

News

● What's on today ●

Prothom Alo roundtable: Prothom Alo will hold a roundtable meeting on "Allocation for Education in the national budget." Venue: BIS auditorium. Time: 10:00 am-5:00 pm.

Democracy Watch dialogue: Democracy Watch will hold a dialogue on "Impediment freedom and impartiality of the mass media and its prevention." Venue: Democracy Watch hall, 7 Circuit House Road. Time: 3:00 pm-5:00 pm.

ADAB discussion meeting: Association of Development Agencies in Bangladesh will hold a discussion meeting on poetess Begum Sufia Kamal. The discussion will be followed by a cultural programme. Venue: Main auditorium of National Museum. Time: 5:00 pm.

Children's exhibition: A children's painting exhibition will be inaugurated. This will be followed by a cultural programme by children. Venue: Goethe Institut, House No 10, Road No 9, Dhanmondi R/A. Time: 5:00 pm.

Exhibition: The 1st solo art exhibition of Rashidul Islam Khan will be inaugurated. Chief guest: Mohammad Nasrin, Home and Telecommunications Minister. Venue: Drik Gallery, House No 58, Dhanmondi R/A. Time: 5:30 pm.

Job Fair: Institute of Business Studies, Darul Ihsan University will hold a Job Fair. It will also hold a seminar on "Family Employment Micro Financing of Social Investment Bank Ltd." Venue: Russian Cultural Centre, Road No 7, Dhanmondi R/A. Time: 10:00 am.

Signing ceremony: The signing ceremony of Texas Electronics Ltd and Tech Valley Computers Ltd with Electronic Transaction Network Ltd for supply of Diebold ATMs, will be held. Venue: Surma, Hotel Sonargaon. Time: 12:00 noon.

ASB meeting: Asian Society of Bangladesh (ASB) will hold its 5th monthly general meeting. Venue: Seminar room of ASB at 5, Old Secretariat Road, Nimgal, Ramna. Time: 4:30 pm.

Speech: World Peace Organisation will hold a speech on "Way of Everlasting World Peace." Venue: TSC auditorium, Dhaka University. Time: 5:00 pm.

Satyajit Ray Retrospective: Zahir Ralhan Film Society presents a seminar on Satyajit Ray and *Shakha Prashakha* (the branches of the tree) on the last day of the retrospective. Venue: Indian High Commission auditorium, Road No 2, Dhanmondi R/A. Time: 6:15 pm.



Daily Prothom Alo arranged a reception for the students who topped the list of successful candidates in the SSC examinations of this year at CIRDAP yesterday. Picture shows the students with the guests who included Professor Sirajul Islam Chowdhury (seated third from left) and Professor Wahiduddin Mahmud (seated fourth from left), Professor Mohammad Kaikobad (seated first from left), MA Mannan, Chairman of Butterfly company (seated fourth from left) and Principal Shahana Parveen (seated fifth from left).

— Star photo

No subsidy

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An expert committee recommended 10 per cent cash incentive and 25 per cent subsidy on airfreight for export of perishable goods, an official at the Export Promotion Bureau (EPB) said.

He said the EPB in its proposal suggested to the government to give either cash incentives or subsidy for export of fruit and vegetables. The proposal has been forwarded to the Ministry of Commerce for approval, he added.

There is a huge demand for Bangladeshi fruit and vegetables abroad, especially in ethnic markets in the Netherlands, England and France. A few such items are being exported to the USA, the official added.

A Commerce Ministry official said, "The ministry is considering the matter. We need to talk with the airlines as regards the subsidy for the perishable goods."

Bangladesh earned around 22 million US dollars by exporting agricultural products in the fiscal 1998-99. The earnings from the sector stood at 39 million dollars in 1997-1998 fiscal. The export earnings from agricultural product fell by about 17 million US dollars in 1998-99 due to the devastating floods, which severely damaged the production in the sector, EPB officials said.

There is a pressure from fruit and vegetables exporters to announce incentives in export of perishable items, an EPB official said.

"We have to export perishable items under special arrangement which is very expensive. Sometimes we incur heavy loss since the perishable items can not be kept fresh for long" another exporter said.

Tk 3cr fertiliser factory

BOGRA, June 23: The first ever private sector fertiliser factory of the country is being set up here at a cost of Tk 3 crore, aiming to produce a new type of balanced fertilizer, reports UNB.

The factory is being constructed along Bogra-Shantabar highway in Dupchachia upazila with financial assistance from Rajshahi Krishi Unnayan Bank (RAKUB).

ChAPAINAWABGANJ, June 23: Nineteen development schemes are being implemented in Chapainawabganj district in the current fiscal year, reports BSS.

Asian Development Bank has sanctioned Taka 55 lakh for the schemes.

The schemes included construction and repairing work of different roads, repairing of damaged drains and fish market including the broken pipe lines.

After completion of the work, Chapainawabganj people will get the expected supply of pure drinking water from different pipe lines and proper drainage facilities.

Country's first mobile hospital opens today

By Staff Correspondent

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina formerly inaugurates the Community Welfare and Health Care centre of Bangladesh Medical Studies and Research Institute (BMSRI) today.

The Prime Minister will also inaugurate the country's first mobile hospital to be used for community medicine by Bangladesh Medical College Hospital.

Bangladesh Medical College Hospital, a project of the institute, is the first private medical college in the country established in 1986.

As part of the 23 crore taka non-profit project, it has already produced over 300 doctors and the first batch of dentists will graduate by end of this month. The government also provided Tk 8.18 crore for the project in the last 3 years.

Briefing the journalists, Dr Mahbubuzzaman, Chairman of the hospital management committee, said, "We are aiming to develop a centre of excellence where only quality doctors and dentists will graduate every year."

Dr Anis Walz, Principal of the college said, "We have international recognition even by the WHO. But sadly there are many eligible students who do not get scope to study in medical colleges countrywide due to shortage of number of seats. Our project is supplementary to government effort."

He also said, "Every year we receive over 700 applications for admission but can accommodate only 100 including 20 foreign students."

Among others who were present in the press conference held at its hospital premises were Prof Abu Ahmed Chowdhury, medical director of BMSRI, Prof C H Kabir, honorary secretary of BMSRI, Prof K A Quamruddin, honorary treasurer of BMSRI.

On government steps against

Separation of judiciary

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party. "We need to retain power for another term to complete certain programmes we have initiated. So you have to work hard to make sure that the party wins the next general elections."

Giving a list of achievements of the government, Hasina instructed the party workers to faithfully propagate the success to the people.

Terming the BNP led four-party alliance a "political calamity" for the people and her party, the PM said, "We have so far faced a lot of natural calamities successfully, and we will definitely face the political calamity too."

"But you have to make sure that the government's programmes for socio-economic development are implemented smoothly and there is no intra-party conflict."

She also warned the "troublemakers" in the party of stern action and advised grass-roots level leaders and activists to resolve interneene conflicts.

The Prime Minister also told the party activists that Upajila and Jilaparishad elections would be held soon and asked the party activists to get prepared for that.

Speaking on law and order, she claimed that the situation is under control in most areas of the country. "But Dhaka and Chittagong cities are still witnessing certain amounts of terrorist activities," she said adding, "I shall not spare anyone involved in such activities even if he belongs to Awami League."

In this regard she warned the opposition parties "not to make noise when criminals belonging to those are arrested." She also urged the higher judiciary "not to grant bail to criminals".

Requesting the Opposition not to shelter criminals, Hasina said, "I have not spared leaders and activists of my party, I will not spare criminals of other parties."

On government steps against

corruption, the PM said investigation is on against 103 MPs. Without disclosing political identities of those MPs, she said, "Unfortunately, the problem is, whenever such cases of corruption go to court, those are sent to deep freezers," she said urging speedy trial of the cases.

Claiming that people are living in peace under AL rule, she said, "Only the Opposition is not feeling comfortable".

Instructing party workers to remain alert against black patches of clouds in the political horizon, Sheikh Hasina said, "The vote-thieves, autocrats and razakars who have got united against us are out to hatch conspiracy. However they will not succeed."

Referring to Opposition's token return to parliament on Tuesday, the Prime Minister said, "They came to the House with their heads down only to protect their red passports and privileges as MPs".

The PM ridiculed the Leader of the Opposition for her failure to stick to the decision not to return to parliament. "They said they would never come back to the House. They failed to stick to their decision. They do not have any principle. Those who can not stick to their decision can not deliver anything to the people."

She, however, once again made a "clarion call" to the Opposition to return to parliament. "As you have entered the House leaving behind embarrassment, you better stay back to perform responsibilities towards those who voted you to parliament".

Earlier, she told the party councillors that they had given her four "difficult tasks" when she was made president of the party back in 1981.

"In 1981, you assigned me the four difficult tasks of consolidating the party, establishing democratic rights of the people, steering the party back to power and trying the killers of Bangabandhu. I think I have been able to perform the job."

UNB adds: listing achieve-

AL council

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"Your reaction shows that you don't want any squabbling inside the party. Then, why don't you stop doing such thing?"

The party president warned that troublemakers shall have no place in the party. "I am no place in the party."

Rakhal Chandra Das, a councillor from Rajshahi, asked Hasina and other central leaders to deal severely with squabbles for the sake of holding the party together.

Only six of some 2500 councillors, one each from six administrative divisions, were allowed to talk about the report submitted by General Secretary Zillur Rahman. Rahman's report card on the party mainly focused on the government's performance.

All the four councillors looked unhappy over being given only two/three minutes to have their say.

The dissatisfaction became clear when Dhaka's mayor Mohammad Hanif protested the party chief's decision.

Hasina interrupted Hanif as soon as he started speaking. "I am yet to start my speech," said an annoyed mayor. Hasina reportedly suggesting the mayor take on a countrywide to address the party men.

Mayor Hanif shrugged off the suggestion anyway and gave a brief résumé of the achievement of premier Hasina and her government.

Chittagong division representative Idris Mia suggested the ruling party face the opposition effectively. Councillor Mohiuddin Ahmed from Barisal urged the party chief to reward the workers who struggled a lot.

ANM Shafiqul Haq from Sylhet focused on the turbulent events at the Shahjalal University.

Discussion on the secretary's report over, the special council extended the tenure of the central committee by two years. It also endorsed three amendments to the party constitution including one that provides for update of Awami League manifesto and its economic policies. It was agreed that the central committee will work out details of the planned changes in the two issues.

Sheikh Hasina then launched a membership renewal and collection drive by renewing her own membership. She paid the general secretary Tk 2 as renewal fee. "But it's too little a money. It should be increased through changes in the constitution," Hasina said.

The president asked all the leaders and workers of her party to renew their membership and carry ahead the membership collection drive.

Hasina did not read out the written speech all along. She preferred to extemporise being aware of the time shortage. The general secretary and Amir Hossain Anu, chairman of the council preparatory committee, also touched only the highlights of their speeches.

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Sadarghat terminal

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for doing business on the pontoon.

Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA) has leased out goods handling for the year for Tk 1.34 crore to a labour cooperative. The BIWTA has prominently hung a price chart for porters. But in reality, innocent passengers are forced to hire porters who realise up to Tk 100 from a passenger for carrying a medium size suitcase.

BIWTA's Deputy Director at Sadarghat terminal admitted that such harassment took place regularly. But he said the police have been posted at different spots of the port and whenever he receives a complaint he takes action against the unruly porters.

"I think the lease money is too high and that is reflected on the exorbitant kuli charges at the ghat," said a BIWTA official suggesting that reducing the lease money could help tackle harassment of passengers by the porters.

Sources said a BIWTA move to extend the length of the terminal by putting a new pontoon landed them in a bitter row with the Bangladesh Armed Forces recently. BIWTA sources said, to face the increasing pressure of passengers, they had to add a pontoon on the eastern side of the terminal.

During Eid and long holidays, up to one lakh people use the Sadarghat terminal daily. About 90 per cent of them arrive and leave the terminal between 4 pm and 8 pm.

In a recent move to bring some order at the terminal, BIWTA has banned use of loudspeakers on the pontoons to attract passengers. The authorities have also set a time table for each vessel to berth at the terminal and depart. This has lessened the race for a berthing place at the terminal.

Prodipan sets example

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bin in the area.

Prodipan, the local NGO, designed the layout for keeping the residential areas clean of kitchen garbage. It provided the locals with expertise on garbage collection the hygienic way and by year-end none in the neighbourhood threw garbage from their windows, a practice until then seemed hard to quit.

"We got a tremendous response for this task in the community. However, initially we had to persuade people to participate in the programme. In fact, many ignored us thinking the task was impossible. But as we moved from house to house and motivated people not to throw garbage in the streets, it worked very soon," said Amin, another resident.

Two young boys have been employed for garbage collection. Both start early in the morning and by afternoon they are through making sure there are no kitchen garbage in the house. A rickshaw van is used to collect and carry the garbage for dumping at a selected site near a street where municipal vehicle can collect it before it decomposes.

The idea of the programme is to encourage people to participate to keep their neighbourhood clean. When we started we noticed that no-one except for a few was willing to avail the facility of garbage disposal at a designated site in the area," said Monir Alam Chowdhury, Prodipan's project coordinator.

"That's why the garbage collection system of the city corporation has not been effective even now in most areas of Khulna city."

Inspired by the success, five other neighbourhoods next door followed suit and by now several other communities have shown interest.

It gained such popularity that several local NGOs are undergoing training at Prodipan.

Muktijoddha rally in Rangpur

RANGPUR, June 23: A big rally of Muktijoddha was held at Pirgacha Thana area on Sunday, reports BSS.

Faulty taps, negligence of authorities alleged

Thousands of gallons of water go to drains from DU toilets, baths

the campus from nine deep tube-wells operating alternately, official sources said.

Talking to UNB, Asif, a student of Public Administration and resident of Haji Mohsin Hall said, "you know we live in heaven. There is no scarcity of water. We use water according to our wish and nobody closes those for long."

The DU authorities allocated Tk 10 lakh in the proposed budget for 2000-2001 fiscal for setting up deep tube-well to meet water crisis on the campus.

If the authorities could save the quantity of water going to the drains, we don't have to face any water crisis, rather we could sell water to Dhaka WASA aiming at increasing university's income," Mazharul Huq, a student of Accounting Department said.

Many times, the students open the taps but do not close those getting no water. It happens when the water tanks go empty before fresh supply. As supply resumes, water flows through the open taps and nobody closes those for long.</