

DHAKA  
TODAY**Seminar**

On the occasion of holy Eid-e-Miladunabi, Tarikot-e-Mawla Group, Bangladesh, will hold a seminar and miliad mahfil. Venue: National Press Club. Time: 11.00am.

**Discussion**

Bangla Academy will hold a discussion titled 'Human Rights and Islam' in observance of holy Eid-e-Miladunabi. Venue: Seminar room of the academy. Time: 4.00pm.

**Buddha Purnima**

Bangladesh Buddhist Federation organises a function in observance of Buddha Purnima with Major Sadeque Hossain Khoka as chief guest. Venue: International Buddhist Monastery, Merul Badda. Time: 5.00pm.

**Peace procession**

Sammilito Buddha Purnima Uddjan Parishad will take out a peace procession in observance of Buddha Purnima. Venue: Shikha Bhaban, Abdul Gani Road. Time: 7.30am.

**Nikita Mikhlov retrospective**

Zahir Raihan Film Society in association with Russian Cultural Centre organises a 3-day retrospective on Nikita Mikhlov. On the third and last day, two films titled 'Dark Eyes' (1987) and 'Urga-the territory of love' (1991) will be screened. Venue: Russian Cultural Centre, Dhanmondi. Time: 3.30pm and 5.30pm.

**DHAKA  
TOMORROW****Art exhibition**

In association with Women's Initiative for peace in South Asia, Bengal Gallery of Fine Arts organises an art exhibition featuring 28 women artists of Bangladesh. Venue: Bengal Shilpalya, Dhanmondi. Time: 5.00pm. The exhibition will remain open till May 20 from 12.00 noon to 8.00pm daily.

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**Film show**

Academy Film Society will screen one Japanese film titled 'Kitchen' and one American film titled 'One fine day'. Venue: 21/C, Jigatola. Time: 3.30pm and 6.30pm.

**Discussion**

South Asia Alliance for Poverty Eradication, Bangladesh organises a discussion on Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP). Venue: CIRDAP auditorium. Time: 3.00pm.

**Seminar**

Rapport Bangladesh Limited will hold a seminar on 'Poverty, Unemployment and Gender Issue'. Venue: Zeenat Bhaban, Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue. Time: 8.30am.

**Conference**

The inaugural ceremony of the national conference of Ganatantri Party will be held. Venue: Mohanagar Natyamancha, Gulistan. Time: 10.00am.

**BB staff**

**FROM PAGE 1**  
Wahiduddin Mahmud was barred from entering the bank and he left when employees asked him not to join the board meeting.

Later, the BB governor, Dr Fakhrudin Ahmad, met with deputy governors to review the situation.

Prof Mahmud told The Daily Star last night that there was a proposal of strengthening the central bank and rationalising its manpower. But the BB board has not yet discussed it, let alone approved, he added.

"So far as I know the employees at 45 and above will be offered the option of voluntary retirement with benefits, but there will be no compulsory retirement," says Prof. Mahmud. The terms of voluntary retirement can be further discussed, he added.

"I don't find any reason for agitation at this stage. The governor called a meeting of directors today to let us know the situation. But the meeting was not held because of the agitation."

"Such an incident is undesired in a strategically important institution like the Bangladesh Bank and may send wrong signals for reforms of the financial sector and discipline in the administration," he said.

"I have never seen a board meeting being disrupted due to unruly behaviour of the employees," he said.

**WISPA**

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against women and trafficking.

As part of WIPSA's initiative, a 34-member delegation from Kolkata came to the city yesterday under the theme of 'peace bus trip'. The Indian delegates also visited Pakistan before coming to Bangladesh.

Speakers said it is the women that are the victims in most cases of repression and violence, both in India and Bangladesh.

"The policy of all the South Asian countries should be such that people can live peacefully both socially and politically," Aysha Khanam said.

"We will visit India within the next six months," Sigma Huda said. Among other things the visiting delegates are here to protest the push back attempts by India, she added.

The delegates include noted women personalities, human rights activists, writers, journalists and lawyers.

They will be in Bangladesh till May 20. They will meet the minister for women and children affairs, the home minister and visit various human rights organisations, trade unions, NGOs and meet with students and teachers.

The WIPSA host committee comprises women leaders, human rights activists, actresses, singers and others.

Hamida Hossain, Salma Khan and Ivy Rahman also attended the conference.

**Civil society watchdog**

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poverty reduction policies are not discussed with the stakeholders and demanded free flow of information and access to all relevant documents prepared to help the poor.

Advocate Emdadul Haq said, "There are some NGOs which are making money by charging high interest rates for microcredit. If we really analyse the situation, it would transpire that the credit programmes do not benefit the poor. In fact, loans often become a big burden for them. Such loans with high interest rates should be banned."

Nurul Amin Kalam of the district Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD) said, "A civil society vigilance group should be formed to monitor whether the funds for the poor actually reach them with any benefit."

Anil Bandhu Das of the Jatiya Party (Manju) said, "Before addressing the poverty issue, we should work for a corruption-free society. We cannot expect anti-poverty schemes to bring benefit unless corruption is eradicated."

Professor MM Akash of Dhaka University said poverty cannot be changed overnight since it is a gradual process.

"What we are witnessing in the name of poverty reduction is basically business. The NGOs are making money out of the poor with little development done to them," a speaker from the Bangladesh Agriculture University (BAU) said.

Many speakers observed that

**NGOs demand Tk 100cr fund to fight poverty****STAFF CORRESPONDENT**

A group of non-government organisations (NGOs) sought a Tk 100 crore special allocation in the next budget for poverty alleviation, literacy and nutrition programmes.

They also proposed formation of an independent and autonomous body styled Bangladesh Small NGO Foundation for using the fund under various programmes.

The proposal was placed before Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman during a pre-budget discussion at the planning commission yesterday.

The finance minister assured them of giving special allocation in the next budget.

"I do not see any problem in giving them money, but we need some policy framework," Saifur told journalists after the meeting.

The finance minister however said the government had some reservations about a section of NGOs which are directly involved in political activities.

NGOs under the umbrella of the Federation of NGOs in Bangladesh was led by former ADAB chairperson Rasheda Chowdhury.

She observed the government should give special allocation for education of working children, elimination of urban poverty and providing water and sanitation facilities to the poor.

Executive Director of BRAC Abdul Muyeed Chowdhury, Chairman of the Bangladesh Shishu Odhikar Forum Abdul Huq Kazi Rafiqul Alam of the Dhaka Ahsanullah Mission and SM Rashiduzzaman, country director of the Muslim Aid Bangladesh, were among the 19 NGO leaders present at the meeting.

**Miladunnabi**

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gious organisations have chalked out programmes marking the day.

President Iajuddin Ahmed, prime Minister Khaleda Zia and leader of the opposition Sheikh Hasina gave separate messages wishing the Muslim Ummah on this occasion.

They urged all to follow the ideals and teachings of Hazrat Muhammad (PBUH) for upholding peace, fraternity and equality as well as ensuring welfare of the mankind.

Newspapers will publish special articles while radio and television channels air special programmes highlighting the significance of the day. The day is a public holiday.

He mentioned that Bangladesh Bank Automation Project, which



PHOTO: STAR

As the convicted in the Sutrapur double murder are taken away in a prison van, a cigarette carton is being given to them right in front of the policemen, posing security threat.

**Governor**

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"No-one will be forced to retire, but anyone willing to retire will be welcomed to avail the opportunity," he said while briefing newsmen yesterday at the BB conference room.

Besides, six per cent of the fund will be spent for employment of local and foreign specialists and advisors for a smooth and timely implementation of the programme.

The governor said the central bank's VERS is more attractive than similar programmes in other government organisations and it has been taken up following detailed discussions between the bank board and the government.

About the ongoing agitation, he said stern action would be taken against those trying to create chaos. "But we are ready to discuss with the agitators if they have any lawful demand."

He described extensively the central bank strengthening programme to be implemented in fiscal 2003-04 and 2005-06 at a cost of \$ 46.13 million. Of the amount, the International Development Agency (IDA) will provide \$ 37 million and the government \$ 9.13 million.

He went on, "VERS is a small component of the reform plan to screen out persons who are not skilled."

The governor further said, "Persons willing to retire voluntarily will be given a large amount of loan remission, an option to retire within a specified period, cash payment of 15 months' salary and all the money due as provident fund, pension and gratuity."

The British army, which was unable to say exactly where the incident took place, has identified 350 unexploded ordnance sites in the governorate of Missan and has cleared 230, according to Major Cameron Day.

**64 dead**

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China's market-oriented reform of the state-run coal sector is leading to increased mine accidents while the ruling Communist Party-controlled unions are ineffective in safeguarding workers, labor activists said.

Last month, two major explosions killed 97 miners in China, with 72 dying at the Mengnanzhuang mine in Shansi province in the north and 25 in a blast at the Mengjiaogou mine in the northeastern province of Liaoning.

Official figures show nearly 1,600 miners died in Chinese mines in the first two months of the year.

**Iraqi children**

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"This tragedy highlights the terrible danger that unexploded ordnance represents all around Iraq," Wimhurst said.

Kathryn Irwin, a spokeswoman for the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), said the ordnance that exploded was an Iraqi rocket.

"There are thousands of stockpiles of weapons in Iraq," she told AFP.

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The Department of State has ordered the departure of all non-emergency personnel and family members at the US Embassy and the Consulates in Saudi Arabia following the terrorist attacks on May 12 against residential compounds in Riyadh," the State Department said in a statement.

"The Department recommends that private American citizens currently in Saudi Arabia consider departing the country," the statement said.

The list included books by a minister, several ruling BNP lawmakers, bureaucrats, committee members and their wives and friends.

Many books by unfamiliar writers were included in the list as textbooks, but many renowned writers were skirted, alleged the publishers.

The list's reference section enlisted 17 books on Ziaur Rahman, including speeches by Ziaur Rahman by SM Bipash Anwar, Zia Bangladesh by Maruf Kamal Khan, deputy press secretary to the prime minister, Ziaur Rahman by MS Doha, and Political Ideology of Zia by Prof Emajuddin Ahmed.

The committee selected 200 books out of over 8,000 for secondary students.

The motive behind the selection was not only to please the ruling BNP but to promote unfamiliar books, sources alleged.

Last year, a committee selected as many as 52 books on Ziaur Rahman and Khaleda Zia for public and college libraries.

The Awami League (AL) also enlisted books for libraries out of political bias. During its rule, the AL selected 34 books on Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, seven on AL President Sheikh Hasina and 13 written by pro-Awami intellectuals.

**Two detectives**

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Home Minister Altaf Hossain Choudhury went to the DMCH to see the bodies of the policemen and ordered that their family members be informed.

Senior police officials visited the spot and went to the DMCH.

Police and intelligence agencies have been put on alert and checkpoints put up on key city roads.

**FBI hunts for Saudi bombers**

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US targets since the United States waged war on Iraq to stamp out terror and oust Saddam Hussein.

"Whatever success they (al Qaeda) think they have achieved they will be sorry for, because this country is now united against them in every way," Prince Saud said in an interview on NBC's "Today" show.

An FBI spokesman in Washington said a team of agents had already left for Saudi Arabia. Saudi officials said the prime suspects in the blasts were a group of 19 al Qaeda suspects, who disappeared in Riyadh last week after a shootout with police.

The main accused Sumon and his brother Sujon alleged -- before the court announced its verdict -- that they were politically victimised. Sumon shouted at the crowded courtroom, questioning the validity of the special tribunal.

Sumon's sister called the verdict politically motivated. His father Sultan Uddin Ahmed, acquited of the charge, termed the judgement one-sided.

Defence lawyers said the convicts would appeal to the High Court against the judgement.

The US ambassador to the

kingdom, Robert Jordan, criticised the Saudi authorities for not responding quickly to recent US requests for more security at the attacked compounds.

He also said the conservative Muslim kingdom where Saudis sympathise with bin Laden had a "long way to go" to end terror attacks against foreigners.

"I do believe the crown prince... is sincere," he told NBC's "Today" show. "Executing their plan to provide additional security is another matter."

A US diplomat in Riyadh said the embassy would lay on evacuation flights for any of the 40,000 or so Americans living in the kingdom, the world's largest oil exporter.

The State Department also told

dependants and non-essential staff at US missions in the kingdom to leave.

But despite the heightened security threat, many Western firms said they had no plans to walk away from the lucrative business to be had in the world's biggest oil exporter, which also has a huge defence budget.

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Senior police officials visited the