



PHOTO: STAR

WASA officials celebrate the recent appointment of Tarique Rahman as joint secretary-general of BNP in front of their office at Karwan Bazaar in the city yesterday, disrupting work.

Secretary General QAMA Rahim tells *The Daily Star* SAARC members realise importance of co-op

M ANWARUL HAQ

The SAARC countries are realising that non-cooperation is weighing heavily on them and so, they are putting more and more stress on the South Asian regional forum. "Although bilateral issues cannot be discussed in the SAARC, which many members see as a drawback, but in my view, this is a wise provision because of the current situation (political)," Secretary General of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), QAMA Rahim told *The Daily Star* in an interview. "Otherwise, there would have been more bickering among the nations. But I believe this will gradually change. The SAARC charter may not be amended to exclude the provision, but the clause not to discuss bilateral issues may gradually be disused." Rahim is now in Dhaka on the last leg of his familiarisation tour of the seven-nation regional forum that was



QAMA Rahim

founded some 17 years ago at the initiative of Bangladesh. Rahim, a former career diplomat from Bangladesh, has been involved in SAARC since its formative stage. He was elected the new secretary general in January this year at the 11th Summit held in Kathmandu. Rahim, who delivered a lecture at the Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BISS) on "Economic Cooperation in SAARC: Getting Our Act Together" earlier in the day, explained the regional body has made a significant progress in the economic field despite criticism about its slow pace. "Although SAARC came into being in 1985, the issue of economic cooperation formally entered the SAARC agenda as an agreed area of cooperation only in 1995 with the operation of SAPTA." The SAARC secretary general said, "A lot more needs

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Alleged thief beaten to death at Badda

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

An alleged thief was beaten to death in the city's Badda area early yesterday morning. Hedayetullah Ripon, 21, was caught and beat up by a mob when he entered Master Abdur Rahman Mess in the area at about 4:30 am. He died on the spot. Badda police recovered the body and sent it to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) for autopsy. Victim's father said Ripon was drug addict and one of his friends called him out of the residence at 2:00 am. He came to know about the incident at about 8:30 am. A case with Badda police station in this regard.

PM declares war on drug peddling

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday asked all concerned to guard against any attempt to make Bangladesh a transit route for illicit drug trafficking. "We will not tolerate any negligence to checking illicit drug trafficking," she warned referring to making the anti-drug laws more stringent incorporating death sentence as the highest penalty. The prime minister was addressing a function on the occasion of the International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking at the International Conference Center (ICC) here in the afternoon. Home Minister Altaf Hossain Chowdhury, State Minister Lutfozzaman Babar, Secretary Dr Sadaat Hossain and Director

General of Narcotics Control Abdus Salam also addressed the function organised by the Department of Narcotics Control. Ministers, MPs, diplomats, NGO representatives, girls guide and boy scouts attended the function. The day with this year's theme "Substance Abuse and HIV/AIDS" is being observed to create mass awareness against drug abuse. Rallies, painting competition, special programmes on radio and television, and supplements in newspapers have been organised as part of the campaign. The prime minister pointed out that drugs like phensidyl and heroine are not produced in Bangladesh but are smuggled in. "Those involved in it intend to destroy the young generation, the future of our country... It is a sort of

guerrilla war, a secret chemical war against us," Khaleda Zia said, adding, "We have to win this war." She sought support from the neighbouring countries in the bid to check smuggling of drugs through Bangladesh. Although the situation is still not alarming, drug addiction is increasing, she said asking all concerned to check the menace and take up necessary programmes in this regard. She also warned that if left uncontrolled, the society may experience anarchy and law and order cannot be maintained. "Our future will be ruined. We may face the crisis of drug addiction like many other countries," she cautioned. The prime minister stressed the need for increasing awareness

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Students protest felling of trees at DU

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

About 15 trees on the Dhaka University campus were felled yesterday at the site for construction of the proposed Centre for Persian Language Studies, ignoring strong protest from students. Earlier, the students had repeatedly urged the university authorities to allot a new site for the proposed centre and save the lush greenness of the present site. The agitated students yesterday damaged the foundation stone of the centre and planted some saplings there. They want to plant 100 more saplings today. Besides, another seven trees on the S M Hall premises were also felled yesterday. The reason behind this could not be known.

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PHOTO: STAR

Students hold a small rally at Dhaka University yesterday, protesting the felling of trees. The authorities cut down the trees to set up an institute for Persian language on the campus.

4 chargesheeted in Sr Asst Secy murder case

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Four people have been chargesheeted in Senior Assistant Secretary Mohammad Afzal Hamza Amirul Qaiyum Chowdhury murder case. The accused are Mohammad Tobarak Hossain, Mohammad Mockbul Hossain, Mohammad Kabir alias Humayun Kabir and Mohammad Mohan.

Low-cost plastic surgery possible for the poor

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

People living miserably due to their congenital and acquired deformities can be treated successfully by plastic surgery at a low cost. Speakers at a press conference in the city yesterday, organised by the Gonosasthaya Kendra, said in cases of burn injuries, plastic surgery becomes more successful if a proper first aid is given to the victim. Also in other cases of deformity, the patients should be brought before it is too late. The Kendra organised the press conference to disseminate its effort to break the curse of congenital deformities like cleft lip and palate, squint eyes, wrist deformities, bent fingers and acquired deformities like burn injuries and injuries caused by accidents in road and factories through plastic surgery at a possible low cost. "People nurture a wrong notion that plastic surgery is something exorbitantly expensive," said Dr Morshed Chowdhury, director, Nagar Gonosasthaya Kendra. "We provide a health insurance categorised into six groups according to people's earning under which a hard core poor can go for a plastic surgery for Tk 2000 to 5000 only," he added. Prof. Swaran Arora, plastic and cosmetic surgeon from the Grants

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Palestinians set date for elections

REUTERS, Jericho, West Bank

Palestinian President Yasser Arafat has called elections for January and plans to run again despite U.S. President George W. Bush's appeal to the Palestinians to dump their longtime leader. A blueprint for new elections and sweeping institutional reforms was unveiled yesterday, two days after Bush pressed Palestinians to elect leaders "not compromised by terror" as a condition for creating a Palestinian state. Israeli forces, meanwhile, kept a tight grip on seven cities in the West Bank after recent Palestinian suicide bombings. In Jenin, troops enforcing a curfew shot dead a seven-year-old boy, Palestinian officials said. The army had no immediate comment. Cabinet minister Nabil Shaath said Arafat would stand for re-election. Bush's dilemma is that polls show Arafat widely favoured to win, meaning Palestinians are likely to give a fresh mandate to a leader whom Washington has effectively written off. Arafat had brushed aside Bush's call for his people to replace him but he

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Proposed duties spell doom for TV assemblers

STAR REPORT

The local television assembling industry is likely to face a major setback as the budget for the next fiscal proposes reduction of customs duty gap between television sets imported in completely built-up (CBU) and in completely knocked-down (CKD) conditions. In the proposed budget, the duty gap between the CBU and the CKD television sets has been narrowed down to only 7.5 per cent against the existing 12.5 per cent. The budget has proposed to reduce customs duty on CBU television sets from the existing 37.5 per cent to 22.5 per cent. On the other hand, for CKD television sets the duty has been proposed at 15 per cent against the existing 25 per cent. Local television assembling industries import sets in CKD condition.

Industry officials fear that the proposed tariff measures would virtually cripple the local units and Bangladesh will permanently become a market of imported television sets. According to them, the locally assembled colour television sets will now find it difficult to compete with the imported ones. In addition, a large number of low-cost colour television sets from China have already entered the market. At present there are around 60 local television set assembling plants in the country. According to

them, the annual television market in the country is around 3.6 lakh of which 1.2 lakh are for colour television sets and the rest are for black and white ones. Local television assembling plants meet the entire demand for black and white television sets, which they import in the CKD condition. Of the annual 1.2 lakh colour television set market, the local plants supply around 40 per cent of the demand and the rest are imported. Local television assembling

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	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
June 27		6-50 pm
June 28	5-13 am	

Prayer Timings		
June 27		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-15	4-45
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	5-00	5-15
Maghrib	6-55	6-59
Esha	8-15	8-45

Source: Islamic Foundation

New light on Neanderthals

REUTERS, England

British archaeologists revealed an Ice Age site on Tuesday they hope could provide some of the strongest evidence yet that Neanderthal people hunted mammoths. The 50,000-year-old remains in a gravel pit in eastern England may provide the scientific evidence needed to back up the age-old popular depiction of Neanderthals hunting mammoths and other large animals for food. Although the Neanderthals' carnivorous diet is not in dispute, scientists have hotly debated whether the squat, muscular race actually hunted large animals and even mammoths rather than scavenging dead ones for meat. "You always see these pictures of them hunting mammoths, but there is no real evidence. This is as good as it gets," said David Miles of English Heritage, the body that supervises the country's archaeological excavations.

Finds displayed at the dig near Thetford in East Anglia included remains of mammoths, woolly rhinoceros and reindeer found in close proximity to several hand axes, thought to be for butchering animals. "It's the kind of thing that turns up just once in a lifetime," he said, pointing out a hand axe embedded in the ground next to a mammoth bone. The site, centering on a group of ponds, is thought to have been a watering hole where Neanderthals - predecessors of modern humans - may have herded in or waited for their prey. "This is the best evidence we've ever had for a Neanderthal kill site: certainly in Britain, but it is also one of the best in Europe," said Miles, English Heritage's chief archaeologist. **Big question** But Miles said the big question which needed to be answered was

what were the Neanderthals doing at the site. "With a spear and half a dozen Neanderthals you could actually kill a mammoth," Miles said, staring at a two-meter (six-foot) long mammoth tusk poking out of the earth. Corroboration must wait until flint axes and animal bones are forensically tested -- a process that will take months. "We may be in for more sensational revelations yet," said Chris Stringer of the Natural History Museum, one of a group of experts visiting the site. The first clue that the working quarry might be hiding Ice Age secrets came when a quarryman found a black shiny flint followed by a bone and then a tooth. Bill Boismier, called in to lead the excavation team, was staggered when he realized its significance. "I have had to pick myself up off

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6 of a family poisoned to death

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Six members of a family were killed and four others fell seriously ill after being poisoned allegedly by the landlord's son-in-law at Chhoto Bangram under Boalia thana in the city Tuesday night. The dead were identified as Mushtari Begum, 50, wife of Jamiruddin, her son Sabbir, 28, daughter-in-law Maya, 23, daughter Putul, 32, grandson Sagor, 8, and granddaughter Urmi, 3. Landlord Jamiruddin's two sons -- Mushtaque, 15, and Samir, 12 -- and two daughters -- Sultana, 14, and Salma, 16 -- were also seriously ill due to the poisoning. According to police and local sources, Tuhin, 30, son of Firoz of Malanchi village in Bagatipara

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