "At the meeting, we will propose exchange of data for a final settlement, side by side fixing the modalities," Khaleque said.



BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan addressing a discussion meeting on "Democracy Killing Day" organised by the party at the Jatiya Press Club auditorium yesterday.

Remain alert against any move to revert to one-party rule : BNP

Opposition BNP criticised the ruling Awami League for launching BKSAL in 1975 to establish a one-party rule, and asked party activists to remain alert against any such move, reports UNB.

Awami League doesn't believe in democracy. BKSAL remains embedded in their head," BNP secretary general Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan told a discussion marking the "Democracy Killing Day" yesterday. BKSAL was launched on this day in 1975.

Addressing the meeting at Jatiya Press Club, Mannan Bhuiyan said BNP cannot be destroyed by repressive measure, rather it would be stronger.

Chaired by city BNP convenor Sadek Hossain Khoka, the function was also addressed by Khondokar Delwar Hossain, Khondokar Mosharraf Hossain, Moudud Ahmed, Shamsul Islam, MK Anwar, Abdullah Al

Noman journalist Reazuddin Ahmed, Mahmuddin Ahmed Manik, Mahbulul Alam Tara and Abdus Salam.

Mannan Bhuiyan, asserted that BNP would not allow Awami League to establish BKSAL again until a single worker of BNP remains alive.

He hoped BNP would form government bagging more than 200 seats at the next parliament election if the vote will be free and fair.

Referring to the move to enact Public Safety Bill, he warned the government that it was digging its own grave.

Khandakar Delwar Hossain said with the 4th amendment Awami League killed not only democracy, but also the values of Independence War.

He alleged Awami League was only giving lip service to democracy. "Awami League has got its training not in democracy but in terrorism and vote rigging."

Businessmen won't give up

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will go to the government again and ask them to give some concessions to the opposition for creation of an atmosphere for dialogue.

"The opposition have some grievances. They think the government offer is not sincere. The government should take the first step and have to create an atmosphere to change the mindset of the opposition," Mintoo said.

The FBCCI president said that for the first time the business community could show the guts to tell the Prime Minister that everything was not going right. "We also told the Leader of the Opposition that the whole nation does not like politics of hartal and destruction."

Bangladesh Garments Manufacturer and Exporters Association (BGMEA) President Anisur Rahman Sinha said he was frustrated at the speech of the opposition leader.

He however said, the result was obvious. "We should have done more groundwork and prepare ourselves before arranging such a big conference. We should have set a target."

"However, we will continue our efforts and try to convince the opposition to keep the garment sector out of the purview of hartal. It is the worst affected sector but it contributes the most in the country's export earnings. We will try to attain our goal at any cost," Sinha said.

Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MCCI)

President Latifur Rahman termed the event "a positive beginning".

"Hopefully, the effort will continue in coming days".

He said the Executive Committee of MCCI will discuss the issue and suggest recommendations whenever chances come.

"Everyone should go ahead with the move and carry it forward whenever opportunity comes," Rahman said.

Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry (DCC) President Aftabul Islam termed the conference a "failure" as the Leader of Opposition "did not budget an inch from the original stand".

He said the preparations were not enough. "Prior to arranging such a big conference, they should have brought the issue at a matured stage through preliminary talks with both the government and the opposition."

He also said many issues like irregular power supply, shortage of working capital, reforms in banking sector, trade unions activities, labour unrest and increase in cost of production were not highlighted due to lack of preparation.

"But we have established our point that none favours hartal and that the problems can be solved only through dialogue", Aftab said.

Vice-president of Bangladesh Chamber of Industries (BCI) AK Azad said the conference was partially successful.

BNP to protest proposed Public Safety Bill

By Staff Correspondent

BNP will stage demonstrations across the country tomorrow to protest government's move to introduce what it termed "repressive black law" in parliament in the name of public safety.

As parts of the programme, the BNP will hold public rallies and bring out processions in all city, district and thana headquarters.

BNP's allies partners — Jatiya Party, Jamaat-e-Islami and Islami Oikya Jote — will also observe the programme simultaneously.

In the city, BNP will organise a rally at Paltan Maidan at 3:30pm and bring out a procession after the meeting, said a press release yesterday.

BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan in a statement instructed party's city, district and thana units to organise rallies and processions and build up strong resistance against the government's move.

"Through the conference we at least spoke about our problems and showed that every business leader was opposed to hartal," Azad said.

The BNP chief said that she understood problems of the business community but added that when it was in power, Awami League did not allow it to function, the BCI leader said.

"So, it seems to be an attitude of taking revenge on the government of Awami League for the party's acts while it was in the opposition," Azad said.

"So, the next course of action (by the business community) should be to sit with all professional groups and launch an anti-hartal campaign," he said.

Former FBCCI president Yussuf Abdullah Harun said the conference made politicians understood that the business community was united against hartal and that the problems could be solved only through dialogue.

"Both the government and then opposition believes the private sector is the engine of growth. So, when we express concern over hartal, they understand what we want."

Harun hoped that the process would continue and said the community will sit again to set the next course of action.

FBCCI Director Abdul Huq said he is not frustrated. "The expectation was too high. But we have to take into consideration the reality. We should not expect that everything will be changed overnight."