

DHAKA TODAY

Publication ceremony
Power and Participation Research Centre organises a publication ceremony for its recent publication 'Local Government in the New Century: A Search for New Frontiers' with LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan as chief guest. Venue: National Press Club. Time: 5.00pm.

Seminar
A seminar on 'The Role of Commercial Organisations in the development of Private Sector', organised by Shilpa Byabsayee Parishad, will be held with Commerce Minister Amir Khasru Mahmud Chowdhury as chief guest. Venue: CIRDAP auditorium. Time: 3.30pm.

Workshop
United Nations Population Fund organises a day-long Gender Training Workshop. Venue: IDB Bhaban, Agargaon. Time: 9.00am.

General meeting
The 11th Annual General Meeting of Bangladesh Shishu Adhikar Forum will be held. Venue: Democracy Auditorium, 5 Momenbag, Rajarbag. Time: 9.00am.

Discussion
Karmajibi Nari, an organisation for women, will hold a discussion on 'Globalisation, Economic Disparity and

Women Workers in Bangladesh'. Venue: Dhaka Reporters Unity auditorium. Time: 3.00pm.

Rally
Manabik, an anti-drug and anti-tobacco organisation will hold a rally in support of their demand for imposing heavy taxes on tobacco and tobacco-products in the coming budget. Venue: Muktangan, Ramna. Time: 4.00pm.

Seerat-un-nabi
A seerat-un-nabi (sm) mahfil, organised by city Jamaat-e-Islami, will be held with Agriculture Minister Maulana Matuwr Rahman Nizami as chief guest. Venue: Engineers' Institution auditorium. Time: 4.00pm.

DHAKA TOMORROW

Film show
Under its weekly programme, Alliance Francaise will screen two films titled 'La vie est un ong fleuve tranquille' by Etienne Chatiliez and 'Le lieu du crime' by Andre Techine. Venue: Alliance Francaise auditorium. Time: 10.30am and 6.00pm respectively.

Seminar
In observance of holy Eid-e-Miladunnabi, Muslim League organises a seminar on 'Human Rights in Islam'. Venue: National Press Club. Time: 3.30pm.

UK diplomats

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tion there," Foreign Secretary Jack Straw said.

"We will begin reducing the number of staff and dependants in Pakistan with immediate effect."
At least 15 foreigners have been killed in Pakistan and dozens wounded in violent attacks since January, the targets of Islamic radicals opposed to the US war on terror following the September 11 attacks on the United States and moves by Pakistan's military regime to crack down on militants.

Most foreigners evacuated the country in September, although many returned by December or January.

In a note to British citizens and read to Reuters, the High Commission warned people to be vigilant over their personal security, vary regular routes and check vehicles for bombs.

"The British High Commission has decided to close all our visa sections in Pakistan for the time being in response to a number of very recent threats to British interests," the mission said.

"The British High Commission cannot judge the authenticity of the threats but is taking them seriously," it said.

2 criminals

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body in the area.

Police sent the body to the Mitford Hospital for autopsy. Sabura Khatun, mother of the victim, filed a murder case with Shyampur Police Station.

Police said Johnny was accused in two cases — one under the Women and Children Repression Act, 2000 and the other of robbery.

Pradip, son of Luxmi Narayan Saha, was shot in the abdomen at Tanti Bazar when he was returning home at about 4.00pm.

Sources said three gunmen stopped his rickshaw at Shakhari Bazar and shot him in the abdomen. He was admitted to the DMCH but later shifted to a clinic to avoid police harassment.

Judiciary

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Criminal Procedure amendment bill. Since the parliament is not in session now and the next one would focus on budget, the government would need at least four months time to place the bill in the parliament. Law Minister Moudud Ahmed told journalists yesterday.

The government appealed for rescheduling of the deadline several times since December 2, 1999, when the Appellate Division issued a 12-point directive for virtual separation of the judiciary from the executive wing of the government. The last deadline fixed by the Supreme Court expired on March 17. The chief justice had earlier said that there would be no fresh deadline after March 17.

PM discharged

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from Dhaka and gave necessary orders.

She talked with senior ministers and secretaries over telephone discussing urgent matters and gave directives. She also talked with the party leaders on different issues of the country.

Also on Tuesday, Khaleda Zia talked with senior ministers as well as the cabinet secretary and the principals secretary and gave instructions on urgent matters.

On Tuesday afternoon (NY Time), president of the Manhattan Hospital John R Reynolds called on the Prime Minister at the hospital cabin and congratulated her for making early recovery. He also thanked Khaleda Zia for choosing the hospital for her treatment.

New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg on Tuesday (New York time), World Bank vice-president for South Asia region Meiko Nishimizu and World Bank executive director BP Singh sent bouquets and get-well-cards to the prime minister at the hospital wishing her early recovery.

Awami League leader Sheikh Selim, who is now in the United States, talked with Khaleda Zia over phone and wished her complete recovery at the earliest.

Darkness

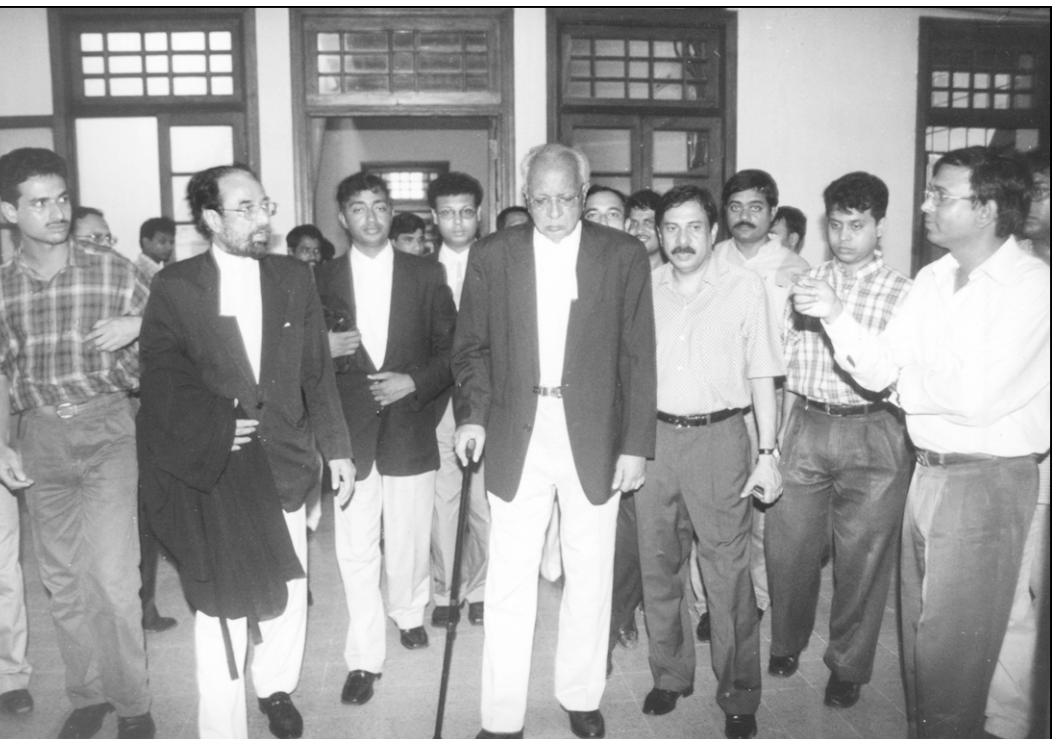
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susceptible to infection.

Congenital rubella syndrome occurs in 25 per cent or more of infants born to women who have been infected with rubella during the first three months of pregnancy. Defects are rare if the infection occurs after the 20th week of pregnancy.

The disease is caused by the airborne virus and is spread by close contact. A mother with an active infection can also transmit it to a foetus. The disease is usually mild and may even go unnoticed. Children may have a few symptoms, but adults may experience a warning symptom.

Rubella is almost 100 per cent preventable with vaccination. Live rubella virus vaccine is recommended for all children. It is routinely given between 12 and 15 months of age but is sometimes given earlier during epidemics.

The extended programme of immunisation does not include rubella vaccination for children. Many experts believe that rubella vaccination should be immediately introduced since a large number of children already suffer from the disease.



Editor of Manavzamin Motiur Rahman Choudhury (third from right in the foreground) comes out of the Supreme Court yesterday along with barristers Ishtiaque Ahmed and Amirul Islam after filing a petition seeking a stay on the HC verdict against him in the cassette scam case.

Gani Lone's killing to cast a shadow on peace process

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, *New Delhi*

The assassination of Abdul Gani Lone, the most vocal moderate voice in Hurriyat Conference, a conglomerate of 23 separatist groups in Jammu and Kashmir, is likely to cast a shadow on the peace process in the state.

The killing of 70-year-old Lone, a strong proponent of "independent Kashmir", in Srinagar Tuesday comes at a time when he had been increasingly opposing the cult of violence by "jihadis" in Jammu and Kashmir and signaling a return to the process of peace and democratic process in the state.

Besides, only last month, Gani Lone and another moderate Hurriyat leader Mirwaiz Umer Farooq had held a meeting with Indian commanders of the group being expelled by their Pakistan-based supreme commander Syed Salahuddin.

Among the commanders expelled is Abdul Majid Dar who had advocated the short-lived Ramzan truce with Indian government in the year 2000. Dar has been looked down upon with suspicion by Hizbul's Pakistan-based leadership ever since Salahuddin called off the ceasefire in the year 2001 under Pakistan's pressure.

The expelled Indian commanders have also indicated their willingness to switch over to dialogue to solve Kashmir issue and form a separate group.
This is not the first time that a moderate Kashmiri leader has been eliminated. In May 1990, Mirwaiz Maulvi Farooq, father of present Hurriyat leader Mirwaiz Umer Farooq, was killed in downtown Srinagar -- for advocating the path of peace.

Gani Lone's killing has no doubt thrown up a major challenge for the Indian government which must ensure that the moderates in Hurriyat leadership remains on course in their inclination to return to the democratic process in Jammu and Kashmir.

The Indian government must ensure that the young moderate Hurriyat leaders like Mirwaiz Umer Farooq and Shabbir Ahmed Shah are not made to leave the field in the face of "gun culture" by militants and efforts are made to create an atmosphere of credibility to make coming elections in Jammu and Kashmir broad-based and with maximum response from voters.

hawks, especially Geelani, and militant groups in Kashmir for his stand that Kashmir is a political issue and not a religious one and that violence is not the solution to the Kashmir issue.

He had incurred the wrath of extremist elements two years ago when, during a visit to Islamabad in connection with his Sajjad's marriage, he had attacked the "jihadi" elements based in Pakistan with pan-Islamic agenda for trying to take over the "Kashmiri movement".

He had also asked the non-Kashmiris to leave the movement.

Another development that must have worried the pro-Pakistan militant groups and Hurriyat hardliners is the split in Hizbul Mujahideen, the biggest militant group operating in Jammu and Kashmir, with some

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leaders from Pakistani-occupied Kashmir, including Sardar Abdul Quayum, of London in Dubai, an action that was frowned upon by Hurriyat hardliners as well as the militant groups. Geelani, for example, was on record as criticising the Dubai meeting.

The killing of Gani Lone came at a time when the moderate section of Hurriyat has of late indicated of warming up to the idea of taking part in assembly polls in Jammu and Kashmir likely before September this year.

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Decisive fight

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cabinet and the policy-making National Security Council (NSC), said Pakistan would continue its "moral, political and diplomatic support" to what it called the Kashmiri struggle for self-determination.

The Musharraf meeting expressed "deep concern" over India's massing of troops on the border and "the threatening and aggressive statements by the Indian leadership."

The two nuclear-armed rivals deployed around a million troops on their borders after India blamed Pakistan for an attack on its parliament in December.

The statement said the meeting agreed that all differences between Pakistan and India, including Kashmir, should be resolved "through bilateral negotiations or other peaceful means as provided in the UN charter."

It called on the international community to "impress upon India the dangers inherent in the explosive situation created as a result of Indian belligerence and obduracy."
In remarks reminding the west of its key role in the US-led war on terrorism in the neighbouring Afghanistan, the statement said.

The meeting particularly emphasised that the government will not allow the territory of Pakistan or any territory whose defence is the responsibility of Pakistan to be used for any terrorist activity anywhere in the world."

After meeting his cabinet and security chiefs, Musharraf was to hold consultations with politicians in a bid to build a consensus over how to deal with the crisis.

Shihab murder: 3 more PWs cross-examined

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Three more prosecution witnesses, including a magistrate, in the sensational school-boy Khondakar Shihab Ahmed abduction and killing case, were cross-examined in the Second Additional Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court, Dhaka yesterday.

After cross-examination by the defence lawyers, Judge Hossain Shahid Ahmed adjourned the hearing till 10.30 am today.

Mohammad Shahidul Islam, a magistrate at the CMM's Court, Dhaka told the court that he recorded confessional statements of the arrested accused Abu Syed and Monir Hossain Liton on April 7 and 8 respectively.

He further told the court that the accused gave confessional statements willingly and were not afraid at that time.

Earlier, 12 prosecution witnesses, including complainant of the case, were cross-examined.

Khondakar Shihab Ahmed, 13, a student of class seven of Motijheel Model School and College, was abducted from in front of his school on February 7.

Later, the abductors killed Shihab and slashed his body into pieces.

Detectives recovered the pieces from three places in Basaboo and North Goran areas in the city after 53 days of the incident.

Accused Liton and Syed, now at the Dhaka Central Jail, were produced before the court during the hearing.

Advocates Abida Sultana Rozi, Suja-Al-Faruq, and Sadequr Rahman appeared in the court on behalf of the accused.

Manavzamin

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racy.
"We believe in the freedom of the press and the judiciary. We also believe in the freedom of objective reports and of expression," said Khondakar Monirul Alam and Swapan Kumar Saha, president and secretary of the Jatiya Press Club respectively, in a joint statement.

Journalists will uphold the freedom of the press at any cost, they affirmed.
Odhikar, an NGO, said, "We expected that the court would praise the Manavzamin for its role in publishing an objective report, but the verdict on cassette scam disappointed us."

The free access to information bolsters the status of a nation as well as the judiciary," stated Odhikar.
The Jatiya Kabita Parishad urged people to be aware of the long-term impact of the High Court verdict on democracy and the freedom of expression.

The High Court on Monday sentenced Chief Editor of the Manavzamin Motiur Rahman Choudhury to a one-month jail term and fined him Tk 2,000, while Mahbuba Choudhury, the publisher, was fined Tk 2,000 on the charge of contempt of court.

Heat wave

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The blistering heat has also killed 49 people in the western desert state of Rajasthan, 33 people in the central state of Madhya Pradesh, five in adjoining Chattisgarh, 28 in the arid northern states of Punjab and Haryana, seven in coastal Orissa and nine in Gujarat and Maharashtra which are on the coast of the Arabian Sea.

Narsingdi Jubo League leader shot dead

But he was snubbed by major opposition parties, which rejected invitations to attend, citing the fact that Musharraf was a military general who came to power through a coup in 1999.

UNB, Narsingdi

A freedom fighter and Jubo League leader was shot dead by unidentified assailants in Sadar upazila on Tuesday night.

Police said Siraj Ali, 48, vice president of Jubo League sadar upazila unit, came under attack while he was returning home at Gonergaon from Sheikhcherchar bazar at 11:30 pm.

He died on way to the hospital.
None was arrested till Wednesday evening in connection with the murder.

Two PBCP men held in Khulna

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, *Khulna*

Two members of Purbo Banglar Communist Party (PBCP) were arrested in the town yesterday.

The arrested outlaws are Anwar Hossain Liton, 24, and Mamunur Rahman, 28.

They were arrested from the residence of forest ranger Lutfur Rahman at Munshipara.

Police also recovered two motor-bikes and a mobile phone from their possession.

Sources said three members of outlawed PBCP went to the residence to receive toll money.
Earlier, the outlaws had sent a letter to forest ranger Lutfur Rahman, asking him to pay Tk one lakh on May 22. Accordingly, they went to the residence at about 9 am yesterday.

On information, police rushed to the spot and nabbed two of the three while the rest managed to flee.

A case was filed with Khulna thana in this connection.

Prisoner escapes from Cox's Bazar jail

UNB, *Cox's Bazar*

An on-trial prisoner escaped from the district jail on Sunday.

Jail sources said Anwar Hossain, an accused in a murder case, ran away as wardens allowed him to talk to his relatives outside the jail.

Senior police officials visited the jail and suspended three constables for negligence of duty.

On the same day, another accused escaped from police custody in Pekua upazila of the district.

Habiganj clash

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Later, the villagers clashed with police when ASP (north) Saidur Rahman and Lakhai thana OC Ataur Rahman, along with their forces, charged baton on the rioters.

In the violence, over 150 people, including the ASP, the OC and 28 constables were injured.

Of them, ASP Saidur Rahman, OC Ataur Rahman, three constables and 20 villagers were admitted to Habiganj Sadar Hospital and upazila health complex.

Rejoinder

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of East Land Insurance, claimed that his company paid VAT and other government dues and it had no fault in this regard.
In its rejoinder, Central Insurance claimed that the outstanding VAT figures were not accurate as many insurance companies had in the meantime minimised their liability on this count.

There was no mention of 'lock up' of the companies concerned at the meeting with the government, it said.
Referring to the meeting, it however admitted that it was made known at the meeting that due to failure of the individual companies to pay the committed amount of VAT within the stipulated period, the companies will obviously have to face 'appropriate action' as decided by the government.

Our reply
The report was based on discussion at a meeting of the state minister for finance, VAT officials and top bosses of 12 accused insurance companies.

The overdue amounts of VAT with those companies were mentioned in the report on the basis of a special audit by the customs, excise and VAT commissionerate (south).
It was also mentioned in the report that some of the companies deposited some amounts and paid up the overdue amounts after the report was published.

Numbers mean

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to a list released Wednesday.

Roberto Carlos said there was no secret behind his preference. Six has been lucky for him in the past, so why not try again.

"It may not seem like a very big thing but the number is important for me," said Carlos, 29, one of the side's most experienced players.

Coach Luiz Felipe Scolari gave his players the morning off training Wednesday, after they ran shooting drills and practiced set-pieces during two, two-hour sessions on Tuesday in Kuala Lumpur's tropical heat. An evening session was scheduled for later Wednesday.

The world will have its first glimpse of Scolari's new side, complete with the Ronaldo-Rivaldo partnership, when it faces Malaysia in a friendly Saturday.

Brazil is seeking its fifth World Cup -- and to avenge its loss to France in the final four years ago. It goes into the Group C competition as favourite against China, Costa Rica and Turkey, which Brazil meets in its June 3 opener.

Superstition thrives in soccer, as in many sports, and the Brazil team has been no exception.

Last year, Scolari tried to break the jinx of a six-match winless streak by having his squad switch colours -- to blue and white stripes instead of the trademark yellow and green. It worked with Scolari calling it a "mystic choice."

Budget

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strains, Saifur in his inaugural speech said in the early 1990s around US\$ 1300 to \$1400 million in foreign aid was available each year. "But this year, we roughly expect around \$ 1100 million. Even then, I am doubtful whether the whole amount will be available," Saifur said.

Highly critical of donor conditionalities, he said, "There are many countries giving very small dollops of aid and that too through NGOs. But they talk tall and preach us on different issues like the law and order and Chittagong hill tracts affairs."

The finance minister went on, "Even then there are certain suggestions and we have to agree to those. Otherwise, we cannot continue our relations with the donors."

Saifur also said there is hardly any wheat available from donors to carry on the food for works programme. "If the government wants to implement these programmes, then it has to buy wheat from its own resources," he said, adding that corruption is embedded in the process of food for works programme.

But the lawmakers said it would not be a good idea to stop the programme all of a sudden.

Bombay Duck

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The business on the coast is brisk but intense, and the fish is at once transported by lorries towards Chittagong.

The status of Bombay duck can be understood by the following anecdote taken from real life. The bride's father went on a visit to the house of the bridegroom's father. The bridegroom's father was happy, but grew concerned that the honourable guest was staying for lunch. He offered him a lunch with Bombay duck at which his guest was offended. He thought offering no chicken but only Bombay duck was a clear sign of disrespect. He was taking leave after lunch, but his host for courtesy's sake insisted that he should stay overnight. The guest-behai now found his opportunity. He said, "why, no need, I have already happily eaten here, and you have given me lunch with Bombay duck. So, no problem." At this the host-behai understood that his guest was offended. So to make it up he gave

him a dinner with beef. And the following morning, as the guest-behai sought his leave to go to the host-behai, for courtesy's sake, insisted on his staying for the lunch. The guest-behai retorted, 'why, I've eaten enough in your house, you have treated me with Bombay duck, and then with beef.' At this the host-behai understood that his behai still didn't forget the insult. So he made his behai stay for dinner and this time his wife prepared pilao and chicken roast and other delectable items. The guest-behai ate to his heart's content, and as he was taking leave the host-behai, for formality's sake again, asked him to stay on for the second night. The guest-behai, with a broad smile on his face, said, 'why, behai, you've fed me enough, Bombay duck, beef, chicken roast, pilao and what not...? At this the host-behai's face turned red.

The writer is professor, Department of English, Chittagong University.

Shashya bhandar

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control projects constructing a number of sluice-gates there.

But the farmers alleged that the local office of Bangladesh Agricultural Development Corporation (BADC) had remained closed there for the last few years leaving the people in a crisis of quality seeds while the local office of Department of Agriculture came of little help.

The local Upazila Krishi Officer Keshob Lal Das was not available for comment. His office was seen under lock and key on Thursday as he reportedly was attending a departmental function in the city.

However, some of the Block Supers present there admitted of the poor support provided to the farmers.

Department office in Rangunia. The Officer in-charge of the Silo, Antartjami Chakma, said they got a copy of the government circular on May 4, issued on April 23, for procurement of food grains.

In the circular the government set a target for collecting 6 lakh tons of rice and 1 lakh and 54 thousand tons of paddy from the whole of the country. Of which 122 tons of paddy and 125 tons of rice have been set for Rangunia Upazila.

Accordingly, a nine-member upazila food committee has already been formed with the local MP and TNO as its chief advisor and president respectively to start purchase of paddy, Antartjami said.

But he said no government purchase of paddy was made from the upazila in the past few years. "We could not purchase because these (paddy and rice) were not available," the Silo in-charge said adding, "actually procurement is made in the North Bengal where they are grown in abundance. Here (at Rangunia) the production is not so much."