

What's on today . . .

Seminar : Lions Clubs International will hold a seminar on "Quality and Dedicated Service". Venue: Hotel Sonargaon. Time: 10.00 am.

Satyajit Ray retrospective: A documentary The Music of Satyajit Ray by U Chakravarty will be screened. Two films by Ray *Rabinradra* and *Teen Kanya* (Three daughters) will also be screened. Venue: Indian High Commission auditorium, Rd No 2, Dhanmondi. Time: 4.00 pm. 5.15 pm and 6.00 pm respectively.

Induction ceremony: The induction ceremony of the newly-elected executive committee members of ECOTA forum will be held. Venue: Suruchi Restaurant, BRAC Centre Inn, BRAC Centre, 75 Mohakhali. Time: 6.30 pm.

Founding anniversary: The concluding ceremony of the founding anniversary celebrations of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University will be held. Chief guest: Minister for Food Amir Hossain Amu. Venue: Shaheed Dr. Milton Hall of the university. Time: 8.00 pm.

Annual conference: The annual conference of Palli Shiksha Foundation of Bangladesh will be held. Chief guest: Agriculture Minister Motia Chowdhury. Venue: Dr Tofail Palli Shiksha Bhavan at the Foundation premises, 6/A Borobagh, Mirpur Section 2. Time: 9.00 am.

Discussion meeting: A discussion meeting will be held on "Creation from Devaluation" in commemoration of the cyclone of 1991. Venue: Development Organisation of the Rural Poor (DORP), 44/10 North Dhanmondi, West Panthapath. Time: 11.00 am.

Inauguration: A function will be held to mark the inauguration of the principal office of Bank Asia. Chief guest: Finance Minister Shah A M S Kibria. Venue: Hotel Purbani International. Time: 11.00 am.

Annual general meeting: The annual general meeting (AGM) of Bangladesh Fertiliser Association will be held. Venue: Paltan Community Centre. Time: 12.30 pm.

Discussion meeting: Bangladesh Unnayan Parishad (BUP) will hold a discussion meeting on "Foreign aid, development trend and its reflection on rural people" to mark its 20th founding anniversary. Venue: BUP auditorium, House No 33, Rd No 4, Dhanmondi R/A. Time: 4.00 pm - 6.30 pm.

Meeting: A meeting of Sylhet Bihag Mahila Parishad will be held. Venue: 153/1, East Rajabazar. Time: 4.00 pm.

Seminar: A half-day long seminar on "Arsenic Contamination of Ground Water and its Mitigation Measure" will be held. Venue: SPARSO auditorium. Time: 4.00 pm.

Virtual Business fair : East West University will hold a virtual business fair. Venue: University premises. Time: 12.00 noon - 4.30 pm.

ASB meeting : The monthly general meeting of Asiatic Society of Bangladesh (ASB) will be held. Venue: Seminar room of ASB, 5 Old Secretariat Road, Nimtali, Ramna. Time: 4.30 pm.

Exhibition: A painting exhibition by Abdus Sakour will be inaugurated. Venue: Designers Den Gallery, Gulshan. Time: 5.00 pm.

Drama: Theatre Centre will present Sukumar Ray's *Bhlabhuk Shova*. Venue: Asparagus Restaurant, 53, Gulshan Avenue. Time: 8.30 pm.

..... and tomorrow

Satyajit Ray retrospective: *Chiriyakhana* (The Zoo) will be screened. Organiser: Zahir Raihan Film Society. Time: 6.15 pm.

Weather

Thundershowers likely

Rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty to squally wind is likely at many places over Dhaka, Rajshahi, Chittagong and Sylhet divisions and at a few places over Barisal and Khulna divisions during the next 12 hours till 6 pm today, reports UNB.

Day temperature may remain nearly unchanged over the country, Met office said.

The country's highest temperature recorded yesterday was 36.8 degree Celsius at Chuadanga and the lowest 19.5 degree Celsius at Srinagar.

The sun sets in the capital today at 6.26 pm and rises tomorrow at 5.25 am.

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

City/Town	Temperature in Celsius		Humidity in Percentage	
	Max	Min	Morning	Evening
Dhaka	31.2	24.0	81	80
Chittagong	33.0	22.9	75	75
Rajshahi	30.9	21.2	95	72
Khulna	35.7	25.0	78	57
Barisal	33.4	23.0	80	74
Sylhet	22.0	20.4	100	94
Cox's Bazar	33.5	23.0	74	81

HERE and THERE

Bangladesh Scouts

A discussion meeting and a miltad mahfil was held at the National Scout Bhavan yesterday on the occasion of the 20th death anniversary of Nurul Islam Shams, ex-chief national commissioner, Bangladesh Scouts, says a press release.

Azal Hossain, national commissioner (Extension Scouting), Habibul Alam, Bir Pratik, national commissioner (Programme), Md Rafiqul Islam Khan, national commissioner (Adult in Scouting-Incharge), Jahangir Habib Ullah, deputy national commissioner (PR), Md Abul Husain Siddiq, executive secretary (Incharge), and Aminur Rahman Khan, deputy secretary, spoke on the occasion.

Manzoor Ul Karim, president of Bangladesh Scouts, presided over the meeting.

JU Bangla Sangsad

By JU Correspondent
Bangla Sangsad of Jahangirnagar University (JU) arranged a function on the campus Thursday to welcome the new year and rainy season.

Split into two part, the first part of the programme, *Basanta Utsav O Barsho Abahan*, was inaugurated by Vice Chancellor of the university, Prof Abdul Bayes at the Akashmoni Chattar in front of the Arts Faculty in the morning.

Noted drama personality Sayeed Ahmad, Jubaida Gulshan Ara and Hayat Mamud were present as special guests. Chairman of Bangla Department Prof Rabeya Moyn presided over the function.

The discussion was followed

by a cultural function where the students rendered a number of songs.

Earlier, members of the organisation brought out a colourful rally from Bangla department.

The second part of the function was held at the amphitheatre on the campus in the evening.

CRP
A Telemedicine Seminar organised by the Centre for the Rehabilitation of the Paralyzed (CRP) was held on Wednesday in the conference room of the Centre for Medical Education (CME), says a press release.

Lord and Lady Swinfen, main contributors to the Telemedicine Service link of CRP, were guests at the seminar while CRP Training Institute Principal Maj Gen (Retd) Dr Md Nurul Haq was the chairperson.

CRP's founder Valrie A Taylor (OBE) and deputy director of Medical Education Dr Mahbub Ara also spoke at the seminar.

BCSIR
A discussion meeting on nutrition of the children in observance of national nutrition week 2000 was held Thursday at the seminar room of the Institute of Food Science and Technology (IFST), BCSIR, says a press release.

Presided over by Dr A J M Omar Farooq, Director, IFST the keynote paper was presented at the meeting by nutrition scientist Shafiqur Rahman.

The meeting was addressed among others by Dr S. F. Rabbi, ex-director of the Institute, Dr M Kabirulla, chief scientific officer, Azizur Rahman, principal scientific officer and Md Ishaq Ali, nutrition scientist of National Nutrition Council.

'Concerted effort needed to protect bio-diversity'

Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad yesterday called for a concerted effort to protect bio-diversity in South Asia, reports UNB.

"Bio-extinction is dangerous for our environment. Once a species disappears it is gone for ever - whether it is Royal Bengal Tiger or Sundarban or one-horned Rhino," he said.

The Minister was speaking at a dinner hosted by an independent group on South Asia Cooperation that organised a workshop on Conservation of Bio-diversity in South Asia.

Representatives from SAARC countries are participating in the two-day workshop that began in the city yesterday.

Bangladeshi envoy presents credentials to King Sihanouk

PHNOM PENH, Apr 28: Bangladesh Ambassador Suhrah Hossain today expressed the optimism that forging greater cooperation between Bangladesh and Cambodia would be mutually beneficial, reports BSS.

The envoy made the remark while presenting his credentials to Cambodian king Norodom Sihanouk at the Royal Palace here.

Ambassador Hossain who is based in Bangkok and concurrently accredited to Cambodia recalled the historical relationship between the two countries and said that there was a great scope for strengthening the relationship to explore avenues for enhancing cooperation.

The King expressed his gratitude for the support given by Bangladesh to Cambodia throughout her turbulent history and welcomed the suggestion on strengthening bilateral cooperation in various sectors.

Masterda Surya Sen Bhaban inaugurated

CHITTAGONG, Apr 28: Environment and Forest Minister Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury said today that different welfare organisations would be set up on the land of Masterda Surya Sen in Raazan to preserve his memories, reports BSS.

The minister said this at a meeting while inaugurating the Masterda Surya Sen Bhaban on his inherited land.

She said Masterda's sacrifice in the Swadeshi movement was a glorious chapter in our national movement. He was the source of inspiration in our Liberation War, she added.

Sajeda Chowdhury emphasised the need for preserving the history of Bengali nation's movement and revolution.

Binod Bhari Chowdhury, a close associate of Masterda Surya Sen, presided over the meeting while Awami League leader Abdullah Al Haroon, Chittagong District Awami League (north) general secretary MA Salam, Awami League leader Omar Faruq and Raazan Pourashava Chairman Debashish Palit spoke on the occasion.

Seat sharing

From Page 1

The rest 147 seats will be shared among the four parties and the alliance will nominate a single candidate in each of the constituencies. He said the sharing of these 147 seats can be done through two formulas.

The party that stood second in the constituency in the last polling will nominate its candidate and the three other parties will support the nominee.

"It will be very easy to defeat the Awami League candidate if we adopt the formula," said Akbar.

The second formula is that the 147 seats will be shared as per the ratio of the percentage of votes the parties polled in the last election.

However, Akbar said the chances of defeating the AL candidate by adopting the second formula is a little slim. "I think the first formula is easy and it will not affect the unity of the alliance."

Moreover, he said party chiefs and the policymakers can decide on the fate of a number of top leaders in the four parties - some of whom lost in the last polls while some others even polled poorly, like JP leader Kazi Zafar Ahmed and Jamaat leader Matru Rahman Nizami.

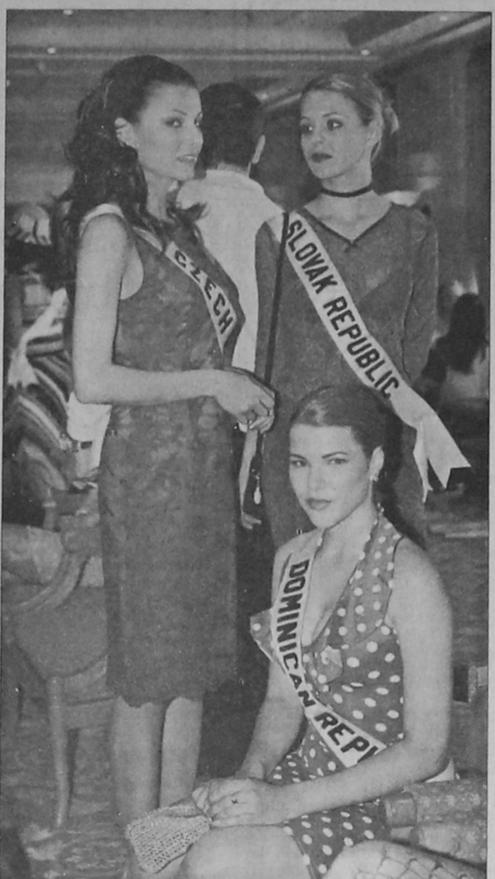
"It is not possible for any party to go beyond the logic if they really mean to sustain the unity, form an electoral alliance and form government."

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia, Jatiya Party Chairman H M Ershad, Jamaat-e-Islami Ameer Golam Azam and Islami Oikya Jote Chairman Azizul Haq in the summit meeting in November 30 last hinted at forming an electoral alliance and a coalition government.

The chiefs also reiterated their willingness to form an electoral alliance in recent meetings in Dhaka, Chittagong and Rajshahi where they addressed the meeting in a single platform.

The objective of an electoral alliance is to stop the ruling Awami League from a second term in office.

BNP hardliners and the other partners do not want a broad-based unity, they favour an alliance within the four parties. However, majority in the BNP, including the liberals, wants to accommodate more parties and prominent individuals in the alliance.



The Czech (Jitka Kourova) and Slovak (Mirka Kysuckova) contestants pose with Dominican Republic's Gilda Goine in the lobby of the Hilton Hotel Thursday during promotional activities ahead of the upcoming Miss Universe beauty pageant. — AFP photo

Nor'westers hit 3 districts: Houses damaged

KUSHTIA, Apr 28: Nor'westers lashed three districts today, causing extensive damage to standing crops and kutchas houses and disrupting power supply, reports UNB.

A nor'wester lashed sadar, Kuntarkhali and Khokhsa upazillas of the district at about 10 am damaging huge number of dwelling houses.

Some primary schools in these areas were also damaged by the storm and standing crops like mango, tobacco, betel-leaf and boro were damaged severely.

Bogra, a storm swept over Gabtoli and Dhunat upazillas in the morning, damaging several hundred houses.

The affected areas are: Dherabatali of Gabtoli and Bagbari of Dhunat upazilla. The extent of damage could not be ascertained immediately.

In Mymensingh, a nor'wester this morning caused massive damage to standing crops and damaged a large number of kutchas houses.

The storm uprooted an electric tower snapping power supply to Fulpur upazilla.

Meanwhile, boro crops on about 10,000 acres of land went under water following incessant rain in last few days in sadar, Trishal, Bhaluka, Gafargao, Ishwarganj and Dhoabura upazillas of the district.

CU: Session jam

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On the other hand, students have to face problem with certificate age to complete for jobs as they are losing several years, he said.

A senior teacher of Political Science Department when asked said, "It may take minimum seven to eight years to overcome the session jam if academic activities go uninterrupted from now on."

Another senior teacher of History Department said the delay suffered by the students should be adjusted by rescheduling examinations.

"But it is really a time factor," he commented.

Chittagong University is closed for the last four months, making academic life of 14,000 students uncertain.

The stalemate began after two activists of Islami Chhatra Shibir were killed in a night with activists of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) on the campus on December 19 last year.

Students are demanding reopening of the university, but to no effect. Students under the banner of General Student Society (GSS) will begin a fast-unto-death at the academic building tomorrow demanding immediate resumption of classes.

Besides, a meeting of teachers of the university will be held tomorrow to find out ways to break the stalemate, CU sources said.

Obituary

Alhaj Md Abdul Hamid, a businessman, died of old-age complications at the Royal Hospital in London on April 25. He was 72, says a press release.

Hamid is the father of Rotarian Md Shahab Uddin, one of the leaders of Sylhet Bihag Unnayan Parishad in Sylhet.

He is survived by his wife, 4 sons, 2 daughters and a host of relatives.

Hamid's body is scheduled to arrive in Sylhet from London today.

Khaleda condoles death of Osman Gani Khan

By Staff Correspondent
BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia Thursday expressed her shock at the death of former MP and state minister Osman Gani Khan.

In a condolence message, she said late Khan was elected MP with BNP ticket from Bera-Sujanagar constituency in Pabna and appointed as State Minister for Establishment. The late leader also contributed a lot in the field of social work, she added.

In another message, the BNP Chairperson also condoled the death of party's National Executive Committee member and Manikganj district BNP leader Mosharrar Hossain Ratan.

Comptroller and Auditor General Syed Yusuf Hossain, in a separate message, also condoled the death of Osman Gani Khan who was also an Auditor General.

He conveyed sympathy to the members of bereaved family.

Cloned cows more youthful than Dolly

LOS ANGELES, Apr 28: US researchers who produced six healthy cows through cloning found cells taken from the cows showed rejuvenation that was the reverse of the premature aging reported in the case of Dolly the cloned sheep, according to a report today, reports AFP.

Dolly, cloned in 1997 by British scientist Ian Wilmut, was old before her time as her cells appeared to inherit the age of her genetic mother.

However, "Chromosomes from the cow sisters are the picture of youth," according to Advanced Cell Technologies (ACT) researcher Robert Lanza, in the report published in Science magazine.

"Surprisingly ... the cloning process seemed to restore the 'nine lives' of these cells in the six cows," Lanza, a co-author of the research, said.

Cells from the cow clones appear to have rejuvenated and even prolonged their youth," Lanza explained. "Instead of being zero to four division cycles away from the end of their lives, cells taken from the cows were more than 90 cycles away from the end."

The ACT researchers based in Worcester, Massachusetts used cells that were near the end of their lifespan, instead of cloning from cells that had been starved and sent into a resting state - like those used for cloning Dolly.

While they don't yet understand why there should be such a marked contrast in the youthfulness of the cloned animals, the condition of the donor cell appeared to be significant, researchers say. And the different origins of the cells could be a factor, the report noted. Mammary cells were used for Dolly and fibroblast (connective tissue) cells for the cows.

Patel murder

MUMBAI, Apr 28: Bollywood stars, cricketer Azhar questioned

MUMBAI, Apr 28: Bollywood stars Sanjay Dutt, Shahrukh Khan, Sunil Shetty and former cricket captain Mohammed Azharuddin have been questioned by the Mumbai police in connection with the murder of diamond merchant, Ashraf Patel here last Monday, reports PTI.

The celebrities, who were alleged to be close to the diamond trader, would soon be questioned again, police sources said.

Noted actress Tabu, who was among those who had paid condolence visit at the merchant's residence at Aripada as well as another actress Farah would also be questioned in this connection Police Inspector, Feroze Patel, who is handling the case, told PTI today.

Although the motive of the murder was not yet known, police did not rule out the role of the deceased in match fixing deals, he said.

Hours before his death, Ashraf Patel was seen in the company of Sanjay Dutt. Patel was also noticed moving around with Azharuddin a few days ago, police said.

According to DCP Jayjeet Singh, the police was exploring various angles into the murder of Patel. "We do not want to jump to conclusions immediately."

Publication of S Asia's oldest English daily suspended

COLOMBO, Apr 28: Sri Lanka's afternoon daily The Observer, the oldest English newspaper in South Asia, announced today it was suspending publication - at least for now, reports Reuters.

"This is part of a major restructuring plan and the paper will not be stopped for good," said Janadasa Peiris, editorial director of Associated Newspapers of Ceylon Limited (ANCL), the state holding company that owns the newspaper.

The newspaper was founded on February 4, 1834.

Peiris told Reuters by phone that the several other newspapers of the group were also either being closed down or merged as part of a government plan to make the state-controlled press more profitable.

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Chaktai canal

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The city officials say dumping of polythene and domestic waste and flow of huge quantities of sand due to illegal leveling for hills have all the more worsened the siltation problem in the canal.

Little has been done since the canal was re-excavated and encroachers were evicted about 10 years ago, sources said.

Bus accident

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Some of the injured passengers told The Daily Star that both the buses were overloaded and carrying passengers on rooftops.

Day labourers Nazrul, Jabbar, Lal Miali and Yunus Ali - all hailing from Dalia, Raigang - said that they were on the rooftop of the Dhaka-bound bus but escaped luckily with little injuries.

They said the Dhaka-bound bus (Dhaka Metro-Ba-11-0465) of Rozina Transport rammed the Pabna bound bus (Pabna-Ja-040052) as one of its wheels broke loose suddenly.

The driver of the Dhaka-bound bus died while the other escaped unhurt, they said.

Relatives of some of the victims have come from Lalmonirhat. Eight bodies have so far been identified. Those are of Mojibur Rahman, 30, Office Secretary of Jewelry Association at Baitul Mukarram, Dhaka, Khajima Khatun, 42, of Gaibanda, Noor Islam, 35, Abdul Latif, 35, Abdul Hamid, Razak and Omar Sardar of Hatibanda, Lalmonirhat and Noor Amin Pipon of Ullapara, Sirajganj. The bodies were kept at Sadar Hospital morgue.

UNB adds: Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has expressed her shock at the tragic road accident in Sirajganj, leaving a number of people dead and wounded.

In a message, she expressed her heartfelt sympathy for the bereaved families and prayed for the salvation of the departed souls.

Blasphemy

MULTAN, Apr 28: Pakistani religious parties today expressed their strong opposition to a proposed change in the country's blasphemy law by the military-led government, reports AFP.

A resolution passed at today's congregations in mosques here said no changes to the law would be accepted.

Similar resolutions were adopted at mosques in major cities and towns in other parts of the country, said Intizar Hussain Qureshi, coordinator of an action committee set up by 22 religious parties.

Pakistani military ruler General Pervez Musharraf announced at a human rights convention in Islamabad last week a move to tighten the procedure for registration of blasphemy complaints.

At the convention, Musharraf vowed to improve the human rights situation in the country and take a series of measures to protect the rights of women, eliminate child labour and promote religious tolerance and harmony.

Under the proposed procedure a blasphemy case will not be registered by the police without a prior investigation by the deputy commissioner or head of district administration.

Maulana Shah Ahmed Noorani, chief of Jamiat Ulema Pakistan, told reporters that a meeting of religious parties would be held on May 8 to discuss a plan to block the government's move to change the blasphemy law.

Minorities in Muslim Pakistan allege the law, which lays down the death penalty for acts of sacrilege against the Prophet Mohammed, has been abused by religious extremists since its enactment about 15 years ago to harass them.

They have frequently called for the repeal of the law, a demand supported by Western countries and international human rights organisations.

Pak Shiite leader shot dead

MULTAN, Apr 28: A Shiite Muslim leader was gunned down in eastern Punjab province today by four men in automatic rifles, police said, reports AP.

Shahbaz Hussein Shirazi, 60, was killed in Chistian, about 150 kilometers (90 miles) south of Multan, they said. One of the assailants also died when his companions opened fire on him when he toppled from the motorcycle, said police.

No one has taken responsibility, but fellow Shiite Muslims in the area blamed militant Sunni Muslims. They also attacked the army-led government for failing to put an end to a series of killings of Shiite Muslims in Pakistan in recent weeks.

BIMSTEC

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officials meeting (STEOM) for economic cooperation also

The New Delhi meeting also decided to form an expert group to recommend and suggest ways to implement the plans for establishing Trans-Asian Railway and Trans-Asian Highway that was expected to be financed by Asian Development Bank, Jallid said.

He said the meeting decided that India would be the leading country and convene a meeting of experts to examine the feasibility as well as the funding options for early implementation of the BIMST-EC component of the southern corridors of Trans-Asian Railway and Asian Highways Projects.

The next secretarial meeting of the BIMST-EC would be held in New Delhi on May 10 next.

Power plant

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Energy Ministry on August 25 last year recommended setting up of power plants at different places including Bheramara.

PDB has 70 acres of land at Bheramara. It will need more land for the project. The Padma river nearby will ensure water supply while other existing infrastructure facilities will make implementation of the project easy, the proposal said.

"There is no feasibility study behind this project. But considering the power crisis, a crash programme for power generation has become inevitable," the project proposal said.

"Against an ever growing demand for power, on-going projects are being delayed and plants are not being overhauled in right time. That is why this project must be pursued on urgent basis."

Commenting on the proposal, an expert said PDB is laying in implementation of various power projects and old plants are not being rehabilitated in time. "In such a situation, the existing projects to prove its efficiency and then talk about new government-financed projects with proper feasibility study."