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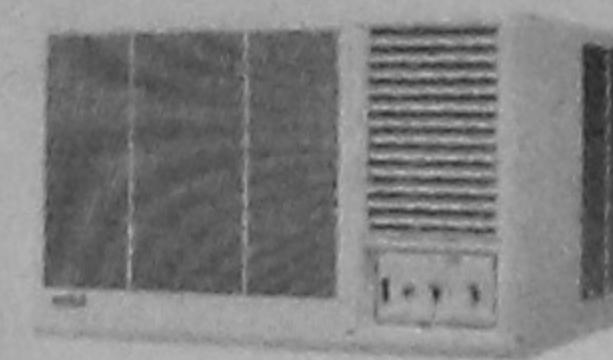
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Tagore's death anniversary observed

By Staff Correspondent

The 59th anniversary of death of Rabindranath Tagore was observed in the country yesterday through various programmes.

Different socio-cultural organisations and institutions took up programmes including discussions on the poet's life and works and cultural functions to mark the day.

Bangladesh Television and Bangladesh Betar aired special programmes on the occasion.

National dailies brought out special supplements on the day. Speakers at a discussion in the city yesterday recalled the contribution of Rabindranath Tagore to make Bengali language and literature known in the international arena.

The discussion was organised by the Shillapkala Academy. The speakers include



educationist Dr. Abdul Quyum, cultural personality Mustafa Monwar, artist Ataur Rahman, art critic Moinuddin Khaleel, vocalist Rezwana Chowdhury Bonyia and Director of the academy Azad Rahman.

A musical soiree followed the discussion.

The Bangla Academy and the National Museum also organised separate programmes to mark the day.

Abdudayy Music Association (AMA) will arrange a musical soiree today at 7:30 p.m. at the auditorium of Biswa Sahitya Kendra in the city.

No more political meeting at FBCCI

Star Report

In the wake of growing criticism over a former FBCCI (Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry) president's political meeting at the chamber's conference room, the executive committee of the chamber yesterday decided not to rent out its conference room to any political party.

However, to tone down the criticism, the committee in a meeting yesterday decided to allow Salauddin Kader Chowdhury, a BNP lawmaker, to hold a meeting at the FBCCI conference room.

The business community criticised FBCCI's decision as it allowed Yusuf Abdullah Harun, a former President of the chamber, to hold a political meeting at its conference room on Saturday to settle an internal feud of Murad Nagar Thana Awami League.

However, the FBCCI President Abdul Awal Minto, when contacted, said that they allowed Harun to hold the meeting as he is a former president of the chamber and not for any political reasons. He also said that the decision was not contrary to the constitution of the chamber and mentioned many organisations usually hold meetings at that venue.

"But from now on we will be very cautious while renting out the conference room to any organisation. Why should we keep getting into this sort of controversy," Minto said.

However, sources said that Harun was allowed to hold the meeting even without applying to the secretariat authority.

Talking to The Daily Star, Salauddin Kader Chowdhury said that he applied following press reports. "As a ruling party representative was allowed to hold a meeting, I decided to apply for renting the conference room."

He also said that allowing such political meeting at the FBCCI is unprecedented and does not personally like the idea of political party's holding such meeting in the FBCCI conference room.

Meanwhile, Jatiya Party leader Kazi Firoz Rashid also applied to the FBCCI for permission to hold a meeting of the Jatiya Aijib Federation at the end of this month. However, FBCCI President said they haven't received any application from Firoz Rashid till yesterday evening.

Defence argues for Farooq's acquittal

A defence counsel yesterday demanded condemned army officer Farooq Rahman be acquitted of the charge of involvement in the "so-called" conspiracy of killing Bangabandhu, saying that his complicity was not proved, reports UNB.

He also pointed to the fact that three others charged in the Bangabandhu Murder Case got exonerated.

Adv. Khan Salfur Rahman argued that if Taheruddin Thakur and to others could be acquitted of charge of conspiracy to kill Bangabandhu, then Col (dismissed) Farooq Rahman should also be relieved.

"Farooq Rahman should be acquitted of the charges on grounds that his position with the so-called conspiracy was less than that of Taheruddin Thakur and two others who were acquitted even though they

were found in places where conspiracies took place," he told a high court bench continuing his argument for a fifth day.

Taheruddin Thakur, Marafat Ali Shah, LD Abul Hossain Mridha and Wahab Joardar had been acquitted by the lower court while 15 former army officers were found guilty and sentenced to death for their involvement in the assassination of Bangabandhu on August 15, 1975.

Submitting his arguments the defence lawyer said Col Farooq was not found in any of the places where conspiracy to kill Bangabandhu was hatched.

Quoting a prosecution witness that Farooq Rahman went to Khandaker Mushtaq Ahmed's village home at Daudkandi, a place where the conspiracy was said to have taken

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Free dengue test in hospitals at 6 div Hqs

The government has made arrangements to conduct laboratory test to diagnose dengue fever in different hospitals at six divisional headquarters across the country free of cost, reports BSS.

This was decided at a high level meeting of the Ministry of Health yesterday with Health and Family Welfare Minister Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim in the chair.

The hospitals are Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU), Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH), Dhaka Shishu Hospital, Suhrawardy Hospital, National Medical College Hospital, Sarkari Karmachari Hospital, Mahanagar Hospital, Holy Family Hospital, IEDCR, BIRDEM hospital, Mitford hospital, Chittagong Medical College Hospital and Sadar Hospital and different Medical College Hospitals and Sadar Hospitals in six divisional headquarters across the country.

The hospitals will remain open round-the-clock to help

patients undergo laboratory test, ministry sources said.

The meeting discussed the dengue fever situation and asked the departments concerned to take adequate measures to contain the disease.

Rally at Ctg to create mass awareness

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Aug 6: The task force formed by the Chittagong City Corporation (CCC) today organised a rally in the city to create mass awareness about dengue fever.

Prof Sultan U Alam, head of community medicine at Chittagong Medical College Hospital (CMCH) is the convenor of a 33-member task force. A research cell was opened today at the Department of Community Medicine of CMCH to collect and compile reports on dengue virus, CMCH sources said.



People try to escape the blinding smoke screen after police fired teargas canisters to disperse an opposition rally held at Naya Paltan in the city yesterday. — Star photo

Deluge in N-dists takes turn for the worse

By Staff Correspondent

Flood has claimed at least 12 lives in the northern districts of Kurigram, Sirajganj and Lalmonirhat until yesterday. Besides, two people have been missing since flood water broke through two embankments in Jamalpur district yesterday.

The flood situation is likely to deteriorate in some parts of the country due to continuous rise of some major rivers.

Seven people drowned in flood water in Kurigram, four in Sirajganj and one in Lalmonirhat district.

The Flood Forecasting and Warning Centre (FFWC) said yesterday that the country's major rivers are flowing above the danger level at nine points and may rise to five more points by today.

Asked about the recent flood in the Indian states of Assam and Bihar, a FFWC official said the flood water from those Indian states will ultimately run down to the Bay of Bengal through Jamuna and Brahmaputra.

putra rivers.

The Padma was flowing 38 cm and 49 cm above the danger level at Goalanda and Bhagyakul points, respectively. The Surma of Meghna basin was flowing 38 cm and 27 cm above the danger level at Kanaighat and Sunanganj points, respectively. The water level of Jamuna is likely to rise at Sirajganj and Aricha today.

More low-lying areas in and around Dhaka and Narayanganj are likely to be submerged, the FFWC said, adding that the Turag is likely to rise at Mirpur and Tongi points.

Our Jamalpur correspondent reported that the low-lying areas of Sarishabari, Madarganj, Islampur and Jamalganj upazilas went down under flood water due to heavy rainfall and continuous rise of water levels in Jamuna and Brahmaputra.

The flood water broke through Harindhara and Akondopara embankments of the district, our correspondent

added.

Meanwhile, our Rangpur correspondent reported that flood has so far claimed seven lives in Kurigram district, including one yesterday, and one in Lalmonirhat district.

Brahmaputra, Dharla and Teesta and their tributaries were flowing well above the danger level, inundating low-lying areas along the rivers.

At least 60,000 people in Kurigram, Lalmonirhat, Gaibandha and Rangpur districts are marooned due to heavy downpour and onrush of flood waters from across Indian upper stream zones, our correspondent added.

Over four lakh people of Manikganj, Pabna, Sirajganj and Rajbari districts have been marooned due to worsening flood situation.

Ferrying of transport on Aricha-Nagarbari-Daulatdia routes was disrupted, as seven out of eleven pontoons were flooded with swelling waters of Padma.

Breach in dam 8 children swept away in Ctg

CHITTAGONG, Aug 6: Eight children while cutting grass at the foot of cross dam at village Boilgaon under Sadhanpur union were swept away when sudden water surge made a breach in the dam today, reports UNB.

Seven of them were rescued from Anwara, 2 km down stream of the Sangkhia river, in a critical condition.

Baby Akhtar, 8-year-old primary school student, was still missing, residents and police said.

About 20 yards of the cross

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Newspapermen observe demand day today

Journalists, general employees and press workers of all newspaper and news agencies will observe 'Demand Day' today across the country demanding arrest of the killers of journalist Shamsur Rahman and security of the newspapermen, reports BSS.

According to a BFUJ press release yesterday, a rally will be held at the Jatiya Press Club at 11 am. Later, a silent procession will be brought out.

Editors, journalists, press workers and employees will join the rally and the procession.

Windies in command

By Sports Reporter

A magnificent 112 from champion batsman Brian Lara and healthy contributions from his teammates put the West Indies in a formidable position at close of play on the fourth day of the third Test against England at Old Trafford yesterday.

At stumps, the tourists were 381 for six, a lead of 235 runs with wicket-keeper Ridley Jacobs batting on 25 not out and Franklin Rose 8 not out.

August	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
Aug 7		6:38 pm
Aug 8	5:31 am	

Prayer Timings

August 7		
Fajr	4:25	4:55
Zohr	1:00	1:30
Asr	5:00	5:15
Maghrib	6:55	6:58
Esha	8:15	8:45

Source: Islamic Foundation

BCL-Shibir gunfight at IU: 20 injured

From IU Correspondent

KUSHTIA, Aug 6: At least 22 people including two policemen were injured in a gunfight between the activists of BCL and Sirajul Islam and constable Shahid were injured.

According to campus sources, the trouble began at around 11:45 am when both the student bodies brought out processions and chanted provocative slogans against each other.

At one stage, gunshots were fired from the BCL procession that left a Shibir activist injured. Shibir retaliated by firing back.

Witnesses said about 100 shots were fired and crackers exploded during the clash that lasted an hour.

Police and BDR jointly rushed to the spot and fired teargas shells to disperse the clashing groups. They also charged batons, leaving at least

14 activists of both the groups injured.

Police sources said during the clash OC of Kushtia thana Sirajul Islam and constable Shahid were injured.

The bullet-hit Shibir activists, identified as Hossain, Nurul Amin, Mohammad Ullah, Abdul Wahab, Rafiqul Islam Rana and Masum, were rushed to Jhenidah Hospital while BCL activists Rofel and Mithu to Islamic University Hospital.

The six other injured BCL activists — Mamun Joarder, Bipul, Muhith, Minaj, Shishir and Khokan — were admitted to Kushtia General Hospital.

The university authorities suspended all classes and examination till August 10. Additional BDR and police forces were deployed on the campus to avert further clash.

Coal importers gripe over PSI

From Iqbal Siddiquee

SYLHET, Aug 6: Import of coal and other perishable items from the Indian state of Meghalaya through the four land custom stations in Sylhet has remained suspended for two months.

The deadlock began after importers stopped opening LCs following introduction of the Pre-shipment Inspection (PSI) system in February this year.

A high-level meeting of the NBR is scheduled for tomorrow to discuss the situation as well as to ascertain how to resolve the crisis.

Last month, a 10-man team headed by the first secretary of NBR visited coal quarries and custom stations, and met the exporters in Meghalaya. The team included officials from FBCCI, Sylhet and Sunamganj Chambers, Sylhet Coal Importers Association etc.

Given the prevailing situation, the team stated in its report, it was not possible to enforce the PSI at the moment until and unless minimum infrastructure facilities were ensured in the Land Custom Stations located in Sylhet-Meghalaya border areas. The PSI should not be enforced in case of coal import, considering the geographical backwardness of the region, the team also suggested. However, it recommended a temporary arrangement, a pre-export inspection with minimum formalities.

While talking to The Daily Star a number of importers alleged that the PSI was imposed without ensuring some basic infrastructure and logistic arrangements and without considering the geographical aspects of Sylhet and Meghalaya.

About eight lakh metric tonnes of coal are imported from India every year. Of this, about 6.5 lakh metric tonnes are imported through the Tamabil and Sheola land customs stations of Sylhet and Barchhara Land Customs Station in Sunamganj.

A number of importers inform that it cost about 40 US dollars to import one tonne coal from India by truck whereas it went up to 56 US dollars for importing from Indonesia on ship. The Meghalaya coal imported through Sylhet meets about 90 per cent demand of the country's brick-firms.

The government earned a total revenue of Taka 45 crore last year through the Tamabil, Sheola and Barchhara land custom stations for coal imports. The figure is increasing every year.

The government had authorised three foreign companies for imports to Bangladesh. Of these, one has been entrusted with the task of issuing PSI certificates for imports from India.

Although the PSI is internationally accepted, its effectiveness has not been considered in the case of land trade, especially in the case of small-scale trades involving 5000 US dollars, said an importer.

Coal is imported from the hilly region of Meghalaya. It is loaded there. Most of the times, officials of the PSI company cannot visit the area from where the coal consignment is loaded due to security and other reasons. It takes about one and a half to two months to complete the formalities from loading to unloading.



A villager pushes his family through a waterlogged area in a small hand-made boat in Shantipur in Nadia district, some 100 kilometres north of Calcutta on Saturday. Over one million people have been homeless by flash floods caused by monsoon downpour last week which also damaged rice and jute crops. — AFP photo

Floods in Assam, Bihar claim more lives

Death toll rises to 94

GUWAHATI, India, Aug 6: Floods have killed at least 94 people and left about 2.5 million homeless in the Indian states of Assam and Bihar, isolating the country's sprawling northeast, officials said Sunday, reports AFP.

Dilip Sakia of Assam's ruling Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) party told AFP there were reports that waterborne diseases had claimed dozens of lives over the past few days.

"Government reports indicate that at least 40 people have died directly in the floods, while 30 others have died in the outbreak of water-borne diseases. The situation is indeed very grim," said Sakia.

Assam Flood Control Minister Pramod Gogoi said the swollen Brahmaputra river and its tributaries had severed road and rail links between seven northeastern states and the rest of the country.

"Floods have submerged large sections of the national highway and railway tracks at various places, snapping surface communication between the northeast and the rest of India," Gogoi said.

"This is hampering relief work."

The seven northeastern

states are linked to the rest of India through Assam.

According to Gogoi, the national highway in the western districts of Kokrajhar and Nalbari in Assam was completely under water.

Almost 1.5 million people in Assam have been left homeless, he said.

In the eastern state of Bihar, two more flood-related deaths were reported Saturday, taking the toll there to 24, a government spokesman said.

Nearly one million people, spread over hundreds of villages in Bihar's 16 districts, were affected by the floods, which have damaged crops and public property worth several million rupees, he said.

The air force and army were carrying out rescue operations in the state with helicopters and motor boats, he added.

An Indian Railways spokesman in Assam, meanwhile, said repair work had started so that train links could be restored.

"But it will take over a week for trains to start plying as there has been extensive damage to railway tracks. Some of the tracks have been washed away," he said.

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Population may reach 177.3m in 25 yrs

When the world's population hits nine billion by middle of the new century at the current growth rate, Bangladesh is likely to be crammed with 210.8 million people, reports UNB.

The country's population is expected to reach 177.3 million in the next 25 years, according to a data sheet of US-based Population Reference Bureau received here yesterday.

Currently ranked eighth, Bangladesh will remain pegged to the same status when some of the countries would have made it higher in the leader.

The just-released 2000 World Population Data Sheet containing the demographic data worldwide shows the world is expected to have a population of nine billion by 2050. World population hit 6-billion mark last October.

And the PRB, in its press release, made grim predictions that the current period of rapid population growth would continue for at least another 50

years. The PRB annual report card on world demographic trends also showed that the populace of Bangladesh has doubled within 38 years and the percentage of natural increase in 1.8.

Authors to the data sheet, Carl Haub and Diana Corneliussen, said: "We are well on our way toward a seven billion in only 12 and 13 years, the shortest period ever."

"But this scenario assumes increasing use of voluntary family planning in developing countries even in areas where it is virtually unknown."

"At stake are the successes of efforts to protect the environment, combat growing poverty, and solve water and food supply problems," they added.

The less developed countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America now account for 80 per cent of world population but represent 99 per cent of global growth.

World population in 2000 to total 6,067,267,000 (6.1 billion) with 1,184,155,000 living in the more developed countries (Europe, North America, Australia, Canada and New Zealand) and 4,883,112,000 in the less developed countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America.

"The highest growth rates are found in the poorest countries, despite stated policies to reduce population growth and despite high levels of HIV/AIDS, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa," the release said.

Worldwide, women currently average about 2.9 births in their lifetime. This ranges from a low of only 1.2 in Eastern Europe to 5.8 in Sub-Saharan Africa.

The population of less developed countries (excluding China) now numbers 3,619,576,000. The bulk of world population growth is concentrated in these countries (70 million annually).

In these countries, women

average 3.7 children each, a rate well above the two children required for populations to only "replace" themselves and reach a condition of zero growth.

The data show that India became world's second "population billionaire" this year and is expected to pass China by mid-century.

Globally, about 1 per cent of the population is estimated to be infected with HIV/AIDS. The highest proportion is in Sub-Saharan Africa (7.1 per cent) and the lowest in Europe (0.2 per cent) and Oceania (0.1 per cent).

Sub-Saharan Africa, with a population of 657 million and a total fertility rate of 5.8 children per woman, has by far the fastest-growing population of any major region in the world. The HIV/AIDS epidemic notwithstanding the region is projected to have 1.5 billion inhabitants by 2050.

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