

What's on today...

Discussion meeting: A discussion meeting on irregularities and corruption in education will be held. Organiser: Centre for Micro Studies, DU. Venue: Women's Voluntary Organisation (WVO), Rd no 27 (old), Dhanmondi R/A. Time: 9:00 am.

Seminar: A seminar on 'The State of University Education in Public Administration' will be held. Venue: Centre for Advanced Research in Social Sciences, Lecture Theatre room # 401, Dhaka University. Time: 11:00 am.

Weather

Dry weather likely

Light to moderate rain or thundershowers may occur at a few places over Chittagong division and at one or two places over Rajshahi, Barisal and Dhaka divisions in next 12 hours till 6 pm today, reports UNB.

Weather may remain mainly dry with partly cloudy sky elsewhere over the country, said Met Office adding that light to moderate fog may occur over the river basins of the country in the morning.

The country's highest temperature recorded yesterday was 27.2 degree Celsius at Sitakunda and the lowest 9.5 degrees at Rajshahi. The sun sets in the capital today at 5:44 pm and rises tomorrow at 6:39 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	24.5	13.8	63	51
Chittagong	26.5	14.0	97	65
Rajshahi	24.6	9.5	86	69
Khulna	26.0	10.6	88	54
Barisal	25.6	11.5	92	-
Sylhet	25.3	12.5	71	60
Cox's Bazar	27.1	13.8	78	59

HERE and THERE

CSID

A meeting on findings of a study on 'Street Children with Disabilities in Dhaka City' was recently held by the Centre for the Services and Information on Disability (CSID) in association with Save the Children Sweden at Women's Voluntary Association (WVA) auditorium, says a press release.

A total of 62 representatives from government agencies, UN organisations, NGOs, donor agencies, and civil society participated in the meeting.

Mir Shahabuddin, Director General, Dept of Social Services, was present as chief guest and Lena Hultstrom, Resident Representative, Save the Children, Sweden was the special guest. Monsur Ahmed Choudhury, Chairman, CSID, presided over the meeting.

On the basis of findings of the study, the participants recommended programmes for developing condition of street children with disabilities.

BCL

By DU Correspondent Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) observed the 'Repression Day' of Jagannath Hall of Dhaka University yesterday.

On the day in 1996, several hundred students of Jagannath Hall were injured when police swooped on them at the hall. Police also arrested 127 students from the hall.

The ruling party-backed BCL chalked out a day-long programme to observe the day which included a photo exhibition and a discussion meeting.

The discussion was held at the Jagannath Hall auditorium in the afternoon, which was addressed by Commerce Minister Abdul Jalil. Dr Durga Das Bhattacharya and other Awami League and Chhatra League leaders.

The exhibition was organised in front of DUCSU building on the campus.

Leaders and workers of

Chhatra League brought out a procession on the campus in the morning and held a rally in front of DUCSU building to mark the day.

Among others Ajay Kar Khokon, Sujit Ray Nondil, Likok Sikdar, Saifuddin Nasir, A K M Ruban and A K M Ajim addressed the rally.

IUB

Fifteen students from different universities of Minnesota, USA under the auspices of HECUA (Higher Educational Consortium for Urban Affairs) recently participated in the Live-in-Field-Experience (LFE) of Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB), says a press release.

The HECUA group spent two weeks at BARD - Comilla. Prof Verne Dusenbery of Hamline University, USA and Prof Haroun Ur Rashid of IUB coordinated the programme. The US HECUA group studied 'Development Community in Bangladesh'. IUB organised a reception for the visiting US students at a local hotel on Thursday.

DU Political Science Ex-students Assoc

A meeting of Dhaka University Political Science ex-students Association was held at the head office of the Eastern Bank Limited at Jibon Bima tower on Saturday, reports BSS.

Joint Secretary of Establishment Ministry M Talukdar presided over the meeting, said a press release yesterday.

The meeting decided to form an adhoc committee to arrange the re-union programme of the association scheduled to be held on March 3 at Ramna Green in the city.

The next meeting of the association will be held on February 6 at 5 pm at the head office of Eastern Bank Limited and all members have been requested to attend.

Obituary

Mujibur Rahman, acting information officer of Bhola district, died of a heart attack Sunday night, reports BSS.

According to an official handout, Rahman breathed his last at the launch at Chandpur Sunday night on his way to Dhaka from Bhola. He was 55 and is survived by his wife, two sons and two daughters.

State Minister for Information Prof Abdu Sayeed yesterday expressed deep condolence and sorrow at the death of Mujibur Rahman.

Lt Col Abdul Aziz Choudhury (Retd) of signal corps of Bangladesh Army died at the CMH, Dhaka on January 30. He was 53, says a press release.

He was the youngest son of late Abdur Rouf Choudhury of Bhugaon, Kanihati, Moulvibazar.

Azim left behind his wife, three daughters, one son and a host of relatives and admirers to mourn his death.

He was buried at Army graveyard, Banani.

His quikhwani will be held after Asr prayers at New DOHS Mosque on February 4.

Chehlum

Chehlum of Md Shahidullah Patwary, an ex-official of Titas Gas, will be observed at his village home at Sukradampur, Faridpur.

February 4, says a press release.

Relatives, friends and admirers have been requested to attend the milad mahfil to be held after Juma prayers on the occasion.

Need for improved relations with India emphasised

By Staff Correspondent

Former Foreign Secretary Faruq Ahmed Choudhury has emphasised the need for improving relations between India and Bangladesh through achieving mutual confidence and with professional attitude.

He said both the countries are very close due to its location and historical background. Together we want to march towards development, peace and stability," he said.

The top ranking ex-diplomat was addressing a roundtable conference on 'Bangladesh-India Relations: Present and Future' at Hotel Sheraton on Saturday.

Leading Bangla daily Prothom Alo organised the discussion, which was participated by eight former foreign secretaries and the incumbent, Prothom Alo Editor Matu Rahman moderated the lively discussion.

Speaking on the occasion

Faruq Ahmed Choudhury said there is a common observation among the people of Bangladesh that India always shows "big brotherly" attitude. A lobby in India also believe that relations with Bangladesh is not going properly.

Referring to improvement of Indo-Bangladesh relations during the previous BNP and current Awami League regime, he said transfer of 'Tin Bigha' corridor, signing of Ganges Water Sharing Treaty, return of Chakma refugee from India and introduction of Dhaka-Calcutta Bus service are the positive signs of improvement of relations.

Turning to politics, Choudhury said sometimes there were irresponsible utterance from our side to India and stressed the need for consensus between two major political parties in Bangladesh about relations with India for the greater national interest.

"I do not see any substantive difference between the BNP and Awami League because both the parties want to improve relations when stays in power and take anti-Indian stance while they are in opposition," he said adding "It is not wise to consider the Indo-Bangladesh relations with emotion."

Choudhury said Bangladesh should have to adopt same and constant foreign policy towards the India.

He suggested that both the countries should take effective initiatives for building confidence among the people of the two countries and emphasised increase in people to people contact.

The former foreign secretary observed that SAARC has fallen into crisis due to Indian attitude and said this forum can be the right platform for improving relations between India and Bangladesh as well as other neighbouring nations.

QU authorities forced out of campus

By Staff Correspondent

Queens University Chhatra Sangram Parishad (QUCSP) in a press release last night said that agitating students yesterday forced the university authorities to leave the campus following filing of a false case against some teachers and students of the university.

Eight more students of the university, who have been on a fast-unto-death programme to realise their 21-point demand, fell sick on the fifth day of the programme yesterday. They were admitted to a private clinic, the press release added.

The press release alleged that Gulsahn thana police have taken side with the university authorities and threatened the students. QUCSP leaders requested police administration to play a neutral role in the incident.

The university authorities could not be contacted last night.

New assignment

Engineer Muhammad Golam Rabbani took over as the Chairman of Bangladesh Water Development Board (BWDB) on Sunday, reports BSS.

Prior to his new assignment, Rabbani was Member (Planning) of BWDB. He held many important positions including chief engineer of South-East Chittagong and chief engineer of monitoring.

Rabbani received his bachelor degree from the civil engineering department of Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET) in 1964 and joined, the then East Pakistan WAPDA as an assistant engineer.

A freedom fighter and cultural activist, Rabbani was born in a renowned Muslim family of Rajshahi on January 1, 1944, said a press release.

T&T chairman goes on LPR

T&T Board Chairman M A Mannan Chowdhury went on leave preparatory to retirement (LPR) yesterday, reports UNB.

Former T&T Board Chairman Khandaker Abdul Matin, who earlier went on LPR on January 20, is likely to be reappointed with one-year extension, according to a source at the Telecommunication Ministry.

Khaleda

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pressed their grievance to the President for not publishing it in public interest.

Asked why BNP met the President when they are ready to wage massive protests against the law, opposition Chief Whip Khandaker Delwar Hossain, present during the briefing, said, "We are exploring all possible avenues to stop the law. So, we went to the parliamentary standing committee meeting on this issue."

BNP chairperson Khaleda Zia will address a press conference at 29 Minto Road today.

Biswa Ijtema

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not due to health reason.

Besides the Ijtema ground on the banks of the river Turag, the whole area from Zia International Airport to Cheraig Ali market at Tongi turned into a sea of humanity as lakhs joined the prayers sitting on roads, footpaths, open spaces and rooftops.

Hundreds of women also took part in the Munajat staying at nearby houses.

A large number of microphones were installed by the Mass Communication Department to relay the concluding prayers to different areas nearby.

Meanwhile, another two devotees died yesterday raising the number to 10 since the Ijtema began on Saturday.

Abdul Majid (60) fell sick at the Ijtema venue and died yesterday morning. He hailed from Myemung.

An unidentified devotee died in the early hours of yesterday. His namaz-e-janaza was held after Fajr prayers.

Besides, four devotees were injured in road accidents while returning from the Ijtema.

Shibir-led alliance calls indefinite strike at CU

From CU Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Jan 31: Islami Chhatra Shibir led Student Alliance (AGSA) has called for an indefinite strike at the Chittagong University from tomorrow.

The programme was announced at a meeting of the AGSA today to press home its five-point demand, including removal of the Vice Chancellor and pro-Vice Chancellor of the university, arrest and trial of the killers of two Shibir activists and release of arrested student leaders and workers.

Two Shibir activists were gunned down in a clash with ruling party backed Chhatra League on the campus on December 19. Earlier, police arrested 91 Shibir activists from four CU dormitories. Of them,

37 were released. Meanwhile, CU VC Prof Abdul Mannan held a meeting with teachers of the university at his office.

DU teacher given forced leave

By DU Correspondent

Mohammad Ferdous Hossain, an Associate Professor of Political Science of Dhaka University, who was arrested and sent to jail on charges of assaulting his wife, was given forced leave from the university for an indefinite period yesterday.

Ferdous also the general secretary of Dhaka University Teachers' Association (DUTA), was arrested from his campus residence on Thursday under Women and Children Repression Prevention Act.

The decision was taken at an emergency meeting of the Dhaka University Syndicate yesterday. DU Vice Chancellor Prof. AK Azad Chowdhury presided over the meeting held at the Administrative Building of the university in the afternoon, said a DU press release.

Curb crimes within a month, Nasim directs IGP

Home Minister Mohammed Nasim directed the Inspector General of Police yesterday to curb crimes like extortion, terrorism and snatching within a month through proper enforcement of the Public Safety Act, reports UNB.

Amar Ekushey countdown

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Renowned poet Shamsur Rahman will inaugurate the 18th poetry festival as the chief guest on the Dhaka University campus at 10 am.

The main stage of the festival has been built at Hahim Chatter near the University Central Library.

The organisers of the festival have decided to continue their programmes as per schedule despite a 36-hour hartal called by the BNP-backed opposition alliance beginning tomorrow," said a press release of the Parishad.

A large number of poets from home and abroad are expected to attend this year's poetry festival. Some 250 poets from across the country have so far registered their names and many are expected to attend the inaugural function this morning.

Some 20 poets from India, Nepal and Ireland will also attend the festival and recite their self-composed poems," said the general secretary of the Parishad Mohammad Samad.

The festival will begin with the rendering of especially composed songs for the festival. Members of the Parishad will also bring out a procession, which would march towards the Central Shaheed Minar to place wreaths to pay homage to the martyrs of the Language Movement of 1952.

They will also place wreaths at the mazar of National poet Kazi Nazrul Islam and renowned painter Quamrul Hasan.

The slogan of this year's festival is "may poetry emerge victorious in the light of the mother tongue".

On the first day of the programme today, two sessions of poetry recitation will be held.

Two discussion sessions and will be held on the second day tomorrow. Dr Khandaker Ashraf Hossain of English Department of DU will present a keynote paper on 'Poet, Mother Language and Internationalisation', while poet Sazzad Kadir will place a keynote paper on 'Poet and Information Technology'. A session of poetry recitation will be held in the afternoon.

Belal Chowdhury and Muhammad Samad, president and general secretary, respectively,

of Jatiya Kabita Parishad in a statement yesterday called upon the BNP-led opposition alliance to withdraw their hartal programme on the second day of the poetry festival on Wednesday.

"The festival is not only our national programme but it has become one of the biggest poetry festivals in South-East Asia," they said, adding that there should not be any political programme that could hamper the festival and tarnish its image.

They urged all concerned to extend their cooperation to hold the festival in a peaceful manner.

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Teachers

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said her government had introduced pay scale for non-government teachers and provided 70 per cent of their gross salary from the public exchequer instead of giving grant.

She said BNP government had brought about 12,000 primary schools under 'food for education programme', but the Awami League government failed to increase the number because it does not want to educate the people.

She said this government does not want to spend the required Tk 250 crore to meet the teachers' demand. "But it is spending about Tk 600 crore for a single family. Where from the money comes?"

"They (AL government) are purchasing MIG-29 and Frigate to get commission. But they are not fulfilling the demand of teachers because they will not get commission from it."

Turning to campus situation, the opposition leader alleged that terrorists belonging to the ruling party have created a reign of terror at universities and educational institutions across the country.

JS body discusses BCS officers' problems

Parliamentary Standing Committee on establishment at a meeting yesterday discussed problems regarding posting and transfer of the BCS administration cadre officers at field level and reviewed ways and means to solve the problems, reports BSS.

The meeting, held at the Sangsaddhaban with commitment chairman Khondker Asaduzzaman in the chair, also reviewed the progress of implementation of the recommendations taken earlier.

The members of the committee, Prof Dr M S Akbar and Mohammad Abu Hena attended the meeting.

PM's relative

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the house was cordoned off by a large number of policemen. Policemen took finger prints from the spot of occurrence last night.

Ministers and dignitaries were visiting the residence till filing of this report last night.

However, most of her relatives and others who visited the house were not allowed to see the body, according to our correspondents.

The deceased is survived by one son and two daughters. BSS said her namaz-e-janaza will be held today and that she will be buried after the arrival of her son and daughter-in-law from the US.

Finger print experts of the CID arrived on the spot about 12 midnight. Her husband was being given treated for his cardiac problems.

Erwin Teufel, Chief Minister, Baden Wurttemberg, Germany, at a solar project of Anando during his recent visit to Bangladesh.

DU exams suspended

By DU Correspondent

All the examinations of Dhaka University scheduled for tomorrow and the day after have been suspended due to unavoidable reasons.

Fresh dates for the examination will be announced later, said a university press release yesterday.

A 36-hour countrywide hartal called by the BNP-led opposition alliance which coincided with this.

The other parts of the examinations however will be unchanged, the press release added.

Plane crash

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for the Ivory Coast and Nigeria later Monday to help probe the cause of the crash, Clark said, along with a team of Airbus engineers and three French accident investigators.

Most of the passengers were believed to be Nigerians, the airline's technical director said. The route is popular among Nigerians heading to Dubai for duty-free shopping.

Emmanuel Madu, a 33-year-old Nigerian who had gone to Dubai on business — and who doesn't know how to swim — suddenly found himself thrown deep into the water, buffeted by debris, after the plane crashed into the ocean.

Teenager shot dead by dacoits in Munshiganj

MUNSHIGANJ, Jan 31: A teenager was shot dead by dacoits at Uttar Haldia village in Louhajang thana Sunday night, reports UNB.

The dead was identified as Dipan, 13, son of Shankar Ghosh of the village.

Police said a gang of about 16 dacoits swooped on the house of Shankar Ghosh and looted valuables worth about Tk 2 lakh.

The bandits opened fire on Dipan as he raised hue and cry when they were leaving the house.

A case was filed with local police.

hands to harass, intimidate and oppress their political opponents. We have seen no attempt to improve our police force through increase in their number, better equipment and better training. Today police is a highly corrupt institution whose own leading officers frankly admit their inability to address the malaise because of its widespread nature. We read daily that FIRs of citizens are refused by Officers in Charge of this or that Thana either because they have not been paid bribes or because of political influence. The abuse of power by branches of police like the CID, DB, Special Branch are well known. On top of all the existing abuses the AL government has now given these institutions — the law enforcing agencies — this additional 'lethal weapon' in the form of this bill.

Finance Minister SAMS Kibria makes two points in his letter to us (we thank him for writing to us and invite him and other ministers to make this practice so that we engage them in media debates) contesting our editorial position. That his party's bill is far superior to that passed by the BNP while in power, and that the law and order situation had so deteriorated in the country that the government couldn't do without such a law. The finer distinctions between the two laws do not alter their fundamental fascistic character. It is preposterous to suggest that right to

them have not and the government must be judged by that. BCL cadres proudly talked to the press of having attacked Kader Siddiqui's conference. Have they been arrested? Several ruling party MPs have been directly and indirectly linked with serious crimes including killing opponents. Have they been brought to book? What about things going on in Feni which have been so graphically reported in a leading Bangla daily. If AL's track record was a judicious upholding of the law, if the PM's repeated statement that "criminals have no party" was honestly and seriously implemented and if all those AL and BCL workers who monopolised "tender processes" were arrested and punished then we might have had a different attitude towards this bill, with of course fundamental changes in it. Today Awami League is being judged by its own performance of the last three and half years and that judgement compels us to conclude that we cannot trust it to be fair, judicious and even-handed.

We oppose this law and ask the government to withdraw it. It can, just easily as it has passed it, cancel this law. This mistake would have been easily avoided if some sort of public consultation were organised around it. It has been an ill conceived, ill thought out and ill-motivated move. Correct it before it brings more 'ills' on us all.

PM: New law

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Clause 11 provides for punishment to abusers."

Asked again about use of certain provisions of the law for political purposes, the ruling party chief said: "We also used to hold processions on streets but we never obstructed free movement of vehicles."

Side-tracking the point, the prime minister then started speaking about highway robbery by blocking roads with bamboo or tree.

"We do not mind observance of hartal. But why do they (opposition parties) throw petrol bombs and kill innocent people in the name of hartal? They can do as many hartals as they like, but should we allow them to kill people?"

She wondered why the political parties were opposing the law enacted to punish criminals like hijackers, extortionists and kidnappers. "May be, they have not gone through the law, or it can be an opposition for the sake of opposition."

At the press conference held at her official residence Gana Bhaban, the PM also replied to various questions ranging from the public safety law to her trip to Belgium.

The Public Safety Act will come into force soon after the President assents to it.

"At first, we will set up special tribunals in the six divisional headquarters and then in other parts of the country. We will also arrange special short training for all concerned. Such steps involve huge expenditure," she told another questioner.

Asked if enforcement of the law will free the society from such crimes, she quipped, "Can any one give guarantee of a 100 per cent crime-free society? Such a situation is not there even in a developed country... But I am sure that the rate of crimes will reduce substantially provided all are sincere and co-operative."

In this regard, Hasina sought co-operation from opposition parties and advised them not to encourage criminals like hijackers, extortionists and terrorists by speaking against the new law.

The Public Safety Act and another tough law — the Women and Children Repression Prevention Act — have been enacted to ensure that culprits are caught and given tough punishment through speedy trial in special tribunals, she said.

The laws underwent a long process, with suggestions from all quarters concerned.

"Initially, we had planned one law to deal with all the

crimes covered by the two laws. On suggestions from women's organisations, we then split it into two separate laws."

To a question about the opposition demand for early general elections, the PM said the next elections are due in 2001. "It (early elections) depends on... We'll decide it in time. We'll let you know if we decide so."

The Hasina ridiculed the opposition deadline to her government to step down. "We have seen them giving such deadlines frequently since we came to power. The opposition is now desperate to go back to power through unconstitutional means after losing people's confidence."

The PM also criticised BNP chief Khaleda Zia for not responding to repeated moves for dialogue by herself and by business leaders. She also criticised BNP MPs for boycotting the parliamentary session "where they had attacked the Speaker and officials, damaged TV cameras, microphones and files."