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Announcement



The deteriorating drug situation in our country has encouraged rehabilitation centres to try alleviating the problem. This week's cover story of The Star Weekend Magazine looks at the drug addiction scenario and some rehab centres in Dhaka.

Speaker asks minister to give statement on gas export

BSS, Dhaka

Treasury bench member Manirul Haq Chowdhury yesterday demanded that all agreements and deeds regarding the export of gas signed by the past Awami League government should be placed before the House for discussion and review.

Rising on a point of order, Chowdhury referred to the Article 145 of the constitution requiring all international treaties to be laid before the House, and said parliament has the right to know about the reported export of gas.

Chowdhury read out a report from Daunik Ittefaq regarding export of gas through pipeline and said though the state minister for energy and mineral resources clearly stated that no decision on the export of gas has been taken so far, certain quarters have been trying to dub the present BNP government as an agent of India.

Speaker Barrister Jamiruddin Sircar asked the minister concerned to give a statement in this respect in the House later.

Prime minister's question-answer session Wednesday

UNB, Dhaka

The Prime Minister's question-answer session in parliament has been rescheduled on Wednesday instead of Tuesday.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia will now reply the questions from parliament members on every Wednesday for 30 minutes, her Parliament Affairs Advisor Saiauddin Qader Chowdhury told UNB yesterday.

But it is not clear whether the prime minister will get any chance of answering questions during the current session, which will be prolonged on Nov 15.

There will be no sitting today while the next Wednesday falls on Nov 14 when parliament may remain busy with the election of a new president.

The PM's question time was introduced in the 7th parliament by the Awami League government. Former prime minister Sheikh Hasina used to reply the questions from members of parliament on every Tuesday.

'Gram Sarkar' to be reintroduced, JS told

BSS, Dhaka

LGRD and Cooperative Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan yesterday told the Jatiya Sangsad that the government would reintroduce "Gram Sarkar" as the lowest tier of administration at village level.

"The government has plan to reintroduce 'Gram Sarkar' to establish local administration at the grassroots and create competent leadership at village level," he said while replying to a question by BNP lawmaker Shahjahan Chowdhury (Cox's Bazar).

The minister, however, added that the initiative would require a thorough examination of the constitution and law.

UZ Parishad polls schedule to be announced Dec 31

Staggered election over 10 days: EC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The schedule for Upazila Parishad elections would be announced on December 31 and the elections held in a staggered manner over a 10-day period.

The Election Commission (EC) took the decision at a meeting yesterday.

The meeting chaired by Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) MA Syed reviewed preparations for Upazila Parishad elections and asked the authorities concerned to complete delimitation and fixation of women's seats by next month.

Besides, the EC also discussed long overdue election of city corporations and municipalities in the country. It was informed that due to legal complexities, election of some city corporations and municipalities could not be held.

It decided that Local Government Division would

take measures to resolve the legal complexities and complete administrative and preparatory works so that polls could be held soon.

The meeting was attended by the three Election Commissioners Saifur Rahman, MM Munsef Ali and AK Mohammad Ali, Secretary of the EC Secretariat M Saiful Islam, Secretary of the Local Government Division Badir Rahman and other senior officials.

In the past, the EC enjoyed the authority to announce the schedule for Upazila Parishad elections. Prior to handing over power to the caretaker government, the immediate past Awami League government had the Upazila Act amended, empowering the LGRD Ministry to announce the schedule.

The EC has been trying to revive its authority ever since. It has already sent a letter to the LGRD Ministry seeking fresh amendment to the relevant law.

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Awami League President Sheikh Hasina comforts some elderly women, who were subjected to harassment in post-election violence, minutes before addressing a meeting at Kotlipara Ramshil Union College playground yesterday.

Retaliate attacks by BNP-Jamaat: Hasina

UNB, Kotlipara

Leader of the Opposition and Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina yesterday called for resistance to and retaliation against "any further attacks by BNP-Jamaat coalition."

"No more wailing and woes, build up resistance and retaliate if any further attack comes from terrorists of BNP-Jamaat," she told a public rally attended mostly by post-election victims of minority communities at Ramshil College ground.

Hasina also asked the people to prepare lists of terrorists and those who give them shelter in order to give them a befitting reply.

"If the alliance leader (Khaleda) thought that she would be able to eliminate Awami League by holding hands of Jamaat she would make a mistake... The Zia and the Ershad regimes tried in the past but failed," she said.

Hasina said President General Zia who grabbed power by staging the 7th November sepy revolution killed hundreds of army officers, jawans and Awami League workers. Even he did not spare Col (rd) Taher who saved his life, she said.

"Zia wanted to eliminate Awami League and his successor General Ershad followed suit, but they failed in their missions," she told the meeting.

Alleging that the minorities faced rape, torture, killing and looting and

flled their homes in Gournadi and Agoilhara of Barisal district to take shelter at Ramshil after the election, Hasina said the same situation prevailed in all villages and unions where people voted for Awami League.

"Their only offence was that they voted for boat, voted for Awami League," she said adding that Awami League would remain with the people and fight for restoration of their rights.

The former prime minister urged the law enforcers to ensure the security of the common people and not to protect the terrorists since their salary comes from taxpayers' money.

"I will tour across the country and build up resistance. The repressors would not be spared," she said. "This day of darkness would not last for ever, we know the repressors and they must be punished by the people."

Referring to the October 1 election, Hasina reassured that had the 4-party alliance won the polls genuinely, they would not have taken recourse to vengeance, rather they would have celebrated the victory.

"The alliance resorted to torture for protecting the rigged election results," she said accusing the chief advisor, the chief election commissioner and the president of hatching the conspiracy for victory of the 4-

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BNP MP accuses Manju of 'attempts on life'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Ruling party lawmaker Nurul Islam Moni has accused former communications minister Anwar Hossain Manju, now the lone MP from his faction of Jatiya Party (JP), of continued attempts on his life.

Moni was elected from Barguna-2 constituency where Maju was also a contestant and secured third position in the recent general election.

The Treasury Bench legislator told the House yesterday that the JP leader issued threats on his life and hired goons to kill him since long before the October 1 election.

During election campaigns, the JP leader had threatened that the four-party alliance candidate would not be found on the polling day and he would be ousted from the constituency, Moni said. "Now I have come to know that Manju engaged some culprits to be on my trail since then and take away my life," he added.

He informed the House that a group of armed elements attacked his car on the night of November 4 at Gulshan in the city. He believes the attack was made by goons hired by the JP leader because he (Manju) had announced at several election meetings in Barguna that they "would go for not only votes but also

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Holiday on Friday FBCCI urges govt to reconsider decision

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI) has requested the government to reconsider its decision assigning Friday as weekly holiday and a half working day on Thursday, saying that it would present a worse scenario as far as country's links with the outside world was concerned.

Expressing its frustration over the government decision, the FBCCI in a statement yesterday said the government decision for weekly holiday on Friday and a half day working day on Thursday would compound the woes of the country's businesses, especially the export sector.

So far with weekly holidays on Friday and Saturday, the country's business community had been cut off for three days from the rest of the business world, FBCCI said. "But the new decision will compel the country to sever its links with the rest of the world for three and a half days," said the FBCCI statement, signed by its acting secretary general Abdus Salam Bhuiyan.

Seventh PW in Jail Killing Case cross-examined

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Mohammad Abdur Rouf, the 7th prosecution witness in the Jail Killing Case, was cross-examined yesterday in the Special Court adjacent to the Dhaka Central Jail.

Judge Ahmed Jamil Mostafa adjourned the hearing till November 12. Rouf will be cross-examined again on that day.

Four national leaders, Syed Nazrul Islam, Tajuddin Ahmed, Captain Mansur Ali and AHM Qamruzzaman, were murdered in the Dhaka Central Jail on November 3, 1975.

During the three and a half-hour cross-examination, Rouf said he was Deputy Jailer at the Dhaka Central Jail from 1973 to 1976.

The witness told the court that on the night of November 3, 1975 one of the guards of the Central Jail woke him (Rouf) up and told him to go to the Inspector General's office room.

As per a directive from higher authority, Rouf along with others went to the spot where he saw four people in plain clothes.

After a while, he heard sound of gunshots and left the room in fear, Rouf told the court.

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Security guard at former minister's house shot dead

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A security guard at the residence of former communication minister Anwar Hossain Monju was gunned down allegedly by a fellow security guard following a dispute over their duty roster in the early hours yesterday at Dhanmondi residential area.

Halim Mollah, one of the eight guards working at the former minister's residence shot and killed Afsar Uddin, 22, who hailed from Nabnagar in Baramnabaria, police said.

All eight guards stationed at the house are from Business of Private

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Korea Week

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Samulnori, Taekwondo and Speech Contest

Organised by Embassy of the Republic of Korea and co-sponsored by the Ministry of Information and The Daily Star the Samulnori Show, Taekwondo Exhibition Game and Korean Speech Contest will be held at the Osmani Memorial Hall tomorrow at 15:00.

Food Festival
Mouth-watering festival of Korean Foods opens on November 9 at the Ambassador's residence of the Republic of Korea.

Film Festival
Korean Film Festival is being held in the city at the BRAC Centre Inn Auditorium at 75 Mohakhali. Today's screening schedule is as follows: The day a pig fell into a wall (Melodrama) at 11:00; Stairways of Heaven (Melodrama) at 13:40; Oseam Hermitage (Religious drama) at 16:10 and The day a pig fell

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Wife of the South Korean Ambassador to Bangladesh (R) visits a stall at the Korean Bazar, organised at the envoy's residence in the city as part of the ongoing Korea Week.



Prime Minister Khaleda Zia receives a crest from Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry (DCCI) President Benazir Ahmed during a courtesy meeting with the chamber body at her office yesterday.

Top BNP leaders unhappy over some decisions

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Top-ranking BNP leaders and ministers are unhappy about some vital decisions, including the latest changes in the administration and fresh appointments, taken without any consultation with them.

A highly placed source in the BNP yesterday told The Daily Star that a number of influential ministers, including M Saifur Rahman, Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan and Barrister Aminul Haq were not informed beforehand about the changes of secretaries to their respective ministries.

He said even President Shahabuddin Ahmed was kept in the dark about the fact that his secretary was going to be changed. The source also said the ministers felt ignored and many of them were very critical of the changes in the administration. He observed that a section of bureaucrats, who had established their dominance in 1991 that made the administration hostile towards the BNP government, are again very active and pulling strings from behind.

More than one senior minister said that they did not have the slightest idea about changes of their secretaries. They said the decisions made at midnight keeping the senior party leaders in the dark may create conflict and misunderstandings in the party.

"I came to know through press reports that the secretary of my ministry has been changed. It is necessary to bring changes to the

administration for smooth functioning of the government, but it is wise to consult the ministers concerned before making changes at the top level," said a senior cabinet minister.

Sources said some senior ministers have already taken up the issue with the prime minister.

There is also resentment over the re-scheduling of the weekly holiday and office timing. They said most ministers at Monday's cabinet meeting favoured Sunday as the weekly holiday, but their views were ignored.

Senior party leaders and a good number of senior cabinet members have also expressed their dissatisfaction over some appointments. Many of them observed that certain quarters, within the party and in the bureaucracy, are making the changes and appointments to taint the government's image.

A senior BNP leader said although the party is committed to appointing competent persons in vital posts, in reality, however, incompetent people are gradually filling the positions.

Party leaders are also annoyed at the activities of some cabinet ministers, as they are allegedly patronising officials who had openly supported the previous Awami League government.

Complaints have been lodged with the prime minister and other top leaders against these ministers and their immediate removal demanded.

Sexual abuse of children S Asian strategy for concerted action adopted

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The three-day South Asian Consultation for the 2nd World Congress Against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children ended in the city yesterday with the adoption of a South Asian Strategy to forge a collaborative and concerted action to clamp down on the scourge of commercial sexual exploitation and abuse of children.

The strategy will subsequently be translated into the National Plan of Action (NPA) by each government with the aim of eliminating child prostitution, trafficking of girls and boys for sexual purposes, sex tourism and child pornography, which are the prevalent forms of child abuse in South Asian countries. The country actions will be guided by principles of Convention on the Rights of the Child which has been ratified by every country in the region.

The consultation called upon the participant countries to set up targets and allocate specific additional resources to combat sexual exploitation of children. It also called upon the international development partners to help mobilise resources required for effective actions through enhanced financial assistance.

The strategy calls for inclusion of children and young adults in existing regional, national and local networks, task forces and community level processes. It says that children should be given opportunities to express their views and con-

cerns in their own words through the media and in public forums.

It also notes that children should be informed about sexual exploitation and abuses by preparing child friendly documents and materials related to commercial sexual exploitation of children and through large scale awareness campaigns on the related issues.

Participants from Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka including 25 children and young adults and representatives from international agencies and non-government organisations attended the consultation.

The meeting noted that deep-rooted secrecy and a pervasive silence complicate the issue of commercial sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children. While the data available on the magnitude and extent of the problem are inadequate, figures indicate that it is alarmingly widespread in the region. Speakers also noted the increased rate of HIV infection in the region, and that sexual abuse of children places children at increased risk of sexually transmitted diseases.

At a press conference at the end of the consultation Wahid Hasan, deputy regional director of UNICEF based in Kathmandu, Nepal, said, "There is still much more that needs to be done but the good thing is that a lot of progress has already been made on the issues we discussed since the 1996 Stockholm

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Prof Shahed Ali dead

UNB, Dhaka

Eminent litterateur and language movement veteran Prof Shahed Ali died at his Banani residence yesterday. He was 76.

One of the pioneers of national cultural movement Prof Ali was suffering from diabetes and kidney problems.

He is survived by wife, three daughters, three sons and a host of admirers.

Born in 1925 in a respectable Muslim family at Mahmudpur in Sunamganj, Prof Ali served as a teacher in Bogra Azizul Haq College, Rangpur Karmichal College, Chittagong City College, Bangla College and Abuzhar Gilani College in Dhaka.

A life-long member of Tamuddun Majlish since 1948, he took part in the Language Movement and was elected MLA in 1954.

Author of more than 50 books Prof Ali used to contribute to various dailies and magazines of Dhaka and Calcutta since his school days. He was founding Editor of Bhasa Sainik, a mouthpiece of the Language Movement of 1952. He was awarded a number of national awards, including Ekushey Padak, Bangla Academy Award and Matribhasha Padak.

President Shahabuddin Ahmed expressed profound sorrow at the death of Prof Shahed Ali.

In a message of condolence, the President recalled his contribution to the Language Movement mentioning that his short story 'Jibrit-er-Dana' earned him fame home and abroad.

"A recipient of Ekushey Padak and Bangla Academy Award, Prof Shahed Ali was a respected personality in the country. With his death the country has lost an enlightened citizen," Shahabuddin said.

The president expressed his heartfelt sympathy to the members of the bereaved family and prayed for eternal peace of the departed soul.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia has expressed profound shock at the death of Prof Shahed Ali.

In a message of condolence, she said death of Prof Ali has caused an irreparable loss to the nation.

She expressed heartfelt sympathy to the members of the bereaved family and prayed for eternal peace of the departed soul.

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