

## What's on today....

**British Film Week 2000:** Two films will be screened as part of the 'British Film Week', organised by the British Council and Lever Brothers Bangladesh Ltd. The films are 'With or Without You' at 4.30 pm and 'Notting Hill' at 7 pm. Venue: British Council auditorium.

**Andrei Tarkovsky retrospective:** 'Nostalghia' and 'The Sacrifice' by Russian filmmaker Andrei Tarkovsky will be screened. Zahir Raihan Film Society has organised the event. Venue: German Cultural Centre. Time: 5 pm.

**Dress exhibition:** Kay Kraft has organised a three-day exhibition. The inaugural ceremony will be held at 4 pm. Venue: Alliance Francaise de Dhaka. Time: 4 pm to 8 pm daily.

**Scientific seminar:** On 'Importance Of Zinc For Child Health', jointly organised by Bangladesh Institute Of Child Health, Dhaka Shishu Hospital and Medical Services Department of Orion Laboratories Ltd. Venue: Dhaka Shishu Hospital auditorium. Time: 11 am.

**Seminar:** 'Health for All' will hold a seminar on 'Eyesight for All and Eye Tests'. Speaker: Prof Altaf Hossain. Venue: Gonoshasthya Nagar Bhaban, House No 14/E, Road No 6, Dhanmondi R/A. Time: 5.30 pm.

## ..... and tomorrow

**DRU talk:** Dhaka Reporters Unity (DRU) presents BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan as part of its ongoing series 'Meet the Reporters'. Bhuiyan will deliver a talk on 'State of Politics in Bangladesh' and participate in a question and answer session. Venue: DRU auditorium, 8/4-A, Topkhana Road, Segun Bagicha. Time: 10.55 am.

**Meeting:** A meeting of Bangladesh Awami Jubo League will be held. Venue: Paltan Maidan. Time: 3.00 pm.

**British Film Week 2000:** Gregory's Girls and with or without you will be screened on the second day of the week-long film show. Venue: British Council auditorium, Fuller Road. Time: 4.30 pm and 7.00 pm respectively.

**Uttam Kumar Retrospective:** Zahir Raihan Film Society in association with Information and Cultural Wing of the Indian High Commission begins a month-long festival to pay tribute to legendary Bengali actor Uttam Kumar. On the first day of the festival Uttam Kumar starrer 'Chirikhana' will be screened. Venue: Indian High Commission auditorium, Road no 2, Dhanmondi R/A. Time: 6.15 pm.

## Weather

### Thundershowers likely

Light to moderate rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty wind is likely at most places over the country with moderately heavy to heavy falls at places till 6 pm today, reports UNB.

Day temperature may remain nearly unchanged over the country during the period, Met Office said.

The country's highest temperature recorded yesterday was 34.0 degree Celsius at Srimangol and the lowest 23.6 degree Celsius at Khulna.

The sun sets in the capital today at 6.46 pm and rises tomorrow at 5.24 am.

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

| City/Town   | Temperature in Celsius | Humidity in percentage |
|-------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| Dhaka       | 31.5                   | 77                     |
| Chittagong  | 31.5                   | 77                     |
| Rajshahi    | 30.2                   | 82                     |
| Khulna      | 27.3                   | 99                     |
| Barisal     | 30.5                   | 94                     |
| Sylhet      | 32.5                   | 74                     |
| Cox's Bazar | 30.2                   | 85                     |

## HERE and THERE

### Training course for court officials

Law Minister Abdul Matin Khasru yesterday stressed the need for monitoring situation in and around the court, saying that the sacred premises of court should not be the place of harassment of the people who come for justice, reports UNB.

He was addressing as chief guest the inaugural function of a training course for the administrative officials of lower courts and tribunals, organised by the Judicial Administration Training Institute.

Matin felt the need for modern case management and technology to ensure speedy trial and justice.

Some 45 trainees from the

district judge courts across the country are taking part in the course. Director General of the Institute Justice M Badruzzaman and Director Hasan Shahid Ferdous also spoke at the function.

### BACI

The 39th executive committee meeting of Bangladesh Association of Construction Industry (BACI) was held at its office in the city yesterday, says a press release.

Presided over by association president Aminul Islam, the meeting discussed the association's future action plan.

Aminul Islam of PBL and Zahir Hossain of MAH Ltd were elected president and vice president respectively of the association recently.

### Road mishap Minor girl killed in Jhalakathi

JHALAKATHI, July 22: An eight-year-old schoolgirl was killed in a road accident on Jhalakathi-Bhandaria road at Baghri in Rajapur upazila here today, reports UNB.

Police said Nasima, a class II student of Baghri Government Primary School, was run over by a Jhalakathi-bound bus from Bhandaria while going to the school. She was the daughter of school labourer Abdus Salam.

The driver of the bus fled with his vehicle. Police sent the body to the hospital morgue for autopsy.

### Death anniversary

The first death anniversary of noted homeopath Dr M Nurul Islam will be observed today, says a press release.

A milad mahfil will be held after Asr prayers today at his residence at 33/C, Road No 6, Banani (near ABC Tower) to mark the occasion.

Dr Islam was the chairman of the Homeopathic Board of Bangladesh. He also wrote two popular books on homeopathy.



Sangbadik-Sramik-Karmachari Oikya Parishad brought out a procession in the city yesterday demanding immediate arrest and exemplary punishment of the killers of — Star photo

## Attempt on PM's life condemned

By DU Correspondent

Different organisations yesterday protested and condemned the plan to kill Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina with a time bomb at Kotlajpara in Gopalganj.

Association of Universities of Bangladesh (AUB) expressed deep anguish over the incident and demanded immediate arrest and exemplary punishment of those involved in the incident.

In a separate statement, Prof Abdul Bayes, Vice-Chancellor of Jahangirnagar University said, "Anti-state terrorist circles are trying to bar the progress of the prime minister and her government by such subversive activities." He demanded exemplary punishment of those involved.

Ruling party backed Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) yesterday brought out a procession on the Dhaka University campus protesting the planting of the bomb to kill the prime minister.

Following the procession, BCL leaders at a rally at the Aparajeyo Bangla on the campus at noon accused the four-party opposition alliance of planting the bombs and warned that they will resist any conspiracy to kill Sheikh Hasina.

Civil forces along with anti-liberation and fundamentalists are trying to destroy democracy and create anarchy in the society as they have lost support of the people," they said.

The BCL leaders also demanded immediate arrest and hanging of those involved in the incident.

Banabandhu Parishad and Sammilita Muktejodha Front also issued separate press releases condemning the incident of planting powerful bomb near the Prime Minister's meeting venue.

The government will not be able to avert its downfall by resorting to such repression, he said while addressing a meeting of the central BNP leaders of Dhaka metropolis at the Minto Road residence of Leader of the Opposition.

The only aim of the ruling party, he alleged, was to plunder national wealth and enjoy the benefits of power.

### Dengue fever

BNP secy gen blasts govt

BNP Secretary Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan yesterday alleged that the entire state mechanism was so busy with repressing opposition that the government was even careless about the grave consequences of dengue fever, reports BSS.

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### Air Mauritius office opens in city

By Staff Correspondent

Bangladesh travelers can now get tickets in Dhaka to fly Air Mauritius for various international destinations.

Air Mauritius, the national flag carrier of Mauritius, has recently opened an office in Dhaka, says a press release.

Renaissance Aviation Services Ltd, a sister concern of MGH Group, was appointed General Sales Agent (GSA) of the airlines, manager of the aviation company, Zahid Hossain said in a statement.

There are non-stop flights three times a week from Mumbai, twice a week from Singapore, once a week from Kuala Lumpur and Dubai.

Bangladesh travelers can smoothly fly from any of its gateway points with the complete package arrangement of Air Mauritius Dhaka," said the release.

Dhaka office would arrange for tickets, visa, hotel accommodation and other necessary facilities, the press release added.

### Policeman killed in road accident

SUNAMGANJ, July 22: A police ASI of Sadar thana was killed in a road accident at Gabindapur on Sunamganj-Sylhet road this afternoon, reports UNB.

Moharak Hossain, 34, who was coming to his office by a motorcycle, died on the spot when a minibus from opposite direction hit him.

Police seized the minibus and arrested its driver, Haris Ali.

### Gopalganj bomb

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its construction so that none could put any harmful material near the rostrum or within a certain area.

However, in this case, the security was lacking, they said. Investigations are on to fix the responsibility, sources said.

Meanwhile, Army explosive experts are learnt to be working on analysing the composition of the cylinder shaped device.

The possible effect from its explosion can not be said without determining the type and composition of the device, the official said.

"The device has neither been exploded nor defused," an Army official said. Army engineers are trying to determine the chemical composition of the explosive contained in the drum made with cast iron. Normally, such a cast iron work is not done in foundries in the country, one source said.

Army explosive experts yesterday re-checked the meeting venue with metal detectors and sniffer dog squads.

Meanwhile police said that five special teams were investigating the 'plot to kill the Prime Minister'. One more person was arrested yesterday morning from a village under Kotlajpara thana for alleged involvement in planting the device, police said.

With this, the total number of arrested persons in this connection rose to four.

### Shibir activists

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CID police was assigned to investigate the sensational case.

Salahuddin was handed over to CID police in the afternoon. He will be interrogated tonight, CID police said.

CID team could not trace the driver of the seized microbus used in the Bahaddarhat incident yet. But CID police picked up brother-in-law of the driver to help arrest him.

Meanwhile, Dhaka CID police was asked to raid different places to arrest driver Babul Hossain.

### Killing of journalist Immediate arrest of killers demanded

The journalist community yesterday demanded immediate arrest of the killers of journalist Shamsur Rahman, reports BSS.

At a protest meeting held at the Jatiya Press Club, the speakers condemned the killing and called for exemplary punishment to the killers. They also expressed their anger over the delay in identifying and arresting the killers.

The speakers said the freedom of press, democracy and rule of law would be jeopardised if the killers were allowed to go unpunished.

The journalist leaders demanded of the government to arrest the killers by July 31, otherwise they would go for more agitation programmes. The meeting decided to give memoranda to the Prime Minister and Home Minister to press home their demand.

Presided over by BFUJ leader G M Yakub, the meeting also decided that the representatives of three unions will hold a meeting with the Bangladesh Sangbadpatri Parishad.

The meeting was addressed by BFUJ leaders Amanullah Kabir, Akhter Ahmed Khan, M A Aziz, DUJ leaders Altaf Mahmud, Abu Saleh, Abdul Jalil Bhuiyan, and eminent journalists K G Mostafa, Habibur Rahman Milon, Iqbal Sobhan Chowdhury, Borhan Ahmed, Zahirul Haque, Swapna Kumar Saha, Masud Nizam, Wahidur Rashid Murad and Fazlul Bari and Newspapers Employees' Federation leaders Afzar Uddin Khan and Matinur Rahman.

The BCL leaders also demanded immediate arrest and hanging of those involved in the incident.

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## Roundtable on port problems

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road, apart from the Biswa Road, from the port to Fouladpur for easy entry and departure of trucks to and from port.

It also suggested construction of a new Chittagong-Dhaka six-lane express way to facilitate transportation of containers by road and also establishment of a separate truck parking zone to remove congestion.

They also recommended implementation of the river-side ICD project at Narayanganj.

**Long term suggestions**

The long term suggestions include construction of New Mooring Terminal under a crash programme. This will facilitate six feeder vessels to anchor, discharge and load at a time through gantry cranes.

As an alternative, Mongla port should be developed along with all infrastructures including the proposed Padma Bridge.

**Officials hold port hostage**

The participants said Chittagong Port Authority does not have enough power and it is controlled by a group of officials.

Around 50 mid-level officials hold the Chittagong Port hostage. They extract huge illegal money and have been maintaining a lavish life style, the speakers said.

"These fifty officers are enough to destroy the sea port and kill the whole economy of the country," said Salahuddin Kader Chowdhury MP.

He suggested use of available berthing facilities at Chittagong dry dock to reduce congestion at Chittagong port.

The Chittagong dry dock can accommodate three large feeder vessels. The government should take the initiative to use it as an alternative port," he said.

Chowdhury, however, disagreed with the concept of deep sea port at the moment because, according to him, it would not be possible in Bangladesh within short time.

**Demand for port autonomy**

Chairman of Chittagong Port Authority G M Yakub, said that although the Port Authority is supposed to be autonomous, in reality it has to rely on the ministry for decisions, which delay port operation.

He said various development projects of the port progress slowly due to delayed government decision and bureaucracy. As a result, the port's cargo handling capacity is affected.

"Even for recruiting a single person, we have to get approval from the Establishment Ministry," he said.

C K Hyder of MCCI also supported the Chairman's demand for autonomy, saying this would make it more efficient.

However, the Shipping Secretary said autonomy would not solve the real problem if the overall situation does not improve.

Salahuddin Kader Chowdhury MP said accountability of port officials is a must to bring efficiency. He also spoke in favour of giving more executive powers to the Chittagong Port Authority.

He emphasised changing the mindset of people in the port. Although they are short of equipment, they would not allow any outsider to bring those, he said.

**Despite revenue surplus no infrastructure growth at port**

B K Chowdhury, Shipping Manager of James Finlay, presented a keynote paper on "Physical and Infrastructural Problems of the Chittagong Port".

He said arrival of raw materials for exports are affected due to berthing delay caused by vessels waiting at the anchorage.

"Lack of storage space in the container yard, lack of efficient handling equipment and insufficient number of equipment cause slow rate of discharge and loading, which in turn lead to prolonged berth occupancy of vessels," Chowdhury said.

He said congestion is caused as the port container terminal is used as storage yard, not for moving containers to outside depots or container yards.

He said there are inadequate container and cargo handling equipment and those available break down frequently due to lack of proper maintenance.

Chowdhury said that since independence the volume of trade increased three-fold but infrastructure facilities at the port in fact decreased in some cases.

Beside, the number of vessels calling at Chittagong port has also increased three times.

The CPA-operated berths came down to 13 in 1999 from 17 in 1971 while trade volume shot up by 300 per cent.

Speaking on the issue, C K Hyder of MCCI said that although the port authority had surplus funds, it could not procure required equipment, showing management inefficiency.

BGMEA member Farid Ahmed said wrong policy, politics and work stoppage are posing threats to the economy of the country.

**Port problems force garment exporters to lose to competitors**

In his welcome address Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) President Anisur Rahman Sinha said the port problems are costing the garments sector heavily.

"Export of garments depend on three factors - price, quality and timely shipment," he said. "Buyers are reluctant to buy

goods even at lesser price if those are not delivered in time, and as port problems delay shipment, we are compelled to send goods by air which is very expensive."

As a result, Bangladeshi apparels are losing to competitors, Sinha said.

He also mentioned that Kmart, the second biggest retail store in the USA and a leading buyer of Bangladeshi garments, has threatened to source their goods from other countries if the port problems are not addressed immediately.

The BGMEA President said the country's RMG sector is facing stiff competition because of slow port operations. He mentioned that Dubai and Jordan offered Bangladeshi RMG entrepreneurs to set up industries there with promises that containers would reach factories within eight hours of vessels' arrival at ports.

**Alternative port**

M Mokammel Huq, Executive Chairman of the Board of Investment, said that setting up of a deep-sea port could be a solution to the port congestion problem.

He suggested privatisation of port services phase by phase. "We can start privatisation with some handling equipment," he said bulk handling should also be separated.

M Morshed Khan MP also said that the existing facilities at the port should be expanded. He suggested that the Chittagong Steel Mills premises could be used for this purpose.

The Opposition lawmaker found contradiction among ruling party men regarding establishing a private port. "The Prime Minister is saying that there would be a private port. On the other hand Chittagong Mayor is saying there would not be any private port. So I do not understand who is powerful," he wondered.

**Depoliticise port**

Hafiz Ahmed Majumder MP suggested separating the working class from politics. "Until and unless we separate them from politics, nothing could be achieved," he said.

He observed that the political parties were using labour unions for their own purposes. "Trade unions are doing excellent in other countries, but it does not happen here," he said.

IC President Mahbubur Rahman said that the labour unions should not have any political affiliation. No political party should support any programme of trade union leaders, he added.

"If we can not address the problems in the existing port why should we have another port?" he posed the question. "If we have another port the problem will only shift there."

A K Azad, President of Bangladesh Chamber of Industries suggested privatisation of ports and said that the FBCCI President could be made chairman of the port authority.

Anisul Huq suggested that ports could be kept out of all political and social agenda because if those did not function properly the garment sector would be destroyed and the whole economy of the country would collapse.

Giving a detailed description of work stoppage at the port due to political turmoil, Huq said, "Almost 702 hours were lost due to national and local hartals, strikes and labour unrest at Chittagong port only during 1999."

"Export-import trade is badly affected by congestion created by socio-political factors in Chittagong port. Global shipping lines have repeatedly tried to notify the port and threatened for such frequent congestion."

He accused some pressure groups who were directly involved in trade union activities at Chittagong port.

"Local pressure groups are using the sea port for their own interest. Although the wage level is generally low in Bangladesh, some selfish and politically biased union leaders are making huge money by using dock workers and keeping the port hostage."

Anisul Huq warned that international shippers might identify Chittagong port as an "exclusion zone", which would produce terrible results.

"The country will further fall behind and the port problem will be the core problem in post MFA era if we fail to address it," he said.

Shamsul Alam, President of Bangladesh Jatiyatabadi Samik Dal, said most of the labour unions belong to the ruling party.

He protested that the opposition political parties were responsible for stalemate at the port. The labour union belonging to the opposition party never called hartal inside the port.

"We always try to keep the port functioning," he claimed. Even during hartal in the country, the port remained functioning," he added.

However, the CPA Chairman said any drastic change at the port is not possible at this moment.

He opined that there should be a moratorium on trade union activities there for two-three years.

**ADB waiting for reforms by government**