

News

● What's on today.... ●

Dialogue: South-South Centre, Bangladesh will hold a dialogue on 'Adolescent Reproductive Health: A Challenge'. Chief guest: Prof Zinatunnesa Talukdar, State Minister for Women and Children Affairs. Venue: BRAC auditorium, BRAC Centre Inn, 75, Mohakhali. Time: 9:30 am.

Talk: Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BISS) will hold a talk on 'Human Security: Safety for People in a Changing World.' Moderator Mahfuz Anam, Editor, The Daily Star. Venue: BISS auditorium. Time: 3:30 pm.

Cultural programme: Cultural Affairs Ministry holds the second day's programme of a 2-day event to celebrate Rabindranath Tagore's birthday. Venue: National Museum auditorium. Time: 4:30 pm.

Satyajit Ray retrospective: Shatranj Ke Khilari (The Chess Players) by Satyajit Ray will be screened. Organiser: Zahir Rahan Film Society. Venue: Indian High Commission auditorium, Rd No-2, Dhanmondi R/A. Time: 6:15 pm.

Discussion: A discussion meeting on 'Rabindranath and Mother Language' will be held as part of a two-day programme to mark the 139th birth anniversary of Rabindranath Tagore. Venue: Bangladesh National Museum auditorium. Time: 4:30 pm.

Meeting: Democratic Lawyers' Association will hold a meeting and bring out procession demanding separation of judiciary from administration for establishing rule of law. Venue: Auditorium No. 2 of Supreme Court Bar Association Building. Time: 4:30 pm.

Gold Medal awarding: The government will honour a total of 250 working nurses with gold medals in recognition of their commendable services to the patients. Health and Family Welfare Minister Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim will distribute the medals. Venue: Osmani Memorial Hall. Time: 9:45 am.

Discussion, film show: The Cultural Department, Embassy of Russian Federation in Bangladesh has organised a discussion meeting and film show to mark the 55th anniversary of Victory over Fascism. The Great Battle will be screened after discussion meeting. Venue: Russian Cultural Centre auditorium, House No 510, Road No 7, Dhanmondi. Time: 5:30 pm.

Dialogue: Democracywatch and ActionAid, Bangladesh have jointly organised a dialogue on 'Impact of harta on poor community' between leaders of the ruling and opposition parties, parliament members, economists, lawyers, journalists and representatives of the poor community. Venue: CIRDAP auditorium, Chameli House. Time: 10:30 am.

Film show: As part of the Satyajit Ray Retrospective, Ghar Baire (Home and the World) will be screened. Organiser: Zahir Rahan Film Society. Venue: Indian High Commission auditorium, Road No: 2, Dhanmondi. Time: 6:15 pm.

Seminar: Bangladesh Press Institute will hold a seminar on 'Fifty Years of Newspaper in Dhaka' and a week-long 'Newspaper Exhibition.' Prof Abu Sayeed, State Minister for Information, will inaugurate the 'Newspaper Exhibition'. Venue: Seminar Room of PIB. Time: 10 am.

Workshop: A day-long workshop on 'PeBANK', a banking software, jointly organised by Bangladesh Institute of Bank Management (BIBM) and LEADS Corporation Limited will be held. Chief guest: Dr M Farashuddin, Governor, Bangladesh Bank. Venue: BIBM Seminar Hall. Time: 12:00 noon.



Artistes presenting songs at a cultural function organised by the Ministry of Cultural Affairs at the National Museum in observance of the birth anniversary of poet Rabindranath Tagore yesterday.

— Star photo

Rabindra Joyantee celebrated

The nation yesterday celebrated the 'Rabindra Joyantee', the 139th anniversary of birth of Nobel Laureate poet Rabindranath Tagore, reports UNB.

Different socio-cultural organisations drew up elaborate programmes to celebrate the birthday of 'kabiguru', the most illustrious Bangalee.

The day's programmes included holding of musical soiree, recitation of Tagore's poems, discussion and other cultural function.

The day, the 25th of Baisakh, was celebrated throughout the country with festivities and a renewed call to uphold Tagore's sense of humanity and Bengali literature, which was enriched by the world famous poet.

Rabindranath, the composer of Bangla's national anthem, was the first Bangalee to receive the prestigious Nobel Prize in 1913 for his unique literary works.

President Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in separate messages paid glowing tribute to memory of Tagore recalling his immense contributions in Bengali literature and song.

Bangladesh Betar and Television put up special programmes while national dailies published special supplements highlighting the life and works of Rabindranath Tagore.

Commerce Minister Abdul Jalil, State Minister for Energy and Mineral Resources Prof Rafiqul Islam and State Minister for Information Prof Abu Sayeed were present at other programmes at Patishar, Shilaidaha and Shahjadpur respectively.

Rabindra Mela begins at Shahjadpur

SHAHJADPUR, Sirajganj, May 8: A three-day Rabindra Mela began here today in celebration of the 139th birth anniversary of poet Rabindranath Tagore, reports BSS.

State Minister for Information Prof Abu Sayeed inaugurated the mela (fair) at Rabindra Kacharbari premises as the chief guest.

Nobel Laureate Rabindranath Tagore had spent some time in this historic Kacharbari during 1891-1896 and used to look after the Jamindari of the local 'Pargana' from this house. Tagore's grandfather Prince Darkanath Thakur bought the Jamindari by only 13 Taka and 10 Anna from Rani Bhabani of Natore in 1840.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina inaugurated the two-day national programmes at the National Museum in the city.

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The Archeological Department in 1969 carried out some renovations of this beautiful house and turned it into a 'Rabindra Memorial Museum'.

Different articles used by Rabindranath Tagore are being preserved in the museum.

Thousands of enthusiastic fans of Rabindranath Tagore today visited the mela premises and different galleries of the museum. The whole mela ground, where hundreds of stalls have been set up, turned into a human sea.

The inaugural session of the fair was also attended, among others, by local parliament member Chayon Islam, Mirza Abdul Latif, MP, Prof Zannatul Ferdous, MP, and local Awami League leader Advocate Abdul Rahman while the Deputy Commissioner of Sirajganj A F M Saiful Islam was in the chair.

Speaking on the occasion, Prof Abu Sayeed said Rabindranath was the 'poet of humanity and equality.' He said the Bengali nation at the time of its different crisis periods were inspired by the works of Tagore.

8 envoys: Corruption

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Head of Delegation of the EC Antonio De Souza Menezes.

Earlier DRU President M Anwarul Haq briefed the envoys about the activities of the organisation and its General Secretary Monowarul Islam welcomed the diplomats.

The public appearance of all the EU envoys together in Dhaka on the eve of Europe Day symbolised unity of the EU countries.

On the issue of gas export, the envoys said Bangladesh government is sovereign to decide what it wants to do, but stressed quantifying the actual reserve of natural gas.

Replies to a question, British envoy Dr David Carter said for investment, one needs to see transparent atmosphere, less bureaucratic knots and less corruption.

"There has been some progress. But there is still a long way to go," the newly appointed British High Commissioner said.

Menezes said the new agreement will be guided by a policy based on three criterion – development cooperation and financial assistance to directly benefit the poor, intensified political dialogue and smooth and gradual integration of developing countries into the global economy through trade and economic cooperation.

Replies to a question about Bangladesh's present economic situation, Danish envoy Finn Thilsted said the macro economic situation is 'good' except in a few areas, but the micro economy is fragile.

Charge d'Affaires of the Netherlands Jan A Mass said the major concern is that the rate of poverty decreased in percentage, but the number of people below the poverty line is not decreasing.

Poverty is declining by one per cent every year and with this trend, it will take 50 years to totally eradicate poverty from Bangladesh, he said. "By that time the population will be doubled."

Replies to a question about the present political situation in the country, German Ambassador Uwe Schramm said the statement made by the European Commission in Dhaka

PM: Tagore

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stormy protests.

"Rabindra Culture is now free in Bangladesh. With the spread of education, Rabindra culture is also expanding its horizon," he added.

"Rabindranath is blended in Bengali tradition, culture and thought... Rabindranath is the eternal source of our identity," the Prime Minister said adding that his song "Amar Sonar Bangla Ami Tomai Bhalobashi" inspired the freedom fighters to fight against the Pakistani

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State Minister for Sports and Culture Obaidul Qader, president of National Museum Prof Mostafa Nurul Islam and Rabindra Researcher Ahmad Ratiq spoke at the function.

March last year is still valid. "There is nothing to be added or nothing to be taken away."

In the statement, the EC had expressed concern over confrontational politics in the country and requested political parties to resolve disputes through dialogue.

When his attention was drawn to the fact that opposition political parties are now concentrating on next general election avoiding harta, the German envoy said any positive development in the political arena would be welcomed.

Head of EC Delegation, Ambassador Antonio De Souza Menezes, said Bangladesh and EU are going to sign a new Cooperation Agreement in Brussels in May 22. Focusing more on poverty alleviation, it will open up scope for wider cooperation and strengthen future interaction between two sides, he said.

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Charge d'Affaires of France J G de Wargny, who is the current President of European countries in Dhaka, said EU is the biggest development partner of Bangladesh, taking nearly 45 per cent of its export.

BNP: Hena

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duct and polls-related rules through discussion with all parties and others concerned to ensure free, fair and neutral polls in future.

Replies to a question, Bhuiyan said BNP will not propose any name right now for the post of CEC. The party will propose a name at the right place when discussion will take place.

To another query, he said BNP will participate if the President takes initiative for dialogue prior to appointment of a new CEC.

Asked if there will be a constitutional vacuum, Mannan Bhuiyan said the question does not arise because he (Hena) was absent from office for about last six months and the Acting CEC discharged the responsibilities.

Jamaat-e-Islami central leader Abdul Qader Molla said it would have been wise for the 'gentleman' (CEC) to quit much earlier in the face of people's demand because he miserably failed to prove any of the polls held under him free and fair.

Although the Chief Election Commissioner resigned late, I thank him as he quit admitting immense failures," he added.

Islam Oikya Jote Secretary General Fazlul Haq Amin said the Opposition had been demanding resignation of the CEC for his 'partisan and bias' role.

"It is certainly a victory of our movement... We are happy at his resignation but we will continue our movement till resignation of the government".

Meanwhile, the Central Liaison Committee of the BNP-led opposition alliance is likely to sit today to discuss the resignation. It may issue a joint statement, sources said.

PDB-AES row

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James Hogg said in a letter.

Sources said the Meghnaghat land site problem stems from the conflict of interest between the land site developer and the project consultant, both of which are directly and indirectly connected to Syed Abul Hossain of SAHCO as the local agent.

PDB chairman Quamrul Islam Siddique admitted to the Daily Star late last month that Syed Abul Hossain was the local agent of CWHEC and was indirectly connected to Mott McDonald.

The consultant allegedly tried to protect the interest of CWHEC and AES, on the other hand, did not take into confidence the consultant's report on CWHEC's work at the project site.

CWHEC's work involved a Tk 141 crore budget and it was supposed to deliver the land last July. But it delayed the works citing different reasons and tried to blame the government for its failure. It also made financial claims for take down valuation against dollar although the whole project is designed and financed by the government in local currency. Mott McDonald upheld its claims.

The 450 MW Meghnaghat power project offers one of the world's lowest power tariff. If implemented on time, the project will start power supply from 2002.

Top leaders

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any decision but he hinted that there was no possibility of harta before Parliament went into the budget session in June.

He also said a combined meeting of the opposition leaders would be held in Sylhet shortly but the date has not yet been finalised.

Presided over by BNP vice-chairman Shamsul Islam, the meeting was attended by Anwar Zahid of BNP, ABM Golam Mostafa, Shah Mohammad Abu Zafar and Mostafa Zamal Haider of JP, Mohammad Quamaruzzaman and Abdul Kader Molla of Jamaat and Fazlul Huq Amine and ARM Abdul Matin of IOJ.

SUST to reopen

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concern at the incidents over the naming of different buildings and dormitories. It was resolved that cases filed against the APAC activists during the last few months withdrawn.

The meetings also condemned the death of Abdul Munim Belal, a madrasah student, during a clash between the APAC activists and the law enforcement agencies on December 25 last year.

The necessary and leaders assumed to end the crisis and resume immediately academic activities in the university.



A dustbin on the middle of the road at Dhanmondi Road No 7A, causing inconvenience to the residents as well as the pedestrians.

— Star photo

HERE and THERE

Work on Tk 750 cr container terminal in Ctg to begin soon

CHITTAGONG, May 8: Work on construction of a container terminal at New Mooring at a cost of Tk 750 crore will begin soon and the Chittagong Port Authority has started initial activities for it, reports UNB.

The project was approved on April 27 this year.

Port sources said the government has approved the appointment of 'Bisiyom', a French firm, as consultant for the construction work of the container terminal.

Bisiyom will supervise the overall activities of the gigantic project including design, drawing and preparing of tender documents.

A senior official of the Port said a container yard with 90,000 TUS container handling capacity was constructed in 1992 at a cost of Tk 450 crore.

The demand for container service has recorded a sharp increase from local and foreign ships. Congestion at the port is now a regular phenomenon in the absence of adequate container handling facility.

In 1999 the Port handled 3.66 lakh TUS and the quantum is expected to reach at 4 lakh TUS during the current year.

The Port Authority, importers and exporters have been incurring a huge loss every year

for congestion at the terminal. Foreign ships have been losing interest in calling at Chittagong port because of inordinate delay.

To overcome the problem, the CPA took a project to construct a 1000-meter long jetty with hinder land facility at a cost of Tk 737 crore from its own source. But it suffered a setback in the absence of government approval.

After four years ECNEC approved the project on May 12, 1999. The project suffered another setback by the delay in approval of appointment of consultants, which the government did on April 27 last.

There was demand for the establishment of recreational centres in different parts of the city and union parishes where disadvantaged children will have access. The Congress demands also include implementation of existing laws for giving exemplary punishment to the traffickers, child abusers and acid throwers.

The demands include free treatment for children in all hospitals and clinics, child friendly schools in the villages where there will be no physical punishment and awareness programmes against child abuse, rape and trafficking.

The Congress demanded end to rape, trafficking, kidnapping and torture of children, reparation for child marriage and to ensure fair wage to the working children by ensuring congenital working environment.

Children's Congress, a forum of the disadvantaged children, yesterday urged the government and NGOs to establish shelter home for street children, re-ports BSS.

Addressing a press conference at Jatiya Press Club, teenage president of the Congress Shah Alam Sumon placed 19-point demands to ensure basic right of the children.

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