

News

What's on today....

Discussion Meeting: Jatiya Party will hold a discussion meeting and a *milad mahfil* to observe the Eid-e-Miladunnabi. Venue: Party office at 2, Kalabagan. Time: 4 pm.

Electro Computer Days: The inaugural ceremony of a 3-day long Electro Computer Day 2000, organised by Association of Computer and Electrical Students of BUET, will be held. Chief guest: BUET VC Nooruddin Ahmed. Venue: BUET Central Auditorium. Time: 9 am.

Tribute to Great Filmmakers: Chalachitram Film Society presents *Blow Up* (Italy) by Michelangelo Antonioni and *Passion* (France) by Jean-Luc Godard. Venue: Goethe Institut, House No 10, Road No 9, Dhanmondi R/A. Time: 5:00 pm and 7:00 pm.

Satyajit Ray Retrospective: Zahir Rathan Film Society presents *Phatikchand* on the concluding day of the second part of the Satyajit Ray Retrospective. Venue: Indian High Commission auditorium, Rd No 2, Dhanmondi R/A. Time: 6:15 pm.

Discussion meet: Tamaddun Mojlis has organised a discussion meeting and *Hamid-Nat Mahfil* to observe the Eid-e-Miladunnabi. Chief guest: Justice Mohammad Abdur Rouf. Venue: National Press Club auditorium. Time: 4 pm.

Discussion meet: Bangla Academy has organised a discussion meeting on 'Relevance of Prophet Mohammad (SM) in Present World' and a *Milad Mahfil* to observe the Eid-e-Miladunnabi. Venue: Academy Seminar Room. Time: 5 pm.

Discussion: Bangladesh Jatiyatabadi Ulema Dal will held a *milad mahfil* and discussion meeting. Venue: BNP central office. Time: After Asr prayer.



(From R to L) Sugath Rajapakse, Regional Manager South Asia of Sri Lankan Airlines announced the launching of Dhaka-Colombo flights at a gathering of travel consultants and travel advisors at a city hotel yesterday. Priya Munasinghe, Manager-Bangladesh of the airlines, Rezaur Rahman, Managing Director and Quaiser I Ghani, Director, Planning & Development of Bengal Airlift Limited are also seen. — Star photo

Amendments to Primary School Teacher Welfare Trust Ordinance 1985

Govt has placed bill in JS to divide teachers, BPTA alleges

By Staff Correspondent

The government has placed a bill in Parliament seeking amendments to two articles of 'Bangladesh Primary School Teacher Welfare Trust Ordinance 1985,' to divide the primary school teachers. The amendments will give some bureaucrats and government agents the opportunity to misappropriate the money of school teachers, it was alleged by leaders of Bangladesh Primary Teachers' Association (BPTA) at a press conference at the National Press Club yesterday.

Later the then president issued Bangladesh Primary School Teacher Welfare Trust Ordinance 1985. As per the ordinance a 21-member trustee board will conduct the activities of the welfare trust.

As per Article 5(1) of the ordinance Education Ministry will directly appoint 11 officials while the ministry will appoint rest of the members of board as per recommendation of the BPTA.

The bill placed in the parliament by the government sought amendments in two articles of the ordinance.

The BPTA leaders said that proposal to amend article 5(1) (5) said 'But if there are more than one association of teachers and if they could not reach any consensus about nominating ten teachers, the decision of the government will be considered as final.'

Besides, the proposal to amend article 5(1)(3) of the ordinance was to give the teachers a lump sum from the fund instead of giving them pension, the BPTA alleged.

BPTA leaders said yesterday that they would not allow to make the conspiracy a success at any cost.

BPTA leaders also alleged that there are eight thousand government primary school teachers who have been in the service for more than twenty years. But in the name of retention, they are not getting their salary often. Some times they are not getting their salary for even two or three months.

Activities under Ideal Project in 19 districts of the country is another example of government's wrong policy that is deteriorating the standard of primary education and increasing harassment of teachers, the primary teachers' leaders said, adding scarcity of specialised teachers, class rooms and furniture are obstacles for implementing the project.

BPTA teachers alleged that a quarter of the government is trying to entirely destroy the primary education system deliberately. The leaders said that they have already submitted their 21-point recommendation before the government to eliminate illiteracy and to improve the standard of primary education.

But unfortunately the government is taking wrong decisions one after another ignoring the wise recommendations of the BPTA.

In Pakistan, AI said, the government continued to demonstrate a bias against women by failing to investigate serious human rights abuses.

Lankan Airlines to operate 2 flights a week from July 1

By Staff Correspondent
Sri Lankan Airlines yesterday announced the launching of its Dhaka-Colombo flights from July 1.

Sugath Rajapakse, Sri Lankan Airlines' Regional Manager, South Asia yesterday disclosed that the airline will operate two flights a week on Saturdays and Mondays.

He said that the new destination of Sri Lankan Airlines will increase its presence to 26 countries in 34 destinations.

Sugath Rajapakse was addressing a gathering of travel consultants and travel advisors at a dinner at a city hotel.

Speaking on the occasion, Sugath Rajapakse said that on July 13 last year the national carrier Air Lanka was renamed Sri Lankan Airlines.

"And to mark the occasion, a renamed 'Sri Lankan Airlines' Airbus A340 arrived at the Bandaranaike International Airport, sporting a new logo as well, with a peacock symbol retained, but executed on more fluid lines in green, red and orange," Sugath Rajapakse.

"The newly-christened airline is now in the process of forging its brand-new identity in the 'international skies,'" Sugath Rajapakse said.

Amnesty report

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Although Bangladesh government is committed bound to bring about institutional reforms to improve human rights, their implementation was unduly slow, AI pointed out.

The report said despite calls by human rights activists for withdrawal or amend the Special Power Act (SPA), the law was still used to detain hundreds of people, who are released after short periods.

"Countries as diverse as the USA, China, Saudi Arabia, Colombia, Turkey and Russia continued to disregard and violate human rights", the report said. Around the world, thousands of people were tortured, unjustly detained and deprived of their fundamental rights and they are seeking redress.

The AI report mentioned that in India, hundreds of civilians were killed in armed conflicts in north-eastern states and Jammu and Kashmir and hundreds were displaced.

Attacks on socially and economically weaker sections of society in India, Dalits and tribal people were commonplace and often with the apparent connivance of the police and local authorities. Access to justice remained 'problematic' and women were particularly vulnerable to abuse. Those who sought justice on their behalf also became victims themselves, it noted.

In Pakistan, AI said, the government continued to demonstrate a bias against women by failing to investigate serious human rights abuses.

Eid-e-Miladunnabi

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came to this world with the pledge to remove the darkness of the human civilisation," she said.

Islamic Foundation Bangladesh has drawn up a 15-day programme on the occasion.

To observe the day, various social and Islamic organisations have also chalked out programmes, including discussion meetings, milad and seerat mahfils.

There will be a consecutive three-day closure as the public holiday for Miladunnabi falls on Thursday leading to weekend on Friday and Saturday.

Anjuman Rahmani Moina Maizbhandari (ARMM), a representative organisation of Maizbhandari Darbar Sharif, has chalked out a day-long programme including a grand rally today to celebrate the Eid-e-Miladunnabi.

Kamal Mojumder

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Stating that he is respectful to law, the AL lawmaker from the city's Mirpur area told the House if his son is found guilty of killing, he must face trial and punishment.

"My wife and I don't know where our son is staying now. If we knew his whereabouts, we would have definitely handed him over to police," he said.

The legislator made a scathing attack on a section of newspapers for what he said publishing fictitious reports about him regarding the Shipu murder case. He named a Bangla daily in particular for its report yesterday that he and his wife were absconding.

"I gave interviews to a television and several newspapers on Tuesday. I was at my residence on the day," said an angry Mojumder, blaming some newspapers for writing whatever they like by taking advantage of the freedom of press.

He further alleged that those newspapers threatened him on telephone and was trying to blackmail him, taking advantage of the situation.

When Mojumder's statement ended, Chief Whip Abul Hasanullah whose son was accused of forcibly occupying a rented house in the city recently, was seen rushing to his party colleague and appreciating the statement. Several other Treasury Bench members including Haji Mohammad Selim did the same.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina too was seen saying something which could not be heard from the press galleries.

Koreas sign accord

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South at the end of World War II in 1945. They have never officially ended the Korean War with a peace treaty, leaving the two sides on a virtually continuous war footing ever since.

In one symbolic move today, the North halted its loudspeaker propaganda broadcasts across the De-Militarized Zone, army sources said. The daily insults and speeches were replaced with music.

There were unconfirmed reports the two leaders discussed establishing representative offices in each other's capital, while South Korea confirmed talks were held on a possible telephone hotline.

The hopes of millions of people who have lost touch with relatives since the division of the Korean peninsula in 1945 and the 1950-53 Korean War were raised for the first time in the summit.

Kim Dae-Jung highlighted in a speech at a state banquet on Tuesday that many elderly Koreans were dying without getting news of missing relatives and that "urgent" action must now be taken.

The North's leader gave encouragement before the summit went into closed session at the Paekhwawon state guest house.

Kim Jong-Il said he had seen South Korean television reports on the elderly people who have had their hopes boosted by Kim Dae-Jung's landmark three-day visit.

The most impressive news was about separated families and escapees from the North, expressing their anxiety and hopes of hearing news from their home towns and families in the North," the North's leader was seen telling Kim Dae-Jung.

"I actually saw some of them burst into tears on the television," he said.

In South Korea, pictures of the two Kims greeting each other at Pyongyang airport

were splashed across every newspaper Wednesday boasting hopes that a new era in relations will lead to family reunions.

"I never thought I would see anything like this," said Choi In-Young, a 58-year-old from Seoul who fled the North when she was 15.

"There has been so much hatred spoken over the years, but now I really believe that one day I will be able to go back and see if there is anyone who remembers me."

At the latest summit, Kim Jong-Il wore a grey Mao suit and a pin badge depicting his father Kim Il-Sung, the North's founding leader. Kim Dae-Jung stuck to his formal blue business suit.

The North's leader broke the ice as they sat down at the negotiating table, questioning why he was known as a recluse in the West.

"I don't understand why Europeans call me a recluse. I have been to China, Indonesia and made many other unofficial visits abroad. But people still think I am a recluse," he said with a smile.

"And now they say that Mr President's visit has freed me from my hermit's life," he added to laughter from Kim Dae-Jung and others at the meeting.

There has already been international praise for the gestures of friendship shown when Kim Jong-Il greeted Kim Dae-Jung at Pyongyang airport on Tuesday.

But the lavish state welcome given to Kim Dae-Jung on Tuesday dominated international headlines and encouraged hopes the two sides may be on the path to a new and more stable relationship.

The United States, which has 37,000 troops in South Korea, expressed hope the Kims could now reduce regional tensions. Russia also welcomed the summit as did the United Nations and China.

Petrobangla's surprise

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go for an exclusive hush-hush deal with Unocal in early '97 by signing a letter of intent. As a result of the LOI, Unocal had submitted the WRIP proposals outlining development of the gasfield, setting up of gas pipeline and four power plants," the source pointed out.

Although it was an attractive proposal, WRIP could never move fast due to its cost and pricing components and its complicated proposal designing.

Petrobangla experts had been arguing about its "harmful" implications.

They said it would lead to heavy losses for Bangladesh. Besides, Unocal did not submit any feasibility study to back up the economics of the project, the source pointed out.

It was also does not have any ongoing drilling programme in the three blocks it is operating now. Insiders say Unocal is frustrated about the local gas market and the infrastructure growth.

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Later, with the assistance of the US government Bangladesh sought the help of US consultant Parsons to scrutinise WRIP components. Parsons submitted its report a couple of months ago where it found innumerable loopholes.

Apparently the prospect of WRIP is not very bright unless Unocal revises it drastically. That's why the government was continuing negotiations," the source added.

Spirulina

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Dr Hussain explained: "Each of the patients received three grams of spirulina a day as drug deal with Unocal is the highest among the oil companies here, the US company is following an unpredictable conservative strategy. It signed a production sharing contract (PSC) for Block 7 recently without committing to drill or explore a gas or oil field.

It also does not have any ongoing drilling programme in the three blocks it is operating now. Insiders say Unocal is frustrated about the local gas market and the infrastructure growth.

After three months it was found that of the 33 patients who received 'true' spirulina capsules, 27 patients or 82 per cent showed tremendous signs of improvement. But among the patients, those in the stage two showed the most significant improvement followed by stage three and one.

The experiment concluded that spirulina could be used to cure chronic arsenic poisoning. Each pack of 25 tablets of spirulina costs Tk 120.

Leading dermatologists at a government sponsored workshop on treatment protocol development for arsenicosis patients yesterday unanimously reached an understanding that spirulina can be recommended for treating arsenic patients.

The dermatologists who were present at the workshop came from all medical colleges of the country and BSMUH.

Over 100 studies have confirmed vitamin A and beta-carotene contained in spirulina inhibit the development of certain forms of cancer and tumours.

Earlier, spirulina has been cultivated, harvested and dried in edible form at the Bangladesh Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (BCSIR) laboratory for the first time in Bangladesh under the supervision of French consultant named M. George Bonnin, who had transferred the technique of growing spirulina in artificial ponds with special cultivating condition.

A team of scientist at the Applied Botany section of the Biology Division of BCSIR led by Dr Flora Majid conducted this pioneering work.

According to a recent survey, about 7000 people in 200 villages were identified to have developed severe forms of arsenicosis while over eight crore people in the affected areas are at risk of drinking arsenic contaminated water, perhaps the biggest mass poisoning in history.

Further screening is in progress in 300 villages to identify arsenicosis patients and contaminated tubewells across the country.

According to the World Bank and Dhaka Community Hospital, the pioneer body in detecting first arsenic patients in the country, more than 18 million people face death by arsenic poisoning that causes liver, lung, intestinal, stomach and kidney cancer.

To date there is no known cure to chronic arsenic poisoning that has caused many a death, but spirulina could be an answer to saving millions of lives at stake.

Ershad: JS membership

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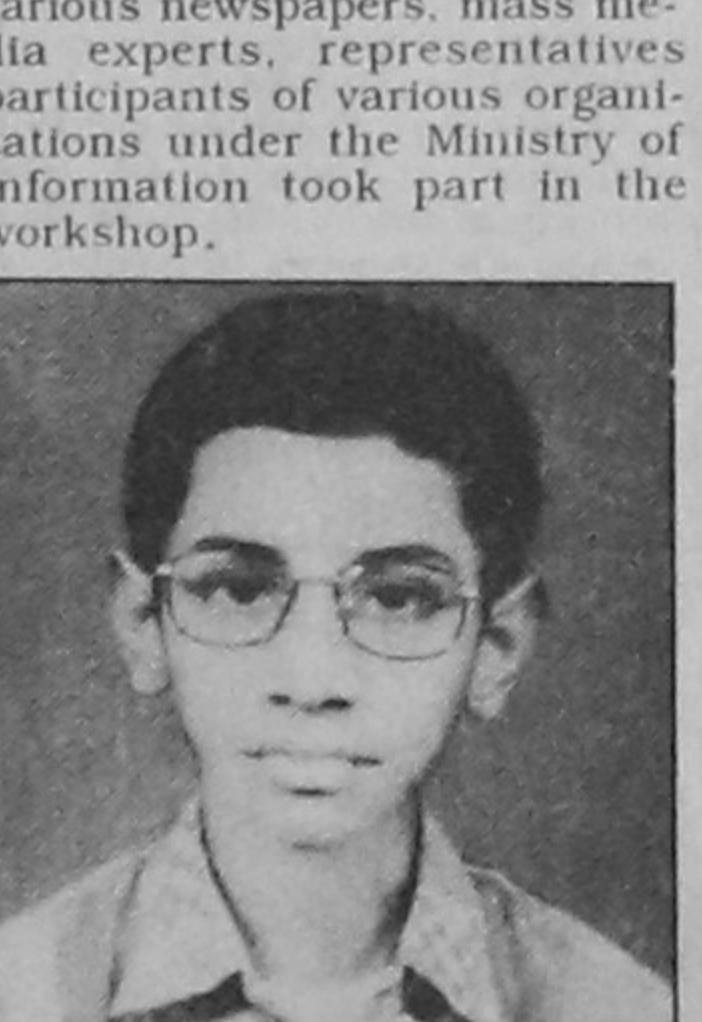
The party argued that Ershad violated Article 70 of the Constitution that bars an MP from keeping off parliament sessions against the decision of the party that nominated him/her to contest the parliamentary election.

The Speaker referred the case to the EC on March 28 and the deadline for settling the issue is July 26. The EC is legally obliged to pass verdict on such a case in 120 days from the date of receipt of it from the Speaker.

On April 27, JP (Monju) filed objection against hearing of the case on two grounds. It argued that the Commission was not properly constituted as there is no provision for acting Chief Election Commissioner. Secondly, it expressed reservation about Moshtaque Ahmed Chowdhury who was acting CEC at that time, alleging that he is biased towards Ershad.

Chowdhury, who heard the objections raised by the lawyers of Monju led JP, said that he would pass judgements on the issue later.

On June 7, the lawyers of JP (Monju) once again filed objection against Moshtaque Ahmed Chowdhury. This time they dropped the other objection as a



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