

CJA confce in city from Feb 17

BSS, Dhaka
The annual conference of the Commonwealth Journalists' Association (CJA) will be held in the city in February next year. Prime Minister Khaleda Zia is expected to inaugurate the five-day conference marking the silver jubilee of the Association on February 17. CJA President Murray Burt called on the Prime Minister at her office on Saturday and requested her to open the event. About 40 to 60 journalists from more than 30 countries will attend the conference which would be preceded by a five-day trainers' programme on economic and financial reporting. Renowned journalists from the United Kingdom will conduct the specialised training programmes here. The Prime Minister showed keen interests in such kind of training programme and urged the CJA president to undertake similar

kind of specialised programme for Bangladeshi journalists abroad. Murray Burt was accompanied by Vice-President of CJA Hasan Shahriar. The CJA President also called on Information Minister Tariqul Islam at his office yesterday to make a presentation on the forthcoming CJA conference. Hasan Shahriar, also the president of the Bangladesh chapter of CJA, and Mokhlesur Rahman Chowdhury, organising secretary accompanied Murray Burt in the meeting. Tariqul Islam assured the CJA leaders that the government, particularly the Ministry of Information and the Press Information Department, would extend all-out help to make the Dhaka meet a success. Information Secretary Mirza Tasadduq Hossain Beg and Principal Information Officer Fazal M Kamal were also present in the meeting.



CJA President Murray Burt called on Information Minister Tariqul Islam at his office in the city yesterday. Two leaders of Bangladesh chapter of CJA accompanied Burt in the meeting.

Complete foreign aided projects timely: Huda

BSS, Dhaka
Communications Minister Barrister Nazmul Huda yesterday stressed the need for completion of the foreign-aided development projects for communication infrastructure in the stipulated time. He was presiding over a review meeting on the progress of the projects for construction of Jamuna Bridge access road, Pakshi Bridge and Rupsha Bridge, and development of 76 steel bridges in rural areas under Roads and Highways Department (RHD). Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC) is providing financial and technical support for the projects. Held at the communications

ministry yesterday, the review meeting was attended by high officials of the JBIC, Economic Relations Division, Japanese Embassy, RHD and the ministry. He said the government had given importance on development of communication infrastructure to expedite economic development of the people and achieve rapid growth of the national economy. The meeting was told that 75 per cent work on the 63.64-km Jamuna Bridge access road on the Dhaka-Joydevpur-Tangail highway has been completed. The project worth Tk 93.13 crore includes construction of 13 bridges and 74 culverts.

Rly earns Tk 380.83 cr

UNB, Dhaka
The Bangladesh Railway earned Tk 380.83 crore in 2001-2002 fiscal which is Tk 6.63 crore more than that of the previous (2000-2001) fiscal. This was informed at a meeting held at Rail Bhavan yesterday with DG of Bangladesh Railway Ataur Rahman in the chair. The meeting was told that major chunk of the earnings came from transportation of goods and earning from this sector in 2001-02 fiscal was Tk 10 crore more than in 2000-01 fiscal. Through transportation of goods, the BR earned Tk 145.50 crore in 2001-02 fiscal. The meeting decided to take various steps to improve the standard of services and increase the overall income.

It also decided to start renovation of the rail tracks and arrange training for the officials and employees to prevent accidents, said a BR press release. Ershad leaves for S Arabia today **UNB, Dhaka** Jatiya Party Chairman HM Ershad leaves for Saudi Arabia today for medical check-up. During his stay there, the former president will perform Umrah, said a party press release. Solo exhibition of disabled artist Ishrat begins today **CU CORRESPONDENT** A four-day solo art exhibition of disabled artist Ishrat Sultana will begin at the District Council auditorium in the port city at 5 pm today. Chittagong Disability Forum will organise the art exhibition. Eminent scientist Prof Zamal Nazrul Islam of Chittagong University (CU) will be present at the programme as chief guest while artist Mizanur Rahim, Professor of Fine Arts Department of CU, will inaugurate the programme.

Stern action against vehicles with excess passengers

BSS, Dhaka
Communications Minister Barrister Nazmul Huda yesterday said the government would take all necessary steps for ensuring welfare and safety of passengers on different routes. "It will be prevented at any cost if any attempt is made to put the old vehicles on service again as we have banned those plying on the roads for the sake of the environment and safety of the passengers," he said while addressing the installation ceremony of Jatri Kalayan Samity at Jatiya Press Club here. Chaired by president of the samity Amin Sarwar, the function was also addressed by BNP Standing Committee member K M Obaidur Rahman, MP, State Minister for LGRD Ziaul Huq Zia, social worker Haji Sahab Uddin, journalist AKM Ruhul Amin and secretary of the samity Faruque Ahmed. Appreciating the organisers for forming such a body to protect the interests of passengers on all the routes including roads, railways, waterways and airways, the communications minister said stern action would be taken if any vehicle was found crossing the seat limit. He said the previous BNP government led by Khaleda Zia had also taken different steps for the welfare of the passengers. Stressing the need for such organisations, KM Obaidur Rahman hoped that this samity would be able to say against any kind of harassment to the passengers on different routes. State Minister Ziaul Huq Zia congratulated the Jatri Kalayan Samity members and said he would extend all cooperation from his ministry to construct passenger shades across the country.

2 held with fake currency note making equipment **Police arrested two people with fake currency note making equipment at village Manikdah in Sadar upazila on Wednesday.** Acting on a tip off, a contingent of police raided the house of one Manik Mollah and arrested him with note making paper, dye and other equipment. They also arrested his accomplice Shamsu Khan.

Foreign trade instt to be set up

BSS, Dhaka
The government plans to set up a foreign trade institute to acquaint professionals and business executives with the world trade regime and other aspects of trade and investment, Industries Minister M K Anwar said yesterday. Organised jointly by the Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BISS) and the Universite Paris-Sud, France, the workshop is being attended by 20 officials and executives of different departments and organisations. The workshop is aimed at exposing the professionals to advanced technology of negotiations and build national capacity in international negotiations to derive maximum benefit for the nation. Presided over by Chairman of Board of Governors of BISS and former Secretary M R Osmani, the function was also addressed by French Ambassador to Bangladesh Michel Lummaux, Director General of BISS Major General S M Shahabuddin and key resource person Dr Selim El Sayegh, Professor of Universite Paris-Sud. The industries minister said globalisation generated intensive competition among the countries in attracting foreign aid, FDI and external trade. Although globalisation promotes free flow of goods, it could not ensure the free human movement, the only resource of most of the developing and least developed countries including Bangladesh, he said. "We have to improve skills to sustain in the global competition and accrue the benefits of globalisation," he added. The government has given thrust on economic diplomacy and taken initiatives to further diversify the export basket and attract FDI, the minister said.

2 girls rescued from traffickers at Benapole

UNB, Benapole
Two teenage garment workers were rescued from Benapole border while being trafficked to India on Saturday. The two were identified as Fatema, 16, daughter of Abdul Khaleque of Nandail upazila in Mymensingh, and Shilpi, 15, daughter of Abul Hossain of Sarisabari upazila in Jamalpur districts. Police said one Belal of Faridpur and Noor Alam of Jessore were taking the teenagers to India with the lure of good marriage. The criminals, however, fled the scene leaving behind the girls when local people chased them. And the girls were handed over to the Bangladesh Rifles. Later, they were handed over to the Port thana police who kept them in safe custody. A case was filed in this connection.

TOAB team meets Mir Nasir

BSS, Dhaka
A delegation of Tour Operators Association of Bangladesh (TOAB) met State Minister for Civil Aviation and Tourism Mir Mohammad Nasiruddin at his office in the city yesterday. The TOAB team led by its Advisor Hasan Mansor apprised the state minister of their problems. The state minister gave a patient hearing to their problems and assured them of all possible help in running their business.

Khosru visits flood-hit Satkania

BSS, Chittagong
Commerce Minister Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury visited flood and river erosion affected areas under Satkania upazila on Saturday evening. Talking to people, the commerce minister said the government has already taken various steps to check the river erosion in the country. He assured the affected people that the government would take proper steps soon to check the erosion of the canal Dalu.



Waterlogging still a major problem for the city-dwellers as various streets go under water following rains, adding to the woes of the pedestrians as well as passengers. This photo was taken from the Malibagh-Rampura road yesterday.

Energy sector reforms ADB mission starts high-level talks today

UNB, Dhaka
An Asian Development Bank Mission from Manila will have week-long discussions with the government and the private sector on energy sector reforms in Bangladesh. The first meeting will be held with the leaders of the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI) today to discuss the power-sector reforms initiated by the government with the support of the donor agency. State Minister for Power Iqbal H Mahmood will address the meeting as chief guest, said an ADB press release. ADB Country Director Toru Shibuichi will be present as special guest. The ADB is the lead aid agency in the energy sector and has provided public-sector loans amounting to 1.4 billion US dollars for the sector. Furthermore, said the news release, the ADB has provided about 15 million US dollars in technical assistance grants for project preparation and institutional capacity building in the country's potential energy sector. The bank advocates for reforms in the energy sector in the areas of private sector participation, corporatisation, unbundling of the sector operations and tariff rationalisation. In addition, ADB has provided 140 million US dollars in loan and guarantees for the AES Meghnath 450-megawatt BOT power plant. This project, the first-ever power project supported in Bangladesh through the private-sector window of ADB, will provide "cheaper electricity for the people and alleviate acute power shortages in the country".

Aman orders suspension of FMCH supervisor

BSS, Dhaka
State Minister for Health and Family Welfare Aman Ullah Aman on Saturday ordered suspension of the supervisor of Faridpur Medical College Hospital (FMCH) for mismanagement and negligence of duty. He gave the directive when he paid a surprise visit to the 250-bed hospital on Saturday. During the visit, Aman saw that the bathrooms and toilets meant for the patients were dirty, stinky and unusable. He also found the hospital surroundings littered with waste. He expressed dissatisfaction at the irregularity and directed to make the hospital usable for the patients within seven days. The state minister also paid surprise visits to Dr Zayed Memorial Shishu Hospital and the Diabetic Hospital on the day. Aman also attended a function at Boalmari Upazila Health Complex organised to lay the foundation and unveil the plaque for the upgradation of the 31-bed hospital to 50-bed one. Disaster Management and Relief Minister Chowdhury Kamal Ibne Yusuf and Aman laid the foundation and unveiled the plaque. Addressing the function, Yusuf said the government was working ceaselessly for the development of the healthcare sector. The hospital would be equipped with modern equipment at a cost of Tk 3.09 crore, Aman said.

DHAKA TODAY

Prize distribution ceremony
The prize distribution ceremony of Dano World Cup Quiz 2002, organised by Anyadim, will be held with Mayor of Dhaka Sadeque Hossain Khoka as chief guest. Venue: National Press Club. Time: 4.00pm.

Roundtable
Local Governance Support Group organises a roundtable on 'Development Budget, Local Government and Local Economy'. Venue: CIRDP auditorium. Time: 4.00pm.

Meeting
A meeting of the executive committee of Uttaranga Janakalyan Samity will be held. Venue: 54 Dikusha Commercial Area. Time: 4.30pm.

Commission meeting
The 11th meeting of the Privatisation Commission will be held with its Chairman Inam Ahmed Chowdhury as chief guest. Venue: Conference room of the commission. Time: 11.30pm.

Launching ceremony
The launching ceremony of WFP-assisted School Feeding Programme will be held with Jahanara Begum, advisor to the prime minister as chief guest. Venue: Sher-e-Banglanagar Shishu Shikkha Kendra. Time: 10.30am.

WEATHER TODAY

Moderate rain likely

UNB, Dhaka
Light to moderate rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty wind is likely at many places over Dhaka, Chittagong, Rajshahi and Sylhet divisions and at few places over Khulna and Barisal divisions during the next 12 hours till 6 pm today. Moderately heavy falls are also likely at places elsewhere over the country during the period, Met Office said. Yesterday's highest temperature of 35.4 degree Celsius was recorded at Rajshahi and Jessore and the lowest of 24.5 degree at Bhola. The sun sets in the capital at 6.43 pm today and rises at 5:27 am tomorrow. The highest and lowest temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

City/Town	Temperature in Celsius		Humidity in percentage	
	Max	Min	Morning	Evening
Dhaka	32.0	26.0	84	97
Chittagong	30.7	26.5	85	65
Rajshahi	35.4	26.3	80	93
Khulna	33.8	28.2	92	87
Barisal	30.8	26.4	98	86
Sylhet	31.0	25.8	91	80
Cox's Bazar	32.4	25.0	89	85

Prof Ali Ahsan's death condoled

CU CORRESPONDENT
Dhaka on July 25 at the age of 83. BSS adds: Speakers at a condolence meeting at the Jahangirnagar University said late Prof Sved Ali Ahsan made unique contributions to the development of nationalistic spirit of the people. Chaired by Vice-Chancellor Prof Jasimuddin Ahmed, the meeting was addressed by Pro-Vice Chancellor Prof M Imamuddin, former Vice-Chancellor Prof Zillur Rahman Siddique, Prof Mahmud Shah Qureshi and Treasurer ABM Enayet Hossain. Paying glowing tribute to the late professor, they said Prof Ali Ahsan played a historic role in mobilising public opinion in favour of the War of Liberation at home and abroad. The speakers said Prof Ali Ahsan was a scholar, good orator, successful teacher and creative writer. He died of old age ailment in Dhaka on July 25 at the age of 83. BSS adds: Speakers at a condolence meeting at the Jahangirnagar University said late Prof Sved Ali Ahsan made unique contributions to the development of nationalistic spirit of the people. Chaired by Vice-Chancellor Prof Jasimuddin Ahmed, the meeting was addressed by Pro-Vice Chancellor Prof M Imamuddin, former Vice-Chancellor Prof Zillur Rahman Siddique, Prof Mahmud Shah Qureshi and Treasurer ABM Enayet Hossain. Paying glowing tribute to the late professor, they said Prof Ali Ahsan played a historic role in mobilising public opinion in favour of the War of Liberation at home and abroad. The speakers said Prof Ali Ahsan was a scholar, good orator, successful teacher and creative writer. He died of old age ailment in Dhaka on July 25 at the age of 83.

'Phone ladies' earn over Tk 40,600 yearly: Study

BSS, Dhaka
The average income of the "phone ladies" who operate Grameen mobile phones on commercial basis is estimated at more than about Tk 40,600 (700 dollars) a year after covering all costs. The women provide the services to 70 customers a month in a small village and earn the amount that is more than twice the country's annual per capita income, says a recently published World Bank source book from Washington on empowerment and poverty reduction. It predicted that in larger villages, individual phone revenues could be more than about Tk 6,96,000 (12,000 dollars) per year,

although revenues are falling in areas with multiple telephones. High and, so far, secure returns have led many women to regard these telephones as their "modern cows." Grameen Phone provides commercial phone service in rural areas through local entrepreneurs, usually poor women, who own and operate cellular phones that typically serve an entire village. 21 women entrepreneurs borrow about 350 dollars at 22 per cent interest from the Grameen Bank to purchase a handset. They then sell telephone services to other villagers, making a living and paying off their loan, usually with a year. This creates a self-employment opportunity for a woman in each village and provides all villagers with access to telephones. Grameen Phone started its operations in Dhaka in 1997 and later expanded to rural areas. By March 2002, about 10,000 village phones were in operation, catering to an estimated 15 million people. Rural telephones are very profitable, bringing in revenues per phone of 93 dollar a month, twice as much as Grameen Phone's urban mobile phones. However, rural phones represent less than two per cent of the phones used on Grameen Phone's total network and therefore bring in only eight per cent of the company's total revenue. The company's profitability thus still depends on its urban business. The sourcebook pointed out that mainly poor people make about 50 per cent of the calls for economic reasons. Users, 40 per cent of them women, call relatives and friends, often overseas, to request remittances or medical help; farmers and traders call city markets to find out the prices of agricultural produce. In villages with phones, eggs and poultry sell for higher prices, the cost of information is much lower, 25 per cent of prior costs, which included a trip to town, the cost of feed is lower, and diesel prices are more stable. Prices paid by traders for raw materials and crafted goods have risen, because sellers have more pricing information. Exchange rates for currency from expatriates have improved. Furthermore, the phones offer the villagers additional bene-

fits such as improved law enforcement, faster and more effective communications during disasters, and stronger kinship-bond. The sourcebook observed that the Grameen Phone experience has shattered many myths about the capabilities of poor rural women. Even illiterate women who have never seen a telephone have mastered the skills quickly, gained confidence, and earned new status and respect in their communities as owners of a powerful and desirable asset. Telephone owners have greater freedom than before to move about the villages as they deliver messages or take the phones to users, charging a higher fee for the service. Women learn about medical

information and the status of markets in Dhaka by overhearing conversations. Some have developed a sophisticated functional knowledge of international currency markets. "She used to cook for the elite," said the neighbour of one of these phone ladies. "Now she is invited by them." In 1999, the International Finance Corporation signed an agreement to lend 16.7 million dollar and invest 1.6 million dollar in equity toward expanding Grameen Telecom, now the largest cellular phone operator in Bangladesh. The Asian Development Bank and the Commonwealth Corporation are providing parallel financing in the form of loan and equity investments.

Obituary

RU CORRESPONDENT
Prof S M Zillur Rahman, ex-chairman of the Sociology Department of Rajshahi University (RU) died of a cardiac arrest at his university residence yesterday morning at the age of 45. Prof Rahman is survived by his wife and a daughter. He was buried at RU graveyard after Asr prayers.

Death anniversary

The 24th death anniversary of Moulvi Abul Quasem, Retd. Judge and Advocate and former president of Chittagong Bar Association, will be observed on July 31 at his village home Sultanpur at Raazan in Chittagong, says a press release. On this occasion, Abul Quasem Sub-Judge Smriti Shangshad has arranged a memorial meeting and milad mahfil at the Raazan-Rangunia Nizamuddin Public Hall Auditorium on August 2 at 3 pm. All relatives and admirers have been requested to attend the function and pray for the salvation of the departed soul.