

Planet IQ opens for children in the city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Planet IQ, the first-ever learning and development centre of its kind for children in the country, was inaugurated yesterday at Dhanmondi in the city.

The purpose of the centre is to give the children, aged between three and 12, a modern and interesting curriculum of education through computers.

Franchised by Capital Informatics of India, Planet IQ focuses on the development of basic skills of children and complements their school education in English, mathematics, social studies, sciences and creativity through innovative software.

"Planet IQ is a perfect fusion of multimedia computers, educational software, people and different approaches to education to ensure that children learn at their own pace of comprehension and enjoy learning to become lifetime self-learners," said Anup Kanodia of Capital Informatics.

Rally on Jan 1 to create awareness against violence

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Movement for Peace and Anti-terrorism will bring out a procession in the city on January 1, 2001, to create awareness among the people against terrorism, murder, extortion and rape across the country.

Human rights organisations, professional bodies, NGOs and leading personalities of the society will join the procession, which will be brought out at 9 am from the city's Ramna Batamul, organisers said.

Barrister Amir-ul-Islam, convenor of the movement, urged all concerned to attend the preparatory meeting at the conference room of the Supreme Court Bar Association at 6pm today.

Jubo Dal, JCD cadres capture Kishoreganj press club

UNB, Kishoreganj

Armed cadres belonging to Jubo Dal and Chhatra Dal captured the local press club at Nikli upazila on Thursday.

Sources said the cadres numbering 25 to 30 put the press club under lock and key, and hurled abuses towards the journalists after damaging the signboard of the club.

They even threatened to kill a local journalist, Dilip Saha, on Wednesday night, it is alleged.

The duty officer of the local police station expressed his inability to provide details about the incident. The UNO was not available for comment either.

Local Awami League and its student wing, Chhatra League, strongly condemned the incident and demanded exemplary punishment to those involved.

Motor vehicles in city

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Sources said the illegal practices have become a source of income for police as well as many corrupt employees and officials of BRTA.

"In fact, every unauthorised vehicle plying the city streets is regularly paying the law-enforcers for plying the roads. A section of government officials benefit from this illegality," said a source.

There are 1,400 BRTA-registered two-stroke tempos in the city. But in fact, about 2,000 more are operating in the city without any valid document whatsoever.

The government is now trying to phase out old vehicles from the city, considering severe environmental impact. But it would be impossible until there is any strict implementation of the decisions made at higher levels, the sources said.

About two-stroke auto-rickshaws, the BRTA record shows that the BRTA has issued 39,000 permits to auto-rickshaws since 1960. In fact, there are an estimated 50,000 additional auto-rickshaws operating in the city.

A sergeant of the Traffic Department told The Daily Star that 99 per cent of driving licences, road permits and other documents of the auto-rickshaws are counterfeit. Every time the sergeant stops such a three-wheeler, the driver has two choices bribing the officer or getting a ticket and paying fines later.

"The illegally operating baby-taxis(auto-rickshaws) go to the police station and the owner makes a declaration that he had lost his documents. Police acknowledge the declaration on a piece of paper and that very paper becomes a document for the owner," said a police source.

Moreover, there are hundreds of auto-rickshaws running with duplicate papers.

The BRTA records show that 721

Anup conceived the idea in 1996 of setting up such a centre after extensive research in the field of education, child development and psychology.

Planet IQ is aimed at developing a child's mind. It complements and reinforces whatever taught in schools, but in an enjoyable and interactive manner. The medium of instruction is English.

With an accommodation of 150 students at a time, Planet IQ charges each student Tk 800 to Tk 1,300 as monthly fees for one-hour classes to be held twice a week. However, the centre will increase the number of seats to 450 within six months.

MM Siddiqi, managing director of the centre said Planet IQ is not a computer school, rather a specialised school where computers will be used as learning tool instead of chalk, blackboard and a teacher.

The first centre of Planet IQ was set up in Kolkata in 1997 and now there are 13 centres in four Indian cities. Six more centres will be set up before long in Dhaka.

The counsellors trained in education, child development and psychology, will continuously observe and record the interest and aptitude of each child to develop a curriculum appropriate to his or her needs.

AL-BNP clash in Natore: 5 injured

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Natore

At least five people were injured in a clash between AL and BNP activist at Bonpara in Boragrim upazila on Thursday night.

The clash ensued when BNP activists attacked Bonpara AL office. They ransacked furniture and damaged the portrait of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

A case has been filed with Boragrim thana accusing 21 AL leaders and workers.

Police however, arrested two AL workers. Khalil and Korban Ali from Bonpara.

Book publisher found dead at a hotel in Khulna

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

A book publisher was found dead in the bathroom on the third floor of a four-storeyed hotel at KD Ghose Road in Khulna city yesterday.

Imam Hossain alias Kuti, 35, owner of Nishan Publications at Banglabazar, Dhaka rented a room on the third floor of Hotel Baishakh few days ago. He came to Khulna for realising outstanding bills from some book sellers, said manager of the hotel who was taken to custody for interrogation.

Police suspect that Imam Hossain has been strangled.

A care has been recorded with Khulna thana in this connection.

SAARC officials

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discuss trade, development and steps to counter terrorism.

Fears of a last-minute cancellation of the summit also weakened after leaders of India and Pakistan said this week that they were looking forward to attending the summit.

Reuters adds: It was supposed to boost South Asia's shaky sense of community and help bring India and Pakistan closer together, but there are now doubts if next week's summit of regional leaders can go ahead.

Some analysts say if the summit does go ahead, it is likely to be overshadowed by the dispute between New Delhi and Islamabad, although they add it could provide a chance to defuse the tension.

"Let us hope the summit will somehow contribute to the lessening of tensions," a former Pakistani foreign secretary, Tanvir Ahmed Khan, told the news agency.

Pakistan says it remains open for talks, but India has already called off a planned one-on-one meeting between Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee and Musharraf on the sidelines of the Kathmandu meeting.

A former Indian foreign secretary S K Singh told Reuters he believed India and Pakistan could push aside their bilateral dispute for the summit, but added the terrorism dogging most of the group's members could be a key topic.

"All of us, one way or the other, are unfortunately plagued by this horrendous thing," he said.



Prime Minister Khaleda Zia addresses local and foreign scholars at the inauguration of the two-day International Conference on Computer and Information Technology 2001 at Dhaka University's TSC yesterday. PHOTO: PID

Mahathir govt

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of the three sentenced to death were allowed to visit them before a police bus took them back to Sungai Buloh prison, north of Kuala Lumpur.

Appeals to a higher court are automatic.

Defense attorney Karpal Singh said that all the men had expected to be sentenced to life without parole: "The circumstances did not warrant the death penalty to be imposed on Amin and even the other two."

Traffic chaos

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was reported that a total outlay of Tk 1,000 crore is fixed for implementation of a co-ordinated project for easing the traffic medley in the metropolis. The project is due for implementation by Dhaka City Corporation, Rajuk, Roads and Highways Department, and several other government agencies, the project has both short-term and long-term objectives. The short-term plans, in their essential include the construction of two fly-overs one at Mohakhali and the other at Jatrabari, construction of ten by-pass roads, improvement of 20 road junctions.

Among the factors responsible for the present traffic chaos, research analysts have cited as the more important ones, the inadequacy of road space in relation to the burgeoning number of vehicles on the roads, the inordinate increase in the number of rickshaws, the large number of railway level crossing impeding free flow of traffic and the large-scale illegal occupation of city pavements by hawkers and other encroachers, etc.

Unless the objectives of the short-term plans so far as they relate to the construction of fly-overs and construction of by-pass roads are expeditiously achieved, the existence of the present railway level crossings contributing to the creation of traffic snarl-ups has to be lived with.

World needs a culture of peace

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detained without charge in the aftermath of the September 11 attacks, and the President has invoked the powers to try by military courts non-US citizens suspected of international terrorism.

"These anti-terrorist laws are not only draconian, they are often discriminatory, targeting foreigners, refugees and asylum-seekers. Refugees and asylum-seekers are increasingly portrayed as terrorists, rather than people fleeing terror. The result is that the already-restrictive asylum policies of many Western countries have become even more restrictive," she said.

"People have been attacked for being a Muslim or Arab or Asian, or even for looking like a Muslim, Arab or Asian. Amnesty International has documented hundreds of cases of Islam-phobia, racism and racist attacks in recent months, not only in

the United States, Canada and Western Europe but also in Asia and African."

The international rights activists elaborated how the much-orchestrated globalisation is curtailing worker rights, particularly women. Quoting NGOs here she consulted on the issue she said profit-based linkages between trade, aid and economic activity, for

instance in shrimp farming, are undermining, rather than improving, lives and livelihoods of the poor.

Mentioning that globalisation is bringing greater wealth to some parts of the world and marginalising others, she said if the benefits of globalisation are to be harnessed for all humankind, then globalisation itself must take an ethical, right-based approach to the fundamental problem of poverty.

"Economic insecurity has led to violence, which nation states, weakened by the growing power of economic actors, claim they cannot control."

She said human rights must promote not just legal justice but also social justice, if they are to have any real meaning in countries like Bangladesh.

On Bangladesh, she also talked about her talks with local right bodies on post-election attacks on minorities in the country.

Particularly discussing security of women, she referred to one 13-year-old rape victim in Bhola and said that both state and society had failed her.

Globally, the Amnesty International Secretary General also referred to some tortured women she met in South Africa, Lebanon and Afghanistan and said equal opportunity to education and employment could ensure security of women.

Prof Rehman Sobhan, Muhammad Yunus, Dr Debapriya Bhattacharya, Mahfuz Anam, Ramendu Mazumdar and Angela Gomez were among those who attended the lecture session marking the conclusion of a workshop.

Pakistan proposes troops pullout

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Rumsfeld revealed the immediate grounds for the intense engagement, on which the White House said President Bush was being updated regularly -- the US war against terrorism in Afghanistan.

Though Washington shares the fear gripping the world that India and Pakistan might launch nuclear missiles if they start their fourth war in five decades, it also worries the tension over Kashmir could prompt Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf to move his forces from the Afghan to the Indian border.

This could make it easier for followers of Osama bin Laden -- or bin Laden himself -- to escape the US campaign aimed at bringing to justice the man accused of attacks Sept 11 that killed about 3,300 people, and at destroying his network of followers.

"They have not yet moved forces from the Afghan border, and that is very encouraging to us because that would be a big disappointment," Rumsfeld told a news briefing of Pakistan.

Rumsfeld said Bush and Powell had been working with India and Pakistan, saying, "This is something we're keeping our eye on very carefully and have clearly made the interest we have in this subject known to both sides."

He said an escalation could complicate the Afghan operation. "We could have problems with overflights ... in case they needed their airspace, that would be difficult for us."

The Group of Eight yesterday expressed its serious concern about the escalating tensions and called on both nations to resume their political dialogue to avoid sliding into war.

The world's major industrial democracies, including Russia, also put pressure on Pakistan to take further steps against terrorist groups acting from its territory.

"Terrorism may not be vindicated," said the statement, which was released by the Russian Foreign Ministry. "We denounce terrorism in all its forms, in particular the attack against the Indian Parliament."

The G-8 said it was concerned about the deteriorating situation, and called on both nations to resolve their disputes through diplomatic channels. The G-8 urged Pakistani authorities to arrest, bring to justice and punish the leaders of terrorist



Indian soldiers drive a jeep mounted with a gun towards the Indo-Pakistani border at the Samba sector south of Jammu yesterday. PHOTO: AFP

groups operating inside its borders.

"The events of Dec. 13 must not lead to a worsening in relations between India and Pakistan," the statement said.

Meanwhile, overnight mortar shelling between Indian and Pakistani troops, following new economic and political sanctions between the two governments, had border villagers convinced yesterday that war is coming.

Villagers fled with everything from their cots to their clothes, bringing the estimated number of migrants to 10,000 since India and Pakistan began moving troops and weapons to their 1,800-kilometer border.

Tens of thousands of soldiers, squadrons of fighter jets, artillery and ballistic missiles face each other along the frontier that extends from the Himalayas in the north through the Thar Desert to the Arabian Sea in the south.

"The war is about to break out," said Sumitra Devi, in her 60s, lodged in a dilapidated school at Koota in northern Jammu-Kashmir state, with her belongings in a corner and her sons and grandsons around her.

Having seen her house demolished in the last war between India and Pakistan in 1971, Devi said she

was already packed when soldiers came to the village of Mangoo Chak telling people to move out on Thursday.

Evacuated villagers spoke about when, not if, India and Pakistan would go to war for a fourth time since they were separated at independence from Britain in 1947.

"There is no measuring scale that we have to say how near or how far we are to war," Indian Foreign Minister Jaswant Singh told reporters as he announced the latest sanctions against Pakistan on Thursday night. "I will just say this: Don't worry. We are ready."

In Pakistan, a spokesman for President Gen. Pervez Musharraf's military government offered similar sentiments Thursday. "We have the capacity to react and retaliate in all conceivable ways," said Gen. Rashid Qureshi.

Qureshi said, India will find it difficult to back off in its dispute with Pakistan following its major border troop deployments.

The deployments had established a "certain momentum," he added.

"It seems that the India government is putting itself into a corner where I think it would be difficult for

them now to back off," he told a press conference.

Meanwhile, Pakistani troops beefed up security yesterday across Karachi, a busy port and the country's financial capital, and witnesses said anti-aircraft guns were deployed to guard the city's docks and airports.

Paramilitary forces stood guard around the city's oil installations, and they and city police stepped up their patrols on the main streets of the bustling commercial city.

"Troops have installed at least three new anti-aircraft guns near the seaport and camouflaged them," one witness said.

Navy spokesman Roshan Khayal said the navy was maintaining a constant vigil along the coast. "They (troops) are vigilant ... We have further strengthened our security measures taken after the September 11 events," he said.

Aviation sources said a security exercise was carried out at Karachi airport in case of attacks. "We have taken all precautionary and appropriate measures to cover all our strategic installations to counter any threat," an airport official said.

IT in school curricula

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University, BUET, North South University and Bangladesh Computer Council. The Ministry of Science and Technology and the University Grants Commission supported the conference.

Khaleda Zia said, as per her election pledge, her government will link Bangladesh to the global information highway, connecting it with the fibre-optic submarine cable.

This will bring about a revolution in IT-commence, which will reduce cost as well as time for communication and data transfer, she said.

Telephone tariff has been lowered to expand advanced and modern Internet facilities to build countrywide IT networks.

Khaleda Zia said the country is lagging behind in computer and IT education because it was neglected

by the past government.

Software industry and trade in it are rapidly expanding in the world she noted and hoped entrepreneurs and IT experts will utilise government's incentives to develop IT professionals. "People's expectations from you are high".

She thanked the Dhaka University authorities for organising the programme, saying it will help the government to reach its goal.

Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan said computer education and Internet connections should be cheaper to make those affordable by all. He also urged youths to learn English language to be in touch with outside world through Internet.

Ehsanul Haque Milon suggested that universities should give more emphasis on computer and IT education and open more departments.

Five swindlers nabbed in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Special Branch (SB) of Police yesterday arrested five frauds on charge of swindling some businessmen out of a huge amount of money.

The swindlers have been identified as Abul Kashem alias AK Azad, Mohammad Shajahan, Khalur Rahman, Nazrul Islam Badal and Mohammad Helal, police said.

A team of SB police, being tipped off, first arrested Helal from the Kalabagan park at about 11:15am.

Following his interrogation, the police team arrested the rest from the ground floor of a building in Kalabagan area.

Police said they came to know that the gang involved the businessmen in a fraudulent business.

Ctg mayor

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Sources at the Mayor's office claimed that the Mayor was keen to attend each of the programs.

They claimed that the Mayor's name was included in the three lists of possible invitees to the functions, sent to the PM's office for clearance. But his name was dropped, they claimed.

It is obligatory for the organisers to send lists of possible invitees to the PM's office ahead of such functions. The lists are okayed by the DGI and sent back to the organisers.

Bangla Academy

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resolution were available for any comment in this context.

Shahria Akhter Bulu, who attended the meeting, said Prof Mamun tried to infuse malice into the peacefully held AGM, chaired by Chairman of Bangla Academy Prof Anisuzzaman. She said the AGM ended formally in the evening.

Polythene

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fish, meat and vegetables get infected by anaerobic bacteria, a germ responsible for skin disease and cancer, Dr Shahriar said.

He said, the colour used in polythene bags in our country is also a threat to public health.

A nutrition expert of Kolkata Medical College Hospital, Dr Shashwati Roy, in a research found that taking tea in polycup can be a cause of ulcer and cancer.

Experts say, polythene bags and other plastic materials, if burnt below 7,000 degrees Celsius, create a dioxin like poisonous gas, which can cause cancer and skin diseases.

Polythene bags dumped near households are the safe havens for breeding mosquitoes, which causes dengue fever, filariasis and malaria, they warned.

Taj Mahal

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military tensions with Pakistan.

"The Taj Mahal would be covered, if required, by a large cloth so as to camouflage it from the view of any enemy aircraft," an ASI source told AFP.

"Ladders have already been arranged and special ropes are being brought in to Agra," the source said.

"These are precautionary steps being taken to meet the situation, in case it arises."

The 16th-century Taj Mahal was built by the heart-broken emperor Shahjahan in memory of his beloved second wife Mumtaz Mahal who died during childbirth.

More than 10,000 artisans toiled for over 20 years to construct the mausoleum, which is visited by hundreds of thousands of tourists each year.

Rickshawpuller

Hossain.

Sources quoting neighbours said the couple had left their K64 Badda residence at about 9pm on Thursday and didn't come back since then.

Two workers of a garment factory found Aklima's beheaded body by the road. Thereafter, local people informed police who recovered the body and sent it to the DMCH morgue for autopsy.

Amir Hossain, the husband, has been missing. Badda police said they suspected his involvement in the killing.

A case was filed with Badda police station in this regard.

Solu arrested

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grabbing a pond belonging to the Badsha Faisal School, government land at Bijoli Mahalla and other residences. He fired at the film actress, Banorsree.

DB sources said Salimullah shot dead Sajal Chowdhury at the Science Laboratory intersection on February 9, 1999, by firing from the procession led by former MP Mookbul Hossain.

He was also involved in the Yunus, Babul, Geda Babul and Rafiq murder cases.

The police team went to the house and asked the family members to open the door, but they refused to do so. The assistant commissioner then contacted a high official of the Detective Branch and was instructed to arrest the accused by any means.

Later, the officer-in-charge of Mohammadpur Police Station cordoned off the house and the assistant commissioner climbed up on the first floor of the building and arrested Salimullah.

Police said the accused tried to escape through the hidden stairs of his house.

Clean Dhaka

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January 1 if such vehicles are found on city streets.

The traffic department of the DMP has already talked to various other transport-owners associations to implement the clean-Dhaka crash programme.

Traffic-watchers held a meeting with 12 associations of vehicle owners yesterday for their full support in the drive.

Aspirants

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Chowdhury and A H M Khairuzzaman Chowdhury.

Fazlay Hossain Badsha is an aspirant from the Communist Party of Bangladesh and Ataur Rahman is from Jamaat-e-Islami, a component of the ruling coalition.

In Khulna, according to local sources, Mayor Taiyab Rahman of BNP wants a chance to retain the position for another term and is lobbying with party leaders. Local BNP leader Nazrul Islam Manju is also another prospective candidate.

The lone aspirant from AL is former whip Mostafa Rashidi Suja.

After the 1994 city corporation elections, the government from time to time changed delimitation of wards. Till 1999, the number of wards in Dhaka was raised to 100 from 90, in Khulna to 37 from 31 and in Rajshahi to 35.

On expiry of tenure of the four city corporations in January 1999, the then government requested the EC to hold elections to those. But the EC could hold elections only to Chittagong City Corporation, leaving three others due to legal barriers.

Fazle Hasan Abed

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certificate and dlsr 50,0