



Tagore's 140th anniversary of birth today

BSS, Dhaka

The nation will celebrate today the 140th birth anniversary of Nobel laureate poet Rabindranath Tagore in a befitting manner.

The government as well as different socio-cultural bodies have chalked out elaborate programmes to celebrate "Pachishey Baishakh", the birthday of Bishwakabi Rabindranath Tagore who is the composer of the country's national anthem.

Besides, national dailies will publish supplements while Bangladesh Betar, Bangladesh Television and other private channels will air special programmes highlighting the significance of the day.

As part of the national level programmes, the ministry of cultural affairs will organise two-day discussion and cultural function depicting the life and works of the great poet, whose songs inspired the

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Budget session starts June 6

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Jatiya Sangsad goes into its budget session on June 6. According to an official announcement, President Shahabuddin Ahmad yesterday called the 23rd and probably the last session of the seventh parliament. The last session of the JS ended on April 12.

The upcoming session, scheduled for a 10:00am start on June 6, is expected to pass two separate bills seeking autonomy for state-run Bangladesh Television and Bangladesh Betar.

Besides, another bill to provide government funding for the Institute of Child and Mother Care will also be placed in the House, parliament sources said. Donor organisations have so far funded the institute.

The fate of a long-pending bill seeking extension of tenure of the reserved seats for women in the JS will also be decided in the next session. The treasury bench introduced the bill in the House a year ago but failed to pass it due to lack of support from the main opposition BNP.

Should the bill fall through, the eighth JS will have no reserved seats for women, who constitute half of the country's population.

The crucial issue of women's quota is likely to influence electioneering for the upcoming polls, as the two leading parties have already

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| | Sun Rises | Sun Sets |
|-------|-----------|----------|
| May 8 | | 6.31 pm |
| May 9 | 5-19 am | |

| Prayer Timings | | |
|----------------|-------|--------|
| May 8 | | |
| | Azan | Jamaat |
| Fazr | 4-30 | 5-00 |
| Zohr | 12-45 | 1-15 |
| Asr | 4-45 | 5-00 |
| Maghrib | 6-30 | 6-35 |
| Esha | 8-00 | 8-30 |

Source: Islamic Foundation

Draft laws for BTV, Betar autonomy okayed

Key provisions mark departure from commission's recommendations

REAZ AHMAD

The cabinet yesterday approved two draft laws seeking autonomy to Bangladesh Betar and Bangladesh Television. Autonomy to the state-run electronic media was one of Awami League's major electoral pledges in 1996.

However, some key provisions in the draft laws do not conform to the recommendations set forth in late 1997 by the Radio-TV Autonomy Commission, a body constituted by the government.

Some members of the commission regretted that the proposed laws not only came at the fag end of the government's tenure but also marked a significant departure from the commission's recommendations.

The two draft laws approved yesterday - Bangladesh Betar Authority Act, 2001 and Bangladesh Television Authority Act, 2001 - contemplate formation of two separate authorities for the two institutions. Each authority would have a chairman with some members to assist in running the affairs of the two electronic media.

The Radio-TV Autonomy Commission, on the contrary, recommended a National Broadcasting Commission to run Bangladesh Television and Bangladesh Betar.

The provision that the government would recruit the chairmen and members of both the Bangladesh Betar Authority and the Bangladesh Television Authority is also not in line with the autonomy commission's recommendations.

The commission, headed by former civil servant M Asafuddoula, suggested that the President appoint one chairman and six members of the National Broadcasting Commission.

"It would have been better, if the President had the appointing authority, instead of the government, as we suggested," said Ramendu Majumdar, a member of the autonomy commission.

Majumdar also opposed formation of two separate authorities instead of one broadcasting commission. "The broadcasting commission that we recommended for would have been enough to run the two media."

He regretted that the government had not deemed it necessary to seek views from the autonomy commission while drafting the laws. "We were told that we would be consulted when the bills would be sent to the parliamentary standing committee for scrutiny."

Asaduzzaman Noor, another member of the commission, echoed Majumdar's sentiments. However, he said that there must be some logic behind the government's decision to have two separate bodies to run Bangladesh Betar and Bangladesh Television.

Noor avoided a direct comment on the issue of appointment of chairmen and members to the Betar and BTV authorities, but said that it would better ensure freedom of the electronic media if government withdrew its control.

Both Majumdar and Noor, however, lauded the government's move, belated it was though, and hoped that the country's electronic media, independent of government control, would play a key role.

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Mamun surrenders to court

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Chittagong

Alleged terrorist Mamunur Rashid Mamun surrendered to the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's court here yesterday morning.

A custody warrant was issued immediately after his surrender at 10 am and he was taken to jail under police escort, police and court sources.

No prayer for his remand was made as the investigation officer concerned was not available at the time of surrender, police said.

The sources said Mamun was accompanied by an aide of the Mayor of Chittagong City Corporation (CCC) and another official when he arrived at the court building. His surrender was reportedly organised by the Mayor, they said.

Mamun, CCC Ward Commissioner and Jubo League leader, was sued under the Public Safety Act (PSA) for assaulting two journalists of daily Purbakone here on April 18. He was hiding since then.



Mamunur Rashid

He is also wanted in connection with 20 other criminal cases, police said.

On the night of April 18, Mamun accompanied by his cadres, stormed into the daily Purbakone office and assaulted two senior journalists -- Iskander Ali Chowdhury and Jalal Ahmed.

The sources said a top leader of the ruling party in the city was behind Mamun's surrender.

The leader had reportedly requested for relaxing the police hunt to facilitate his surrender, they claimed.

On Saturday last, Mamun contacted police officials from his hideout in the city and said he wanted to surrender. The police officials asked him to surrender on Sunday last. He came to his hideout in the city from Fatikchhari, where he was under the protection of another terrorist gang.

Police earlier declared an award of Tk one lakh for information leading to his arrest.

Police also put pressure on his family for his surrender and arrested his two younger brothers along with two deer and lodged a case against them under the Wildlife Preservation Act. Mamun's father also went into hiding.

Earlier, police seized Mamun's movable property including a luxury car.

Despite repeated attempts, the Mayor of CCC could not be contacted yesterday for comments regarding Mamun's surrender.

How the 'drama' was staged

UNB, Chittagong

Mamunur Rashid Mamun came out of his hideout and went to the residence of City Mayor Mohiuddin Chowdhury at Sholashahar at 8 am yesterday.

During his 20-minute stay there the Mayor asked Mamun to surrender to the court. After exchange of hot words with the Mayor, he finally agreed to surrender.

The Mayor then asked Abu Naser, Magistrate of the Chittagong City Corporation, to come to his residence 'for preparation' of Mamun's surrender.

The Magistrate, along with Iftekhar Salmul Chowdhury, Additional Public Prosecutor attached to the Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court, rushed to Mayor's residence.

At 9 am Mamun accompanied by the Magistrate, PP, APS of Mayor, Mamun's uncle Kabir Ahmed drove to the court building in a police van. At the Bar Association Office, they

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Mamun's surrender not enough, people feel

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Chittagong

Purbakone on April 18, Mamun move freely although there were 18 cases against him.

Of these cases, two were filed in 1985, three in '87, seven in '88, one in '89, four in '91, one in '92, police sources said.

Mamun turned into a millionaire from a slum boy. He had started life as a petty mugger at Zahir Hossain Road in front of his slum at Nasirabad. At school, he had stabbed one of his teachers for not promoting him.

After entering the local MES College, he got a boost in terrorism under the shelter of Ayub Ali who was a central leader of Bangladesh Chhatra League, student front of Awami League.

They also complained of "inaction" of the administration and police in the past in containing terrorist activities of the gang members.

Card-based politics and shelter by political godfathers helped Mamun emerge as a terrorist and maintain his Bahini, they said.

Sources concerned said, till the assault on two journalists of



A file photo of Tipu Sultan, Feni correspondent of UNB, who will be flown to Bangkok today for further treatment.

Tipu to be flown to Bangkok today for treatment

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Journalist Tipu Sultan will be flown to Bangkok today for treatment at the Bamrungrad Hospital.

Tipu will be accompanied by a relative, who would stay with him during the duration of the treatment. The Bamrungrad Hospital authorities have offered Tipu a three-night stay at the hospital and an initial medical assessment by a team of specialists free of cost as a gesture of goodwill.

The cost of treatment would come from the Daily Star-Prithom Alo fund, which was launched on April 8. People from all walks of life, both home and abroad, came forward to contribute to the fund for saving the UNB correspondent from becoming handicapped.

Ruling Awami League MP in Feni Zainal Hazari and his henchmen picked up Tipu Sultan in the evening of January 25, savagely beat him up and left him for dead.

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ICDDR,B gets first Gates Award

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The ICDDR,B has been selected for the first Gates Award for Global Health for its major and lasting contribution in the field of health.

This was disclosed at a press conference at the ICDDR,B yesterday.

The one million dollar award will be presented in Washington on May 31 during the Global Health Council's annual conference on "Healthy Women, Healthy World: Challenges for the Future". UN Secretary General Kofi Annan will be the key note speaker at the programme, ICDDR,B officials said.

Over 100 organisations across the world, including Medicine Sans Frontier (MSF) which got the Nobel Prize in medicine last year, was nominated for the award for 2001 and ICDDR,B was finally selected for it, they mentioned.

"We were deeply honoured when we learned that our centre had been selected as its (award) first recipient", Director of ICDDR,B David Sack said at the press conference.

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More rain forecast

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

Heavy to medium rainfall was reported from almost all parts of the country including the capital yesterday.

The weather will remain foul with more rain in most parts of the country today and tomorrow, with the exception of some areas of Khulna division, the Department of Meteorology said yesterday.

The Met Office also warned of further increase in rainfall. The weather will improve gradually from Thursday.

In Dhaka city, rains coupled with high winds with a gust reaching up to 79 km per hour were recorded at the Zia International Airport control tower at 3 pm.

In the capital, the rains burst early afternoon and continued until

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Businessman, four others murdered in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Five people including a businessman were murdered in the city yesterday.

Motijheel police recovered the body of Rafiqul Islam, 50, managing director of the Asia Pacific Medical Supply Limited, from his fourth floor office at 82 Motijheel C/A.