



Anniversary of Nazrul's birth today

UNB, Dhaka

The 103rd birth anniversary of National Poet Kazi Nazrul Islam will be observed in the country today.

Kazi Nazrul Islam, popularly known as rebel poet of Bengal, was born at Churulia village in Bardhaman district of the Indian State of West Bengal in 1899.

President Prof A Q M Badruddoza Chowdhury, Prime Minister Khaleda Zia and Opposition Leader Sheikh Hasina gave separate messages paying glowing tributes to the memory of Nazrul Islam.

The government has chalked out elaborate programmes to observe

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Ball problems for keepers

REUTERS, Ulsan

The new Fevernova ball being used at the World Cup in South Korea and Japan is likely to cause problems for all concerned, according to Spanish goalkeeper Pedro Contreras.

"It acts very strangely," said Contreras, who was a late replacement for Santiago Canizares after the Valencia goalkeeper had a freak accident with an aftershave bottle.

"Goalkeepers are going to suffer a bit more but it will be difficult for the striker of the ball and the person who receives it.

"It seems to go up smoothly but come down very fast, which means it's going to be hard on crosses and on freekicks.

"It can be confusing."

Italy goalkeeper Gianluigi Buffon had said on Thursday that the official match ball produced by Adidas was "crazy" and he would need two weeks to get used to it.

WC lottery draw Rajshahi round Mahbub's

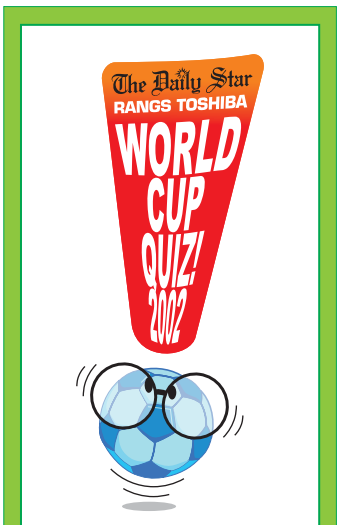
SPORTS REPORTER, from Rajshahi

A 25-year-old student won the first prize in the third round draw of the Daily Star-Rangs Toshiba World Cup Quiz on Friday.

Mohammad Mahbubur Rahman from West Manikdi, Dhaka Cantonment walked away with a 21" Toshiba flat television when the draw ceremony was conducted at the Rajshahi Medical College Auditorium at 4 pm.

In fact, all the prize-winners came from the capital.

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See the rules and coupon of



80 feared killed in another launch disaster

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Only 20 days after the launch disaster in the Meghna that claimed more than 400 lives, at least 80 people are feared drowned as a passenger launch sank in the river Baleshwar in Mathbaria upazila of Pirojpur district Thursday night.

The Khulna bound launch--M L Subha-- sailed from Charduani in Patharghata upazila of Barguna district at 9:pm with around 120 passengers. Caught in a storm, the vessel sank at about 10:15, reports received in Dhaka said.

District administration sources in Pirojpur, quoting eye witnesses, said the small launch with only one engine sank within minutes when hit by the storm. Only about 40 passengers of the vessel swam ashore and around 80 others were 'missing.'

The sources however claimed the launch sank because it was carrying passengers beyond its capacity.

Deputy Commissioner (DC) and Superintendent of Police (SP) of Pirojpur could not be contacted over telephone last night as both went to the spot in

the morning.

According to latest reports, no dead body was recovered and the sunken vessel was yet to be traced.

Local people said the launch was 30 to 35 feet under water.

Our Khulna correspondent reported that worried relatives of the missing passengers were crowding the BIWTA terminal in the city to know about salvage operation.

The BIWTA rescue vessel --M V Hamza-- was due to reach the spot last night.

Hamza was engaged in salvaging a sunken pontoon at Betagi in Borguna. Meanwhile, over 400 people were killed when double-decker launch --M V Salahuddin-2-- sank in the Meghna at Shatrol in Chandpur district during a storm on the night of May 3.

The authorities filed a case with the Marine Court in Dhaka in this connection. The court cancelled the bail petition and sent to jail one of the five owners of the vessel on Wednesday.

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Fund clearance for big NGOs blocked Activities of 1000 small organisations stalled

STAR REPORT

The government has tightened its grip on some leading non-government organisations (NGOs) 'suspected' of being 'sympathisers' of the opposition, blocking clearance of funds totalling crores of taka and consequently stalling activities of about 1,000 small organisations dependent on cash flow from the top.

According to sources, more than 100 NGOs including five big ones have been waiting for over six months to obtain clearance of funds from the NGO Bureau. The bureau's clearance is needed every time an NGO gets foreign funds. As

per rules, it has to give clearance within 45 days of request for it.

The delay has not only affected activities of these NGOs, but also caused concern among a large number of social workers. Thousands of staff of the organisations concerned in the rural and urban areas have remained unpaid for months and stakeholders at grassroots level are also suffering.

At the NGO Bureau, NGO representatives are regularly pursuing the matter with its officials. Some of them complained of 'odd behaviour' of the officials. One of them, requesting anonymity, said every time she had gone to know why clearance was being delayed,

an official said that till the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) cleared it, he could not do anything to help her. She quoted the official as saying that he was merely a 'servant who obeyed orders'.

Various sources said the government move regarding the so-called 'sympathisers' of the opposition Awami League originated from the rift in the 1,286-member Association of the Development Agencies in Bangladesh (ADAB) back in 2000. The rift centred minor issues such as the then chairperson of ADAB Khushi Kabir's meeting with the then leader of the opposition in

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Two murders in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A businessman and a rickshaw-van driver were murdered in the city yesterday.

Mohammad Monir Hossain, 45, was shot in the forehead at west Kazipara. Father of three, Monir was owner of the Metal Engineers in the area.

The killing took place over a row between some extortionists and the businessman. The extortionists demanded a huge amount of money from him, but he refused to pay the money.

The gang used to roam the street near his shop to intimidate him. The businessman also threatened the gang with filing of complaints with the police station.

At about 7:45pm yesterday, the gang took him to an alley near a former police camp and shot him

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India gives Pakistan two months to stop terrorism

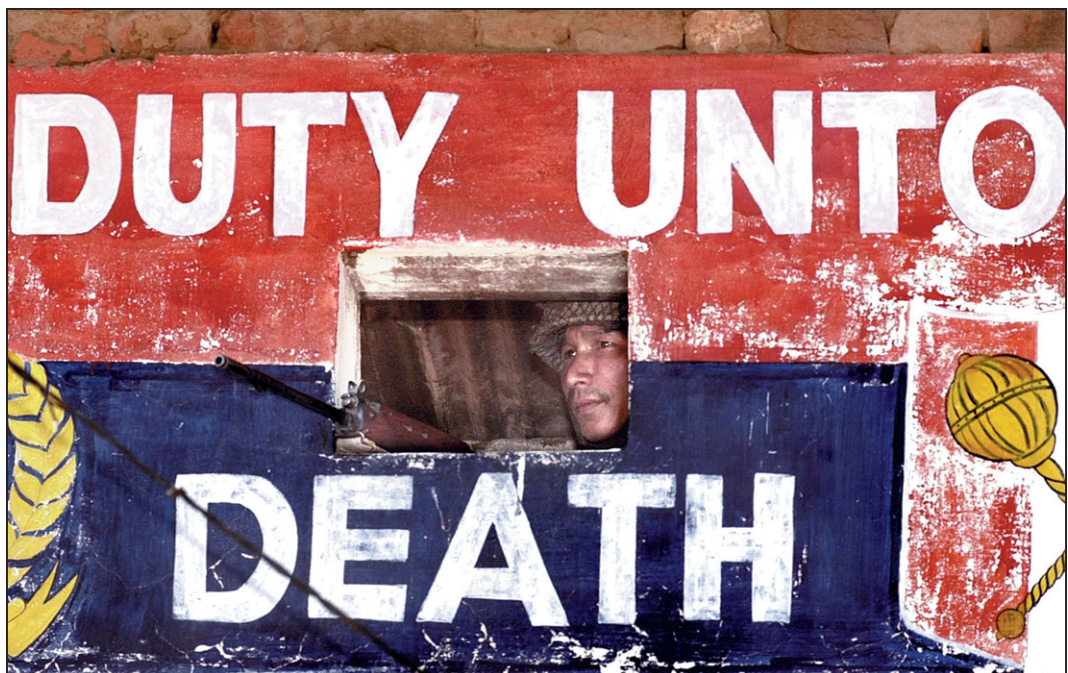


PHOTO: AFP

An Indian soldier keeps alert inside a bunker yesterday in Samba village area, some 45 kms south of Jammu. Pakistani and Indian troops have been shelling each other's positions for the last one week which left scores of people dead.

Hindustan Times says

AFP, New Delhi

India has given Pakistan two months to reign in Islamic militants before it deciding whether or not to exercise a war option, an Indian newspaper reported yesterday.

Pakistan President General Pervez Musharraf yesterday hoped good sense would prevail both in India and Pakistan to defuse tension but vowed to defend his motherland, if attacked.

The Hindustan Times quoted unnamed government sources as saying Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee's "decision to begin a war against Pakistan would depend on how Pakistan acted in the next two months."

"India's cabinet committee on security endorsed the decision to give Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf more time to implement his promise of putting an end to the infiltration of terrorists into Jammu

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21 killed despite jt drive against criminals in city

ABUL KALAM AZAD

Twenty-one people have been killed and 26 others injured in various incidents of crime in the city despite the launching of 'rapid action against criminals' by police, BDR and Ansar on the night of May 11.

Of those killed, two each were on May 11, 12, 13, and 16, one on May 18, one on May 19, two each on May 20 and 21, three on May 22, two on Thursday and two yesterday, according to newspaper reports.

The most sensational incidents were the killing of BNP-backed ward commissioner Binoy Krishna Sarkar Bina in the old part of the city on Wednesday and a double-murder at Kazi Nazrul Islam Road in Mohammadpur on May 19.

Two 'listed criminals' -- Serajul Islam Julu and Liton -- were gunned down on the night of May 11.

On Thursday, two youths -- Jubaid Hossain Angel and Anwar -- were stabbed to death at Mirpur and Kafrul.

Most of the killings and injuries were from clashes among gangs of criminals and incidents like toll collection and of mugging.

Drives to nab criminals were also launched twice earlier after this government came to power, but those proved failure.

Of the 23 'most-wanted criminals' in the city, only one --Kamal Pasha-- was arrested on Monday.

Seven police personnel including the Officer-in-Charge (OC) of Motijheel Police Station were injured in two incidents at Shantinagar and at Shapla Chattar while they were chasing criminals on the night of May 11.

On May 12, two murders took

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BDR nabs 15 alleged criminals in N'ganj

Torture after arrest alleged

OUR CORRESPONDENT, n'ganj

BDR personnel raided different areas of the Sadar, Fatullah and Siddhirganj thanas on Thursday and early yesterday and arrested 15 alleged criminals including two 'listed' ones, police said.

The two listed criminals -- Masud and Amir Hamza-- were arrested from Fafullah thana area. Hamza is wanted in a murder case, police said.

Four more arrested from Fatullah thana area are Milan Ahmed, Anwar, Kamaluddin, and Abdul Gafur.

Jahangir Alam, president of Narayanganj town unit of Bangladesh Chattral League (BCL) was arrested from the town.

Those arrested from Siddhirganj thana area are Hannan and his younger brother Alamgir, Shamol, Mojibur Rahman, Abdul Motaleb, Fazlul Haq, Mozammel and Rafiqul. All the arrested persons were

handed over to police.

The raids started at about 1:30 am on Thursday and continued till 4:30am yesterday.

The district administration and police said they were not given any prior information about the raid.

When contacted, Deputy Commissioner Mustaq Ahmed said, "I knew nothing about the raid. There was no information in my office about it."

The district police said they came to know when BDR personnel went to the police stations to hand over the arrested persons.

Talking to this correspondent, relatives of Jahangir Alam alleged that he was beaten with iron rod after arrest, and was injured. He was picked up from his residence.

Relatives of Hannan and Alamgir alleged that the two were picked up when they went out on Thursday night to buy medicine. They were

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PHOTO: STAR

Firefighters engaged in extinguishing the fire that broke out in the Malibagh Twin Towers (Concord Towers) yesterday (left); people rush out of the tower to escape the fire (right).

Buddha Purnima today

UNB, Dhaka

Buddha Purnima, one of the greatest festivals of the Buddhist community, will be celebrated in the country today with due religious fervour.

The day marks the emergence, enlightenment and disappearance of Great Gautam Buddha.

The day is a public holiday.

President Prof A Q M Badruddoza Chowdhury, Prime Minister Khaleda Zia and leader of the opposition Sheikh Hasina gave separate messages on the occasion.

In his message, president Chowdhury said the messages of the Great Buddha for world peace are very significant as his non-violence ideology is the main gist of h u m a n

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Fire damages shops at Concord complex

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A fire damaged at least 14 shops at Twin Tower Concord, a 24-storey market-cum-apartment house, in the city's Chamelibagh area yesterday.

Sources in the fire brigade said the fire originated from an electric short circuit at a shop on the first floor of the building at about 1:45pm. The fire damaged six garment shops, two fast-food shops and another six that were being decorated.

Several persons, including fire-brigade officials, were injured while dousing the fire that broke out during the Jumma prayers.

Eleven fire-fighting units from Tejgaon, Gulshan and the Fulbaria Headquarters brought the fire under control by about one hour.

Businessmen at the complex said that about 150 shops opened in the market that will house more than two hundred shops. Over 25 families started living in the building, they added.

The businessmen suspect that more people would have been injured if the market had remained open at the time.

Deputy Director of the Fire Brigade (Dhaka division) Mohammad Habib, Officer-in-Charge of the headquarters Mohammad Awal and Reaz Ahmed, a cleaner of the market, were admitted to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH).

The businessmen alleged that fire-extinguishing equipment at the market was not enough.

The firefighters estimated the loss of property at over Tk 15 lakh.