

News

What's on today....

IDR seminar: Institute of Democratic Rights (IDR) will hold a two-day-long seminar titled "South Asian Seminar on Human Rights Education." Venue: House No-135, Rd No-9/A, Dhamond R/A. Time: 9.00 am.

BLAST roundtable: Bangladesh Legal Aid And Services Trust (BLAST) will hold a roundtable discussion on "Responsibilities of Garment Workers: Problems & Solutions." Venue: CIRDA conference room, Tophkana Rd. Time: 4.00 pm.

Discussion: A discussion will be held to mark the 21st death anniversary of Mashiur Rahman Jadu Mia. Organiser: Jadu Mia Death Anniversary Observance Committee. Venue: Jatiya Press Club. Time: 4.30 pm.

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.

Film show: The Muse will screen "The Sound of Music." It will be followed by a discussion on the movie. Venue: Bishwa Shahitya Kendro auditorium. Time: 6.00 pm.

Discussion meeting: Sonali Bank Employees union 202 CBA will hold a discussion meeting on Independence Day. Venue: BCIC auditorium, Motijheel C/A. Time: 10.00 am.

Weekly discussion: The weekly meditation and discussion of Quantum Master will be held under the auspices of Quantum Foundation. Venue: Meditation Hall, 1/1 Pioneer Road, Kakrail. Time: 6.30 pm.

Discussion meeting: Bangladesh Railway Employees League will hold a discussion meeting and rally on the occasion of International Labour Day. This will be followed by a cultural function. Venue: Discussion — Dhaka Railway Station; Rally — from Dhaka Railway Station to Jatiya Press Club. Time: 10.00 am, 11.00 am. Cultural show: 7.00 pm.

..... and tomorrow

Workshop: A workshop will be held on Public Consensus Process under the Kalni-Kushiyara River Management Project. Organisers: Ministry of Water Resources and Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). Venue: Hotel Sonargaon. Time: 9.00 am-1.00 pm.

Seminar: A seminar on "The Life and Philosophy of Shaheed G C Dev" will be held. Venue: Arts Faculty Building of Dhaka University. Time: 10.00 am.

ADAB roundtable discussion: Association of Development Agencies in Bangladesh (ADAB) will hold a roundtable meeting on "Consumers' Rights: Role of Government and Duty of Civil Society." Venue: SPARSO auditorium, Agargaon. Time: 3.00 pm-6.00 pm.

PLAGE workshop: A day long workshop will be held on "Determination of need for set up of a Documentation and Resource Centre (DRC) on Gender Issue" under the auspices of Policy Leadership and Advocacy for Gender Equality (PLAGE). Venue: Seminar room of LGED Bhaban, Agargaon. Time: 10.00 am.

Weather

Temperature likely to rise

Light rain or drizzle may occur at one or two places over Chittagong division and weather may remain mainly dry with partly cloudy sky elsewhere over the country in next 12 hours till 6 pm today, reports UNB.

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

The country's highest temperature recorded yesterday was 35.6 degree Celsius at Jessore and the lowest 16.4 degree Celsius at Sakhira.

The sun sets in the capital today at 6.14 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
Dhaka	33.3	20.6
Chittagong	31.0	20.3
Rajshahi	34.3	18.2
Khulna	35.0	17.4
Barisal	34.2	17.6
Sylhet	31.2	19.4
Cox's Bazar	28.5	23.5

HERE and THERE

BARC workshop

More than 200 research projects will be reviewed at a workshop that began at the Bangladesh Agricultural Research Council (BARC) in the city yesterday, reports BSS.

The eight-day long annual workshop on "Annual Review of Contract Research Projects" is being attended by about 500 participants including coordinators and principal investigators from various agricultural research institutes, universities, NGOs, banks and donors agencies, a press release said.

The annual progress of the on-going agricultural research projects, funded by World Bank, has been taken for review.

Dr Zahurul Karim, Executive Chairman of BARC, inaugurated the workshop.

Organised by BARC, the workshop will also review the progress of research projects in the field of plant protection, technology transfer, varietal improvement, seed production, collection and evaluation of

New Govt High School Old Boys Assoc

The Eid reunion of New Government High School Old Boys Association was held on Thursday at Kakrail Community Centre, reports BSS.

Naushaba Ahmad, daughter of the late headmaster of the school Syed Anwar Ahmad, was the chief guest while her husband Rabindra Sanjeet singer Kalim Sharafi was the special guest at the function.

A large number of former students of the now-defunct school of the city, along with their wives and children, attended reunion.

DUS owner denies allegations

By DU Correspondent

Takdir Hossain Jashim, owner of Dhaka University Snacks (DUS) yesterday at a press conference at the DUS Chattr at DU campus denied allegations by sculptor Shamim Sikder that he was responsible for the damage done to her sculpture 'Shorajita Sadhinata' at TSC road island. He also denied that he had a hand behind the felling of the betel nut trees next to the sculpture a few days ago.

Rather, he said that he had initiated the building of the sculpture at the venue, had provided Tk 2.80,000 for it and had been looking after it since 1988.

Jashim said that Sikder was trying to bring the allegations against him because he had declined to help her cut down the betel nut trees next to 'Shorajita Sadhinata' when she approached him on March 15. Jashim's wife Hosne Ara Jashim, who was also present at the conference, said that she

had received the telephone call from Sikder asking her to tell her husband to carry out the felling of the said trees.

"It's her conspiracy now to try and demean me in the society by bringing these allegations against me," Jashim said.

Shamim Sikder, a teacher at Institute of Fine Arts (IFA), at a press conference at the same venue on Saturday, made public the allegations against Jashim.

When contacted last night, Shamim Sikder denied Jashim's allegations saying "He has damaged my sculpture."

She also said that he had never made any financial help for its construction. She demanded immediate punishment to those responsible for damaging her sculpture on the Liberation War and felling of the trees. She also asked for demolition of DUS as she said that the location of the shop was an obstruction to the view of the sculpture item.

Rajshahi-5 by-poll
Ex-student leader
gets AL nomination

The ruling Awami League nominated former student leader Nurul Islam Thandu for parliamentary by-election in Rajshahi-5 constituency, reports UNB.

Voting in the by-poll will be held on April 22. The seat fell vacant following the death of State Minister Dr Mohammad Alauddin on February 26.

The Awami League Parliamentary Party declared the nomination "on the basis of consensus" after interviewing the intending candidates.

USTC M Pharm
results published

From Our Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Mar 28: The results of M Pharm (General Group) final examination of '97, held in the year '99 under University of Science & Technology, Chittagong, (USTC) was published here today.

The results were as follows (according to merit)
2nd Class: 1601, 1609, 1611, 1606, 1602 and 1603.
3rd Class: 1604 and 1608.
Pass: 1607 and 1610.
Withheld: 1605, 1612, 1613 & 1614.

Indian held for
illegal fishing
at Bagerhat

BAGERHAT, Mar 27: An Indian national was Monday arrested along with his engine boat for trespassing into Bangladesh water and fishing in connivance with a Bangladesh citizen, reports UNB.

Sheikh Mohammad Ali Hossain, 35, an Indian national and Kabir Bepari, 35, of Nagerbazar, Bagerhat, were taken into custody for fishing in the river Doratana.

Police said Ali trespassed into Bangladesh territory through the Bay of Bengal and has been illegally fishing in Tushkhal river since last one month. Both the fishermen were arrested from Nagerbazar trawler ghat.

Tensions heighten
at Magurbari
border region

PANCHAGARH, Mar 28: Frontier villagers fled homes in panic as Indian Border Security Force and Bangladesh Rifles troops took position across the Magurbari border following Monday's skirmish, that left one BSF man dead, reports UNB.

A BSF soldier was killed in the crossfire while another nabbed by BDR during Monday's encounter after a trespass incident by some Indian border guards.

In a backlash, BSF massed troops and heavy guns, including mortars and machineguns, at Bholahat and Chaulhati border outposts, heightening tensions in the area.

Witnesses said people of adjoining villages fled after the armed clash between the two border-security forces.

Meanwhile, following a letter from BSF, the Bangladesh Rifles has agreed to hand over the body and arrested BSF personnel to India.

BDR battalion commander Lt Col Kazi Kaiser Uddin said the body and the captured BSF man might be handed over later in the day today whenever he would receive instructions from higher authority.

Workshop on
reporting
begins in
Comilla today

A three-day workshop titled "In-depth Reporting on Democracy and Human Issues" begins at Bangladesh Academy for Rural Development (BARD) in Comilla today, reports UNB.

Some 25 journalists and freelance writers from national and local dailies, and periodicals will take part in the workshop, organised by News Network, a news-feature agency.

News Network Editor Shahi duzzaman, AP Bureau Chief Farid Hossain and Sr Asst Editor of Bangladesh Observer Shamsuddin Ahmed will conduct the workshop, according to a press release.

CARE BUILD project
launched in Juniadaha

From Our Correspondent

KUSHTIA, Mar 28: The launching ceremony for the CARE Capacity BUILD Project in Juniadaha Union was held at Juniadaha High School ground this afternoon.

Saidur Rahman, chairman of Juniadaha Union Parishad, presided over the ceremony while Dr Sarder Badaruddin, Civil Surgeon, Kushtia, was present as chief guest. Dr Anwarul Karim, former principal of Kushtia Government College, Shahin Anam, Co-ordinator, Integrated Food Security Programme of CARE, and Abu Md Habibullah, Co-ordinator, Operation BUILD Project, attended the project inception session as special guests. Mritunjoy Ghosal, Project Manager of BUILD CARE, Jessore, also attended.

The results were as follows (according to merit)
2nd Class: 1601, 1609, 1611, 1606, 1602 and 1603.
3rd Class: 1604 and 1608.
Pass: 1607 and 1610.
Withheld: 1605, 1612, 1613 & 1614.

Kartik Chandra Mondol, Assistant Project Manager for BUILD CARE, Kushtia, stated

BJP coalition threatened
over subsidy cuts

NEW DELHI, Mar 28: India's subsidies issue is again rocking the coalition government, with key partners of the dominant Hindu nationalist BJP demanding the rollback of recent price hikes in cooking gas and kerosene, reports AFP.

New Delhi increased the price of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) by 30 rupees (about 70 cents) per cylinder and kerosene by 2.50 rupees one week ago to keep pace with an increase in global oil prices and contain a galloping fiscal deficit.

The move sparked a furore with Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee's own coalition partners fighting the hike tooth and nail, both inside and outside parliament.

The BJP's largest coalition partner -- the regional TDP party from the southern state of Andhra Pradesh -- handed a let-

ter to Vajpayee on Monday demanding an about-turn on the issue.

TDP chief Chandrababu Naidu warned Vajpayee in his letter that his party had a "clear stand" on the price hike issue and would not climb down.

He described the measures as "stiff and anti-poor."

Naidu's warning comes as the Trinamool Congress, another partner of Vajpayee's government, has threatened agitation on the issue.

"The government should reconsider the decision," said party spokesman Sudip Banopadhyay, complaining that the government's political allies had not been consulted.

Analysts say the row bodes ill for the future of India's economic reforms, which require a strong political consensus and stable government.

Khaleda blames
ruling party for
killing of Barisal
BNP leader

Opposition leader Khaleda Zia has strongly protested the killing of Advocate A B M Mehdi, BNP leader of Barisal, today and accused the ruling party of shooting him down, reports UNB.

In a statement yesterday Khaleda said Mehdi was shot down by ruling party terrorists under the government blue print to annihilate the opposition.

Mehdi was the information and research affairs secretary of BNP Barisal district.

The former prime minister asked the law enforcing agencies to arrest the culprit without fear or favour and punish him.

Life-term for
violating girl
in Sirajganj

SIRAJGANJ, Mar 28: A court here today convicted a man to life-term imprisonment for violating a girl, reports UNB.

District Special Tribunal Judge Rafiqul Islam awarded Saban Ali for violating a young housewife of Shihalgati village of Ullahpara on May 13, 1997.

According to the case, Saban Ali violated the girl at gunpoint after entering into her house by breaking fence at night.

JCD activist
stabbed to
death

From Our Correspondent

SIRAJGANJ, Mar 28: A JCD activist was stabbed to death at his residence in village Ranikola under Shahjapur thana last night.

The victim was identified as Jahangir Alam, 19, police said.

A gang of miscreants numbering three to four broke into the house of Jahangir and stabbed him. He died on the spot.

Local people said that the incident was a sequel to land dispute.

A case has been lodged.

BNP chief's
political tour
programme

Opposition leader Begum Khaleda Zia will embark on a series of political tour to Khulna, Cox's Bazar, Jessore and Chittagong on March 31 for mobilising support against the government, reports UNB.

On March 31, she will start a 3-day tour to Khulna, Mongla of Khulna and Narail of Jessore where she will address public meetings.

On April 4, the opposition leader will address a joint meeting of the 4-party alliance in Chittagong.

Begum Zia is scheduled to hold public meetings at Chokoria, Moheshkhali and Ukha of Cox's Bazar district April 9-11.

She will go to Jessore and address public meetings at Monirampur and Kalaroa in Jessore district on April 17 and 18, party sources said.

BJP coalition threatened
over subsidy cuts

"Vajpayee's allies have tunnel vision on issues such as subsidies, as they fear any tampering with the politically sensitive issue could seriously mar their electoral prospects," said political analyst P.R. Ramesh.

Ramesh said this "populist mindset" would make it that much harder for Vajpayee's government to prune subsidies on the fuel bill.

The Indian government has vowed to slash subsidies to rein in a huge fiscal deficit which is expected to reach 5.6 per cent of gross domestic product for the year ending March 31 -- exceeding the government target of four per cent.

Indian Finance Minister Yashwant Sinha in his February budget also slashed subsidies on food by 12 per cent and fertiliser by 4.5 per cent to cut spending by 82 billion rupees.

Anwar's trial
postponed

KUALA LUMPUR, Mar 28: The sodomy trial of ousted Malaysian deputy premier Anwar Ibrahim was postponed again today so his lawyers can file arguments on why two ministers should be forced to give evidence, reports AFP.

Deputy court registrar Rozilah Saleh said the postponement was to allow Anwar's lawyers to file affidavits in reply to applications by Finance Minister Daim Zaiduddin and Deputy Education Minister Aziz Shamsuddin to set aside subpoenas which have been issued to them.

The hearing is fixed for Friday.

Rozilah also said prosecutor Abdul Gani Patail had told the court he was unwell.

Last April Anwar was jailed for six years for corruption -- abusing his official powers to cover up allegations of sexual misconduct.

He and his adopted brother Sukma Darmawan are now on trial for sodomy, punishable by up to 20 years' jail and a whipping for men aged under 50.

Anwar, 52, says he was framed as part of a high-level political conspiracy. He has named Daim and Aziz as among those involved and is also trying to call Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad to testify.

Megat Junid Megat Ayob -- a former minister whom Anwar has also accused of conspiring against him -- has agreed to testify, according to the defence.



Obituary

Begum Kamalul Haya, the widow of Mulkutur Rahman, an ex-inspector of School under the government of undivided India and East Pakistan, died at a city clinic on March 15. She was 76, says a press release.

Kamalul Haya, who had been suffering from cancer, left behind four sons, four daughters and a number of grandchildren.

Yousuf Salahuddin, an active student leader of '69 movement, one of the designers of national flag and a valiant freedom fighter, A S Khaled, ex-Road Maintenance Engineer of Brunei PWD, and Faruq Mayeenuddin, story writer and columnist, are her sons.

She was buried at her village home at Sitakunda in Chittagong on March 16.

By Staff Correspondent

Azad Rahman, accounts and administrative manager of ECIT, died of brain hemorrhage at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital at 2 pm Sunday, said a press release of ECIT yesterday.

He was critically injured in a road accident on March 22. Qulshwani of Azad Rahman will be held after Asr prayers Friday at 153/1 Green Road ECIT office.

Kibria: Civil Society

From Page 1

Mahmud and Dr Binayak Sen, BRAC Executive Director Fazle Hasan Abed, Economic Relations Division Secretary Dr A K M Mashiur Rahman and World Bank Country Director Frederick T Temple also spoke at the inaugural session.

Kibria said poverty-alleviation was the highest priority of the Awami League government and elaborated on the programmes that brought 44.7 per cent of the population under the poverty line in 1999 compared to more than 47 per cent in 1996.

He said rural and urban poverty declined while, conditions of the extreme poor showed improvement.

The government has created a pro-poor environment and key social and economic policies have had a significant impact, said Kibria.

Kibria referred to some of the social safety net programmes, including old-age allowances, allowances for widows and the housing fund for the poor.

He said the World Bank funded Palli Karma Sahayak Foundation provides 24 per cent of NGOs' micro-credit resources.

Outlining the government's annual spending, he said public expenditure on education and health has increased sharply.

Kibria discussed encouraging macro-economic indicators, showing non-inflationary growth of the economy.

Under the newly-introduced series of national accounts, Bangladesh's economy grew by 4.9 per cent in fiscal 1998-99 (5.2 as per old accounts) and is expected to grow by 5.5 per cent this year, he said.

Frederick Temple said better governance is a must for the success of poverty-alleviation efforts.

Some reforms have had a significant impact on poverty-alleviation, he said. The government should identify high priority actions for its reform agenda.

Temple also called for a political consensus on reforms, rising above the "narrow vested interests." That would be "good for politics as well as the economy."

Dr Wahiduddin Mahmud said poverty-alleviation must be the overriding goal of the government, but the availability

ity of funds is a constraint.

Unproductive bureaucracy and huge default loans are among the issues that have an adverse impact on the availability of resources for poverty-alleviation programmes, said Mahmud.

Mahmud lauded the micro-credit programme of the NGOs. He said that certainly helped "poor people, but their overall impact on poverty-alleviation has been limited."

He called for other institutional innovations that could include micro credit for the effective reduction of poverty.

Mahmud said the indiscriminate flow of foreign aid, coupled with a low capability for utilisation, led to a massive waste of resources in the past and undermined the country's ability and prospects.

He suggested donors should utilise local experts in aid projects to reduce their own delivery cost.

He endorsed the need for functional local government bodies, such as Upazila Parishad, but feared undesirable people, who would undermine the poor's access to services, might represent these local bodies.

BRAC executive director F H Abed said that although the government and donors are increasingly focusing their attention on poverty reduction, poverty has not declined much yet.

He said he saw great prospects for agriculture in Bangladesh and felt the improvement of agriculture was vital in the battle to reduce poverty.

Abed emphasised the need for more investment in land research to improve agriculture. He also said he favoured more money for education, since a lion's share of the money went to pay the teachers.

Dr Binayak Sen of the Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies said Bangladesh achieved success in poverty reduction, despite weak governance. "But the rate of reduction is slow and it will take 50 years to come out of the poverty cycle if present pace continues."

Bangladesh has achieved little success in empowering local government bodies and ensuring social security to the poor, said Sen.

Sri Lanka troops pull back
from camp, toll hits 73

COLOMBO, March 28: At least 73 people were killed and hundreds wounded as Sri Lanka launched fresh air and sea attacks against Tamil rebels Tuesday and the army withdrew from a camp, officials said, reports AFP.

Soldiers pulled out from Mamunai in the Jaffna peninsula under heavy overnight fire from the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) but air-craft and gun boats pounded

rebel positions, the defence ministry said.

It said 52 government troops, including two officers were killed and another 275 soldiers were wounded, most of them with minor injuries.

The ministry placed rebel losses at "over 150 casualties" but did not give the breakdown. However, the LTTE's underground Voice of Tigers radio in its latest broadcast said only 16 of their cadres were killed.

The Voice of Tigers gave the names of the 16 cadres and said two of them were women fighters.

Local residents said at least five civilians were killed and about 30 wounded when they were caught up in the fighting, which erupted on Monday with a multi-pronged rebel assault.

The navy sank two rebel boats carrying reinforcements to the front while the airforce bombed guerrilla concentrations, the ministry said.

Meanwhile, hundreds of heavily-armed soldiers were on Tuesday conducting clearing operations along the eastern sector of the Jaffna peninsula, the ministry said.

New UN aid coordinator named for Iraq

UNITED NATIONS, March 28: Ton Myat of Myanmar, an official in the UN Food Programme, was named Tuesday as the new coordinator of aid to Iraq, diplomats said, reports AFP.

Ton Myat replaces Hans von Sponneck of Germany, who announced his resignation in February to protest the "humanitarian tragedy" in sanctions-hit Iraq. He leaves his post Wednesday.

The United States had criticized Von Sponneck for being too soft on the Iraqi regime.

Ton Myat, 55, is an official in the Myanmar division of the World Food Program in Rome.

Two panels to
contest Ctg
BMA polls

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Mar 28: Two panels of doctors will contest the Bangladesh Medical Association (BMA) polls of Chittagong chapter on March 30, BMA sources said.

Forty-two candidates under two panels, one led by Dr L A Kaderi and Dr Sirajul Islam and another by Dr Shahadat Hossain and Dr Khurshid Jamil, are in the race for 21 posts.

Dr Kaderi and Dr Shahadat are contesting for the post of president while Dr Siraj and Dr K Jamil for general secretary of BMA Chittagong unit.

The candidates continued hectic campaign for the last few weeks. Election fever gripped Chittagong Medical College Hospital, private clinics and chambers of doctors.

Meanwhile, both the panels held separate projection meetings at CMCH.