

What's on today....

Meeting: The monthly meeting of the Foreign Investors' Chamber of Commerce and Industry will be held. Chief guest: MA Jall, Minister for Commerce. Venue: Surma Room, Hotel Sonar-gang. Time: 12:30 pm.

BSAF commemoration: The commemoration of the first decade of Bangladesh Shishu Adhikar Forum (BSAF) will be held. Chief guest: Justice Mostafa Kamal. Venue: National Museum. Time: 3:30 pm-7:30 pm.

Discussion meeting: Amnesty International Bangladesh will hold a discussion meeting "End Secrecy, End Suffering" on the situation of human rights in Saudi Arabia. Venue: Office premises at 28 Kabi Jasimuddin Road. Time: 4:00 pm.

..... and tomorrow

Open discussion: Bangladesh Federation of Teachers' Associations (BFTA) will hold an open discussion on "Public Examinations: Existing System and its Reforms." Venue: VIP lounge of Jatiya Press Club. Time: 3:30 pm.

Slide show: A slide show of photographs taken by Anwar Hossain will be held. Venue: Alliance Francaise de Dhaka. Time: 6:30 pm-7:30 pm.

Weather

Temperature likely to rise

Weather may remain mainly dry all over the country with partly cloudy sky over Barisal and Chittagong divisions in the next 12 hours till 6 pm today, reports UNB.

Slight rise in the day temperature is expected over the country during the period, Met Office said.

The country's highest temperature recorded yesterday was 34.8 degrees Celsius at Jessore and the lowest 15.7 degrees Celsius at Ishwardi.

The sun sets in the capital today at 6.13 pm and rises tomorrow at 5.53 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	32.5	19.4	46	39
Chittagong	31.5	21.0	71	54
Rajshahi	34.2	16.1	40	36
Khulna	34.2	19.0	53	43
Barisal	33.0	18.2	61	57
Sylhet	32.5	20.2	63	41
Cox's Bazar	32.6	21.8	73	48

HERE and THERE

Bangabandhu Mahila Parishad

Bangabandhu Mahila Parishad organised a day-long programme on Sunday in observance of the Independence and National day, says a press release.

The members of the parishad placed wreaths at the Savar National Memorial in the morning. Member also paid tributes to Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman by placing wreaths at his portrait at Bangabandhu Bhaban.

The parishad arranged musical programmes in a vehicle that travelled Mirpur Stadium Square, Gulshan Circle 1 and 2, Shapla Square in Motijheel, Bangabandhu Square and TSC Road Island. A discussion was also held at the Central Shaheed Minar.

Parishad Convenor Prof Selina Akhter Jahau, Prof Ifat Ara Nargis, Dr Sitarun Nahar, Rashida Muhiuddin, Dr Mak-suda Nahar, Apu Ukil, Badrunesa Hossain, Prof Nazmun

Nahar spoke at the discussion meeting.

Bangladesh Bank Club

Food Minister Amir Hossain Amu yesterday said the reactionary forces have been conspiring from the very beginning against the country's independence to foil the spirit of the Liberation War, reports BSS.

"As part of their conspiracy, the anti-liberation clique is trying to create anarchy in the country by applying evil techniques," he said while addressing a discussion organised by Bangladesh Bank Club in observance of the 30th Independence Day on the Club premises here.

Among others, Governor Bangladesh Bank Dr Mohammad Farashuddin, Deputy Governor Khondokar Ibrahim Khaled, litterateur Selina Hossain, economist Dr Ataur Rahman, journalist Abed Khan and Samik League president Abdus Salam spoke on the occasion. Club president Shamsuzzaman Bhuiyan presided over the discussion.

World Water Forum of Journalists launched

Global organisation to have headquarters in Dhaka

Journalists covering the Second World Water Forum and Ministerial Conference on Water Resources in the Netherlands launched an independent global network of print and electronic media called "World Water Forum of Journalists (WWFJ)". reports BSS.

The meeting, held on the world Water Day at Yukono Hall of the Conference Centre in Dutch capital last week, chose Dhaka to be the headquarters of the WWFJ while Cairo will be the new forum's alternative office.

Death anniversary

The first death anniversary of Khurshid Ismail (Yakuti), wife of former director of Animal Husbandry and Research Institute, Comilla, late Dr M A Ismail Khan, will be observed today, says a press release.

Khurshid was the daughter of late Khudadad Khan of Khan Shontala village.

She was a former member of the All Pakistan Women's Association (APWA) and a prominent social figure of Comilla.

On the occasion, a feeding of the destitute programme will be held at her residence at Mirpur following Asr prayers today, the release added.

Qulkhwani

The qulkhwani of Karimul Haque Chowdhury, Deputy General Manager of Rupali Bank, Cantonment Branch, will be held today at his cantonment residence, says a press release.

He died in a hospital in New Delhi on March 23. His namaj-e-janaza was held at Rupali Bank Cantonment Branch, Head Office and Baitul Mukarram Mosque yesterday.

He was buried at Mirpur Martyred Intellectuals' Graveyard.

Said Khilla of Egypt was unanimously elected Chairman of the newly-launched WWFJ while Quamrul Islam Chowdhury, Chairman of Forum of Environmental Journalists of Bangladesh (FEJB), was elected its Secretary-General.

The primary objectives of WWFJ are to help raise awareness about water-related problems and issues across the world, promote the cause of conservation of the nature, and organise training programmes, study tours and annual conferences of journalists covering water issues.

The meeting also decided to hold the first global conference of the WWFJ in Dhaka in September 2000. The theme of the conference will be "Water for People: The Role of Media."

Following is the full committee of the WWFJ:

Chairman—Said Khilla (Egypt). Vice-Chairman—Manuel Satorre (Philippines). Secretary-General—Quamrul Islam Chowdhury (Bangladesh). Assistant Secretary-Generals—Anna Brouwer (Netherlands), Dhumian Wickremaratne (Sri Lanka), Sharf E Khatib (Syria), Kouassi S Dohou (Benin) and Karim Jordan (Canada). Members—Richard Jordan (USA), Geraldine Coughlan (UK), Noriko Goh (Japan), Yekaterina Aleksanyan (Armenia), Aditya Manshresh (Nepal), Hamid Ali (Pakistan), Basam Ewader (Palestine), Aida Tawid (Jordan), Daniel Sikazwe (Zambia), Alexander Kanegoni (Zimbabwe), Sharif Shahabuddin (Bangladesh), Lilit Stepan-goda (Sri Lanka), Elizabeth C Roxas (Philippines), Faise Mulkwer (Jordan), Dr Said Sobki (Holland), Arhny N Chilema (Zambia), Pascal Adis-soda (Benin), Alexander Ramirez (Costa Rica), Mohamed Faiyaz Patel (South Africa), Martin Barbarana Kruz (Mexico), Bon Saroeun (Cambodia) and Ahmet Kot (Turkey).



BNP leaders led by its chairperson Khaleida Zia placing wreaths at the National Memorial in Savar on the Independence Day. — Star photo

JS session

President Bill Clinton's recent visit to the country. It will replace the prime minister's weekly question-answer session, which usually takes place on Tuesdays. That session will be held tomorrow instead.

Parliament is due to amend the controversial Public Safety Act, dropping some tough provisions and some anomalies. It passed the law during the last session.

Another important bill up for consideration would extend the tenure of the 30 parliamentary seats reserved for women by 10 years.

However, there is no chance the bill will pass, since it requires the BNP's support to ensure the two-thirds majority needed for constitutional amendments.

Other government bills include one about the establishment of a human rights commission in the country.

The possibility of negotiations between the government and the opposition to resolve the parliamentary impasse remain bleak.

The BNP and its allies -- the Ershad-led Jatiya Party and Jamaat-e-Islami -- have boycotted parliament since the 13th session was in progress last June.

Opposition MPs have been absent for 85 of 287 days of the 44-month-old seventh parliament. Their absence in the past three sessions amounted to 34 days.

The opposition MPs walked out of parliament during the last budget session but still attended parliamentary standing committee meetings.

Their last walkout was to protest the government's move to give transportation facilities to India. They have cited different political issues since to continue the boycott. All of those issues have boiled down to one point -- resignation of the government to pave the way for early general elections.

BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan brushed aside thoughts that his party would join the session earlier this week when he said there wasn't a congenial atmosphere.

But Law Minister Abdul Matin Khasru, who plans to table the bills on women's reserved seats and the PSA, said he hoped opposition MPs would return to parliament to support the crucial bill.

Peace efforts by the Speaker and business leaders made little headway against the opposition tough stand. An attempt to return the opposition to parliament for Clinton's visit also failed.

The government hasn't made any fresh attempts to restart negotiations with the opposition. Even Clinton's suggestion to Khaleida Zia to settle political differences in constructive ways had little effect.

NCL urges cable operators to resume transmission of pay channels

By Staff Correspondent

Nationwide Communication Limited (NCL), service provider of pay satellite channels, yesterday called upon the cable operators to resume broadcast of pay channels.

"If these pay channels are not made available to viewers within next 10 days, then we will introduce direct-to-home dish connections as an alternative to present system," Abul Khair, Chairman of NCL, told a press conference.

He alleged that cable operators had not taken any positive step to solve the problems regarding the transmission of pay channels.

Cable operators have recently suspended transmission of 12 pay channels after the NCL increased the renewal fees. The NCL chairman said the increase is nominal in view of currency devaluation, increase of programme rates and lack of local advertisements.

Expensive ride

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count on the normal rate of Tk 85,000 per hour, Zaman said.

The Speaker had gone to Biswanath to address a stipend distribution ceremony at a school at the thana headquarters.

Political observers said the visit was for his personal and party activity and was not connected with his responsibility as a Speaker.



Vice-Chancellor of Dhaka University placing wreaths at the National Memorial in Savar on the Independence Day. — Star photo



Ekatturer Ghatok Dalal Nirmul Committee pays tribute to the martyrs of the Liberation War on Sunday. — Star photo



Dhaka Ainjibi Samity placing wreaths at the National Memorial on Independence Day. — Star photo

Independence Day

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"The way you achieved victory by defeating the enemies during the liberation war is the way to free the country from the clutches of poverty," she told a juvenile rally at Bangabandhu National Stadium in the morning.

"We want to build a developed nation where no one will be left out in the darkness of illiteracy," she said. "Inshallah, each citizen will be given a home, food, education and a better life."

"Bangladesh is no longer a nation infested with cyclones, floods and natural calamity. Today, all agree that Bangladesh is a country full of prospects," she told the crowd. "Even American President Bill Clinton, who came here recently, acknowledged it."

Hasina said two important decades had passed full of trials and tribulations.

"We don't want to waste a single moment now. We want to create a society where each child can get an education, security and no one has to give his life like Russell."

The Prime Minister also opened a display of military hardware, arranged for the occasion to show the public country's military might.

Sophisticated arms, ammunition, equipment, vehicles, tanks, ship's replica, helicopter and aircraft used in the Army, Navy and Air Force were on display at the six-day exhibition at the Tejgaon Old Airport runway.

Political parties, cultural and social groups held discussions and staged musical programmes to celebrate Independence Day.

It was a public holiday. The national flag fluttered atop gov-

ernment and private buildings. Main thoroughfares were decorated with miniature red-green flags, balloons and bunting. Government buildings were illuminated in the evening.

Special prayers were offered in all mosques and other places of worship for divine blessings and the continued peace, progress and prosperity of the country. Better meals were served to people in all jails, hospitals and orphanages.

After paying homage at the National Mausoleum, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina laid wreaths at the portrait of Father of the Nation Sheikh Mujibur Rahman at the Bangabandhu Bhaban.

President Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed hosted a reception at the Bangabhaban on the occasion.

Schoolchildren joined in on the celebration at parks and open places across the city. Some went for river cruises or rides on tourist buses.

Rallies, marches and displays also took place in thana and district headquarters. The thana and district administrations arranged the programmes.

Army, Navy, Air Force, BDR and police bands played at different city corners while the Department of Mass Communications screened film and played patriotic songs.

BAPEX

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border in early 1996. It started supplying around 15 million cubic feet gas per day (mmcf) in March 1998 from one well there. The government gave it funds last year to drill the second well, and BAPEX succeeded in striking gas also in the second well in November last, sources said.

Humayun's silent protest

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Humayun Ahmed and his brothers and friends were taken to a local hotel by minibuses under heavy police protection. Ahmed and others walked up to the hotel. They had their breakfasts there and left for the main of Hazrat Shahjalal at 7:30 a.m. Then the group, escorted by police and the paramilitary BDR, started for Shahjalal University.

The APAC activists showed shoes to Ahmed and companions while they crossed Madina Market road. Humayun staged the sit-in at the gate from 8:00 a.m. until 4:00 p.m.

Just before the programme ended, Humayun Ahmed thanked those who came all the way with him to Sylhet as well as those coming from different parts of country to extend support braving various threats issued by different quarters.

Reiterating that it was 'solely a personal protest', Ahmed said, "I am really happy that so many people have sympathised with me."

Rejecting criticism that he had been a party to the events at the university only because his brother is in trouble, he said: "It's me who has registered protest against *razakars* in a TV serial long ago; it's me who has made the film *Aguner Parash* (Monti) a feature film based on the nation's War of Liberation and again it's me who has completed another such film."

Rather it's the deteriorating conditions in the universities that has made me concerned, Ahmed said.

"We have to understand that our backs are already against the wall. Shahjalal University

has been closed down, same is the case with Chittagong University. Troubles are there in the Rajshahi University, too. It's very painful that the politicians are least bothered about these happenings."

He supported the president's view and said, "there should not be any student politics in an independent country. Let them do politics as much as they want after the student life is over."

However, in the beginning there were some 100 people at the university gate. By noon, it was a gathering of some 500, while in the end, the size of the assembly doubled.

Small groups of left activists belonging to student and youth fronts of the Communist Party of Bangladesh, Workers Party and Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal started reaching the venue after 10:00 a.m. through other roads sidestepping the blocked road. No such group belonging either to the feuding factions of the ruling party went there. But a mid-ranking leader of the Bangladesh Chhatra League, ruling party's student wing expressed solidarity with Humayun's "token protest against those opposed to naming the university buildings and dormitories after Mujib and Jahanara Imam."

Earlier, Workers Party leader Fazle Hossain Badsha, JSD leader Nazmul Huq Prodhan, Juba Union president Anwarul Huq, Prof. Anisuzzaman and advocate Sultana Kamal spoke supporting the cause of Humayun Ahmed, while Asaduzzaman Noor conducted the function.

Vice-chancellor of the uni-

versity Professor Habibur Rahman met Humayun Ahmed at 11:00 a.m. He did not make any public statement but hoped that Humayun's protest "would be fruitful."

Some members of the Sylhet district unit of the MuktiJoddah Sangsad reached the venue, led by Enam Ahmed Chowdhury, 2:05 p.m. to express solidarity.

Some social and cultural activists from adjoining Habiganj, Sunamganj and Moulvibazar districts also came in the afternoon, while two groups of young boys from Chittagong and Comilla joined in under the banner of Prajanma-71.

The programme ended with Humayun's mother taking a few sips of beverage from ruling party MP Syeda Zebunnesa Haque, who reached the venue at 3:45 p.m.

Before offering the drinks, the MP expressed her solidarity with Humayun Ahmed. But she clearly told the gathering that 'the government has now nothing to do with the naming of the university buildings, especially when the president has asked the authorities to refer the matter to the Senate'.

Humayun Ahmed, his family and friends came back to the hotel under police escort and they left the town by train the same way.

Meanwhile, the BNP-led opposition called a 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. hartal in Sylhet in protest against what it said, "obstruction by the law enforcing agencies", preventing them from going to the university gate. They had announced a programme at the same venue, although much later than Humayun Ahmed did.

Putin

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vote against Zyuganov, his victory was less than the huge win that the former KGB officer had sought.

Acknowledging the scale of the problems facing him, Putin said early Monday he would not make any promises of quick improvements.

"The level of expectations is very high — people are tired and struggling and they're hoping for things to get better, but miracles don't happen," he told a press conference.

Even before the election outcome was clear, Zyuganov accused the government of falsifying the results, saying the Communist vote was more than 40 per cent.

"They have set up a zone of blanket fraud to cheat citizens," he said.

Putin acknowledged the Communists had done well despite their cash-strapped campaign and that his government would have to take into account popular discontent. He said he would consider bringing opposition groups into the government if they shared his views.

"That means that our policy must be more balanced, take into account the existing realities and aim at increasing living standards," he told journalists.

The tough, man-of-action image that Putin cultivates appeals to many Russians, tired of the uncertainty of the final years of Yeltsin.

Charge framed in Mummy Murder Case

From Our Correspondent

NARAYANGANJ, Mar 27: The charge of the sensational "Mummy" murder case was framed in the district and sessions judge's court today.

The husband, the mother-in-law and sister-in-law of Mummy were charged in the case.

Her father-in-law and two brothers-in-law were acquitted of the charge.

The hearing was held in the court of District and Sessions Judge Abdul Mukit Majumder. APP Anisur Rahman Dipu and Adv. Suruj Ali appeared for the plaintiff. Adv. Khokan Saha and Adv. Chan Mia defended the accused.

The next date for hearing is April 12.

Citicorp

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pated in an international bidding last year.

Out of the 49 per cent shares that would be off-loaded, the Biman employees would be given 9 per cent.

A preliminary step the consultant started collecting data about the national carrier from different directorates and departments of the Biman yesterday.

After completion of data collection in three months it would prepare the final report in another three months.

After completing the ground work it would look for a suitable partner for the airlines.

Biman has more than 5000 employees and a fleet of 13 aircraft which serves 25 destinations world wide.

Fire at leather factory

By Staff Correspondent

A fire broke out at a leather factory in Hazaribagh area on Sunday, destroying leather and chemicals.

The fire started at about 4 pm in Lexco Limited and it damaged leather pieces ready for production, said a press release. An electrical short circuit sparked off the fire.

Fire brigade sources said they rushed to the scene, but workers of the company and local people extinguished the fire before their arrival.

Fire brigade officials could not ascertain the extent of loss.

JS body reviews new telecom agreements

The parliamentary standing committee on Post and Telecommunication yesterday stressed the need for using various software, including Internet, Personal Handphone Set and optical fibre to provide international standard service, reports UNB.

The meeting, presided over by committee's president Kamal Ahmed Majumder, was apprised of the agreements signed with World Tel and Submarine Cable Network during the recent visit of US President Bill Clinton to Bangladesh.

The meeting discussed matters relating to the project of installing 2.15 lakh telephones and land set agreement, and directed the authorities to take necessary steps against those involved in publishing 'misleading' advertisement regarding appointment of dealers.

Committee members Home and Post and Telecommunications Minister Mohammad Nasim, Barkatullah Bulu, Begum Seghita Yasmin and Nadim Mostafa attended the meeting.

Shikdar appeals to see children

From Staff Correspondent

KHULNA, Mar 27: Ershad Shikdar has appealed to high officials of the KMP to allow him to see his children.

I have been sentenced to death and will be so in some other cases. So, I have something to say to members of my family, he said to a senior police official while being taken to court today in Siraj Murder Case. But the official who is also monitoring all the dockets of murder cases against Shikdar did not respond.

Shikdar's children from his first wife Khodja came to Special Court today. They were not allowed to see their father for security reason, police said.

Khaleida

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BNP leaders and workers and arrest the opposition men before the next general election so that the AL could rig the polls.

Khaleida Zia told the minority groups in Bangladesh that the AL had looted properties and land of minorities, especially the Hindus immediately after the liberation and had started grabbing their wealth again.

She said BNP believed in equal rights of all citizens of the country, irrespective of cast and religion and people of all faiths enjoyed full freedom during the BNP regime.

The opposition leaders asked the followers of Hinduism, Buddhism and Christianity to support BNP to ensure their welfare and religious freedom.

Referring to problems of afforestation in Tangail, especially in Shakhipur, the former Prime Minister said the BNP government didn't go for afforestation in private lands and planted trees only on government land as per the law in 1962.

But the AL government adopted the policy for afforestation in both public and private lands. She assured that if BNP was voted to power it would resolve the problems of afforestation.

Presided over by local BNP President Anjad Hossain Master, it was addressed, among others, by Prof Jahannara Begum, ZA Khan, city BNP President Sadek Hossain Khoka and general secretary Abul Salam.

Abul Kalam Azad Siddique MP, local leaders Mahmudul Hasaan, Abdus Salam Pintu, Moniruzzaman Bulbul and Selim Reza.

At the function, BNP central leader Advocate Ahmed Azam Khan presented a gold-made replica of "sheaf of paddy", the BNP's election symbol, Khaleida Zia.

Int'l Trade Fair begins in Rajshahi

From Our Correspondent

RAJSHAHI, Mar 27: Sona Masjid, Hill and Burimari customs stations will be promoted to fulfilled land ports while Mongla Port will be upgraded to a fulfilled seaport.

Commerce Minister Abdul Jallil announced this while inaugurating the 10-day International Trade Fair at Rajshahi Collegiate School playground this noon. Works will begin very soon in this regard, he said.