

What's on today . . .

Exhibition: Muslim Women's Association of Bangladesh (Fateniah) holds an exhibition of handicrafts and Islamic Hiyab. Venue: Iranian Cultural Centre auditorium. Time: 2.00 pm-7.00 pm.

Meeting: A meeting of the Executive Council of the Prokriehi-BCS Coordination Council will be held. Venue: Institute of Engineers, Bangladesh (IEB) committee room. Time: 7.30 pm.

ASB workshop: The third workshop of the Asiatic Society's Bangladesh project will be held. Venue: ASB auditorium at 15 Old Secretariat Road (Mintoh), Kamra.

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WEST workshop: The seventh workshop of the 'Workshop on Environment Science and Technology' (WEST) will be held. This session will involve children. Venue: Alliance Francaise de Dhaka, 26 Mirpur Road. Time: 9.30 am.

Cultural evening: Alliance Francaise de Dhaka presents Nazrul Geeti by Luna Saeed and Rabindra Sanget by Pijush. Venue: Alliance Francaise de Dhaka, 26 Mirpur Road. Time: 7.00 pm.

Weather

Temperature may rise

Light to moderate rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty wind is likely at a few places over Chittagong, Barisal and Sylhet divisions and at one or two places over Dhaka, Khulna and Rajshahi divisions with moderately heavy falls at one or two places over Chittagong division till 6 pm today, reports UNB.

Slight rise in day temperature is expected over the country during this period, met office said.

The country's highest temperature recorded yesterday was 34.5 degree Celsius at Chuadanga and the lowest 24 degree Celsius at Cox's Bazar.

The sun sets in the capital today at 6.50 pm and rises tomorrow at 5.15 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	32.1	25.5
Chittagong	33.5	24.6
Rajshahi	33.2	27.4
Khulna	34.0	26.5
Barisal	30.8	25.0
Sylhet	30.7	25.0
Cox's Bazar	32.5	24.0

HERE and THERE

Rotary Club of Banani Dhaka

The 3rd Installation Ceremony of the Rotary Club of Banani Dhaka was held recently at 7:30 pm at the Panda Garden auditorium at Mohakhali, says a press release.

Dr Jamilur Reza Chowdhury, professor of Civil Engineering, BUET and former adviser to the caretaker government of 1996, was the chief guest while president Rotarian Engr. Ataur Rahman Choudhury PHSM, presided over the ceremony.

The elected office-bearers of the club for 2000-2001 were installed with Rtn M Ghazafar Ali PHSM, Rtn Sheikh Mawla Baksha PHSM, and Rtn Engr. MAA Zakaria PHSF as president, president elect and secretary respectively.

A Fellowship dinner and a raffle draw followed the ceremony.

ATSEC

A two-day workshop on 'Developing National Agenda and Action Plan for Fighting against Trafficking' was organised by Action against Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation of Children (ATSEC) Bangladesh Chapter at WVA Auditorium at Dhanmondi on Tuesday, says a press release.

It was inaugurated by Matthew S Friedman, Technical Advisor, USAID, in the morning. The main objectives of the workshop were — a) to push for development of a national agenda for combating trafficking of children and women, b) to consolidate the existing activities and take further actions for the fight against trafficking, and c) to draw up an action plan to materialise the national agenda.

Matthew in his inaugural speech laid emphasis on coordination among GO, NGO and Donors who are working to combat the problem of trafficking.

Mizanur Rahman, Coordinator, ATSEC, Bangladesh Chapter described the activities of ATSEC and requested all the participants to make the workshop successful with their active participation. Rina Sen Gupta, regional representative of Save the Children, Denmark

SMVD course from today

A three-day long training course on Safety Motivation for Vehicle Drivers (SMVD) for the trainers will be held at the National Scout Training Centre, Mouchak, Gazipur from June 29 to July 1, says a press release.

About one hundred participants including rovers and scouts leaders are expected to attend the course organised by Programme Division, Bangladesh Scouts.

400 gm heroin recovered, one arrested

RAJBARI, June 28: A man was arrested along with 400 grams of heroin worth about Tk 40 lakh from Daulatdia ferry ghāt today, reports UNB.

Acting on a tip-off, police raided the ghāt and arrested Sajedur Rahman, 22, of Jhikrapara village in Mohespara upazila of Jhenaidah district and recovered the drug.

Budget has been given 'forward-looking vision'

Finance minister says during JS discussion

Finance Minister Shah A M S Kibria yesterday said the people and development accelerating budgetary measures spelled out in the national budget for fiscal 2000-2001 will help the nation achieve economic prosperity, reports BSS.

He was winding up the general discussion on the newly proposed budget at the Jatiya Sangsad.

Kibria reiterated that he has tried to give the budget 'a forward-looking vision' to help make the nation a developed country by 2020.

The finance minister brushed aside the criticism by former finance minister M Saifur Rahman and said that the present government has borrowed far less money from the banks than what had been borrowed by the BNP government in their time.

Kibria quoted in his defence an article by Prof Rehman Sobhan who has argued in favour of bank borrowing as stipulated by the Keynesian School of economics.

The finance minister revised some of the tax proposals in the

budget following requests made by different social groups, members of parliament, and the prime minister.

He said that the present government has given due thrust on developing human resources and the infrastructure as well as keeping in view the future development of the country. He expressed his firm confidence that the last four years' experience will help make Bangladesh a leading economy by the year 2020.

He was highly critical of the absence of the Opposition in the Jatiya Sangsad throughout the entire budget session saying that they have in fact not kept up their own commitment given to the people before the polls.

Giving a comparative documentary evidence on bank borrowings during the past BNP regime and the current regime, Kibria said that Saifur Rahman had borrowed Taka 1,918.6 crore from the banks against a total bank deposit of Taka 25,850 crore during the 1991-92 fiscal year while the total budget was Taka 15,614 crore.

During the first year of the

current government in 1996-97, he said, only Taka 254.9 crore was borrowed from banks while the budget was over Taka 25,000 crore. During the 1999-2000 fiscal year, the documents show Taka 2,419.73 crore as bank borrowings by the present government against total bank deposit of Taka 66,453 crore.

The bank borrowings compared to the total deposits of banks each year during the BNP regime were higher than that of the last four years of the current government, the documents show, he said.

The finance minister also said that direct programmes had been undertaken for poverty alleviation along with launching of old age allowances, allowances for distressed and deserted women, allowances for freedom fighters, housing funds, employment banks, residential projects and expanded VGF programme.

Moreover, budget-allocation has been increased significantly in the fields of physical and social infrastructures in the rural areas, he told the Jatiya Sangsad.

Arsenic poisoning

Photo exhibition opens in Washington

Ambassador K M Shehabuddin and Shengnan Zhang, Managing Director of the World Bank inaugurated a jointly sponsored photo exhibition on 'Arsenic poisoning in Bangladesh' at the lobby of the World Bank main building in Washington DC on Monday, according to a message received in the city yesterday, reports BSS.

The photo exhibition is an extension of a similar programme that began in Washington in May this year and was organised to help create awareness among the donor countries and multilateral funding agencies and the international community of the gravest of the situation.

Speaking on the occasion, Ambassador Shehabuddin outlined the situation of arsenic poisoning in Bangladesh. He stated that 20 million people are assumed to be drinking arsenic contaminated water and another 75 million are potentially at risk. Fifty-nine out of the 64 districts are affected. He said that the government is committed to effectively deal with the situation and has mobilised local resources to undertake emergency and long-term programmes. It has also formed a national steering committee.

Later, a seminar was held where professor Qamruzzaman of Dhaka Community Hospital, Baber Kabir of World Bank office in Dhaka and Professor Willard Chapple of Denver University presented papers on arsenic poisoning.

The seminar mainly focused on various scientific information on arsenic poisoning in Bangladesh. It also identified a scientifically accepted knowledge on the causes of situation as well as a remedy for it.

The association president Md Monirul Islam, general secretary Md Shafiqul Islam and other leaders were present at the press conference.

Biogas Diploma Engineers' Assoc

By Staff Correspondent

Sonie 128 diploma engineers working for the government's Biogas Pilot Plant Project have demanded their absorption into the second phase of the same project after its first phase ends tomorrow.

The diploma engineers under the banner of 'Biogas Diploma Engineers Association' raised their demand at a press conference held at the hall room of Dhaka Reporters Unit (DRU) yesterday.

They said that during the four-year duration of the first phase of the project they have successfully built some 5,000 biogas plants and are now about to lose their jobs.

The engineers were also critical of government's plans to lease out work of the second phase to non-government organisations (NGOs).

The association president Md Monirul Islam, general secretary Md Shafiqul Islam and other leaders were present at the press conference.

Comilla Samity

Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Abdul Matin Khasru handed over a cheque for Tk 20,000 to Josna Nasim, wife of ailing Press Institute of Bangladesh (PIB) instructor Rafiqul Islam Nasim, reports BSS.

The minister gave away the cheque on behalf of Dhaka-based Comilla Samity at a function at his official residence on Mintoo Road.

Vice-president of the Samity Ali Akbar, general secretary Abu Taher, Prof Mobin Khan, Ruhul Amin Mintu, Syed Rezaul Rahman and Mohammad Shahjahan addressed the function.

The minister also donated a fax machine and five fans to Comilla Press Club.

The chelem of Nooruddin Ahmed, former President of the FBCCI, will be held at his Banani residence after Asr prayers on Saturday, reports UNB.

Nooruddin Ahmed, a businessman, died at a city clinic on May 23. He is survived by one daughter and two sons.

He was the elder brother of Raziuddin Ahmed Raju MP and former additional foreign secretary. Ambassador Mohiuddin Ahmed.

Representing the World Bank Frannie Leautier, Director of Infrastructure, focused on the importance of mainstreaming disaster management and effective prevention and mitigation throughout all government and community activities. She spoke of the importance of partnerships and collaborative efforts needed to bring all necessary expertise to bear on developing creative and innovative programmes and appropriate policies to provide safety to the poor.

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Increase JS seats

Parishad's legal affairs adviser Tania Ameer at a workshop in the city yesterday, also kept open the option for women to run for general seats.

Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Abdul Matin Khasru was the chief guest at the workshop, chaired by Parishad chief Hena Das.

The general secretary Ayesha Khanam gave an introductory speech while leading economist Prof Rehman Sobhan, Prof Anisuzzaman, ruling party lawmaker Khaleda Khanam and Barrister Amir-ul-Islam spoke on the occasion.

However, the government recently introduced bill in Parliament seeking retention of the provision for 30 reserved seats for women, elected by 300 MPs.

Rejecting the government bill seeking 'retention of the two-decade old provision', Ayesha Khanam said the bill even contradicted government's policy for women adopted in 1997.

The government policy said the number of reserved seats for women would be increased and provision for direct election to the reserved seats would be introduced after the expiry of the existing provision on April 4, 2001, she said.

The government has to move a new bill to increase the number of reserved seats for women and introduce direct election to the reserved seats.

Seeking cooperation of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Khaleda Zia in meeting the demand of the women community, Ayesha said that the Parishad would not be rigid on raising the reserved seats to 150. 'We are ready to compromise over the figure. But the number of reserved seats must be increased and system of direct election must be introduced.'

Prof Rehman Sobhan found the Parishad's bill 'consistent with the 21st century thoughts' and put forward a comprehensive programme before the women's organisations to get their demand met by the political parties having representation in parliament.

Advising them to advance professionally, Prof Sobhan said when the women's organisations were unanimous over increase in the number of reserved seats and direct election to those, they now needed to reach a consensus on the number of reserved seats they want. 'Once the consensus is reached, you have to take up a series of programmes including setting up of a secretariat, raising funds, mobilising people across the country, convincing various professional groups, winning media support, persuading the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition and lobbying with all the 330 members of parliament.'

The law minister, who moved the government bill seeking retention of the provision for 30 reserved seats for women to be indirectly elected, supported 'the spirit of the women's organisations'.

'I personally believe that the nation cannot make further advancement without ensuring

appropriate as well as effective participation of the women at all levels ranging from Union Parishads to Parliament,' the minister said. He admitted that the present provision for 30 reserved seats does not properly ensure representation of women on parliament.

The minister further said the government was not rigid on the number of reserved seats. 'I have sent the bill to the parliamentary standing body on the ministry of law comprising MPs from both the ruling party and the opposition. So the scope for increasing the number is still there.'

Referring to Rehman Sobhan's suggestion to mobilise public opinion in favour of the issue, the minister said, 'You do not need to take so much trouble to get the demand met if you can convince the Prime Minister and the Leader of the opposition in Parliament. Given the political culture of the day, even 200 years of your efforts would prove to be a failure in case you fail to convince the Prime Minister and the Opposition Leader.'

Noting that the passage of any such bill would require opposition support, the minister advised the women's leaders to 'observe hunger strike in front of the two leaders' office.'

He, however, observed that the women organisations needed to be more committed to the issue. 'Your move may not be successful if it remains limited to earning dollars and pounds from donor countries,' the minister said in an oblique reference to some NGOs working on the issue.

Ruling party whip Khaleda Khanam MP said that it involves a lot of money to contest for a general seat in the direct elections. 'It would be very difficult for the women to contest for the reserved seats if the constituency, as proposed in the Mahila Parishad bill, is double the size of a general seat.'

On the proposal for 450 seats in parliament, she said, 'There is no space in the House for so many seats.'

Barrister Amir-ul-Islam fully supported the Mahila Parishad's bill. Prof Anisuzzaman, however, supported the proposed provision for direct election to the reserved seats but suggested that the number of reserved seats should be raised to 100.

Shamim made JU Syndicate member

By JU Correspondent

A K M Enamul Haq Shamim, former President of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) and former VP of JUCSU, was made a Syndicate member of the Jahangirnagar University (JU) yesterday for a two-year term.

Chancellor of the university President Shahabuddin Ahmed made the nomination as per Section 22 (G) of JU Act 1973.

Shamim was nominated after a Syndicate member, Easul Abdullah Haroon, former president of FBCCI, resigned from the post on personal grounds.

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4 kidnappers arrested, 3 rescued

Detective police arrested four people along with two sophisticated arms and rescued three abducted people from the city's Jatrahari area on Tuesday night, reports UNB.

The arrested are Asaduzzaman Punom, 30, Delwar Hossain Delu, 22, Shahid, 27, and Rafiqul Islam, 30.

After abducting three people — Sentu, Mohiuddin, and Monir — the terrorists had demanded a ransom of Tk 50,000 for their release.

The DB arrested Punom and Delu with a revolver and five bullet from Sanarpar in Demra in the evening. Later, acting on their information, police arrested Shahid and Rafiq with a rifle.

Cargo handling

Port's booking office source said that as no gang-booking was given by stevedores at 4 pm today, the work at Chittagong Port from came to a halt. However, port officials feared worsening of congestion of vessels here.

Presently, 60 vessels, including 40 waiting at the outer anchorage, fell stranded due to the strike, port sources said.

Chittagong Port saw a 37-hour long strike by dock workers two days ago.

Death ref

From page 1

contain grounds of the appeals. The petition on behalf of the four convicts detained in Dhaka Central Jail mentioned that in such a situation, if the appeals were taken up for hearing, the appellants would be denied opportunity of adequate defence.

The four are: Lt Col (dismissed) Syed Farook Rahman, Lt Col (retd) Sultan Shahriar Rashid Khan, Maj (retd) Bazul Huda and Lt Col (retd) Mohiuddin.

The Bangladesh murder case is the last in the list of cases to be heard by this Division Bench constituted on April 24.

District and Sessions Judge of Dhaka Kazi Golam Rasul, in his verdict in the case on November 8, 1998, ordered that the 15 convicts be executed by a firing squad and in case it is not possible, they should be hanged.

The 11 absconding convicts are: Lt Col (dismissed) Khan-daker Abdul Rashid, Lt Col (retd) SHMB Noor Chowdhury, Lt Col (retd) Shariful Huq Dalim, Lt Col (retd) Aziz Pasha, Lt Col (retd) AM Rashid Chowdhury, Maj (retd) SKM Mahjiddin, Capt (retd) Abdul Majid, Maj (retd) Ahmed Sharif Hussain, Capt (retd) Kismet Hashem, Capt (retd) Nazmul Hussain Ansar and Risdalder (retd) Muslemuddin.

NGO official

From page 12

Meanwhile another group of muggers shot a businessman and took away Tk 2.5 lakh from him in the old city.

The victim was identified as Kazi Fazul Huq, 35, a resident of Purana Moghatala under Kotwali thana in the old city.

The incident took place at about 9:15 pm when Huq along with his friend Sultan were returning home in a rickshaw. The gang led by Abu Syed, Asif and Anu stopped their rickshaw when it reached at Nawab Yousuf Road, police said.

Huq was shot when he along with his friend tried to resist the muggers. The muggers then took away the money. Huq was rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital in a critical state, hospital sources said.

Hasina

From page 12

ernment is not swallowing the money. This money is being exclusively spent for rural people, development of infrastructure, socio-economic sector, education and medical facilities for the people.

About stamping out corruption from administration, the PM said she has already taken several steps to make a corruption-free efficient administrative system. 'But it is not possible to wipe out corruption overnight, which plagued society for last two decades.'

She deplored that whenever any official is transferred or suspended on a certain allegation, courts issue stay orders 'creating obstruction' in the administrative system.

About allegation of corruption against 103 MPs of the 91 parliament, Hasina said corruption cases were filed against 70 MPs and inquiry was on against the rest.

The Prime Minister also appeared critical of courts for granting bail to notorious terrorists who resort to fresh killing.

She deplored that the courts not only grant bail but also restricted police not to arrest such terrorists for a certain period. In this context, she cited a case of Kamal Pasha and said the accused after getting bail committed double murders in Moham-madpur recently.

'Who sought bail for him? Why court granted him bail? Who will be held responsible for it?' Hasina posed a series of queries and said: 'How terrorism would stop if terrorists get bail?'

Referring to independence