



PHOTO: STAR

Haji pilgrims offer prayers before boarding the Biman's first Hajj flight of this year at Zia International Airport in Dhaka yesterday.

Kids Festival begins today

CU CORRESPONDENT

A two-day festival titled "Star Ship Juice Kids Festival and Mina Bazar" begins on the local Shishu academy premises in the port city today.

"Dristy", a cultural organisation, will organise the festival.

Commerce Minister Amir Khoshru Mahmud Chowdhury will inaugurate the festival as chief guest at 4pm. Former president of Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industry Farid Uddin Ahmed, Oriental Bank Ltd Managing Director CM Kyes Sami, Chittagong Press Club General Secretary Kalim Sarwar will be present at the function as special guest.

A photography exhibition will also be held at the festival. The exhibition will be followed by a cultural function.

On the second day, the programmes will begin with a debate competition at 9am tomorrow. The concluding ceremony will be held at 5pm. Noted columnist and politician Nurul Islam BSc will attend it as chief guest.

Premier Bank launches edn credit scheme

The Premier Bank has launched an education credit scheme for the meritorious students pursuing higher education, says a press release.

The main objective of the credit scheme is to provide financial assistance to the meritorious students and achieve one of the social welfare objectives of the bank.

Under the programme, undergraduate and graduate students can get loans from the bank without any collateral security.

The loans will be given for admission fees, books and stationery, instruments, monthly fees, examination fees and boarding and lodging.

Undergraduate students having a minimum of 70 percent marks in HSC and SSC examinations can avail themselves of the credit facility while graduate students should have 55 percent marks in degree exams and 70 percent

marks in HSC and SSC exams.

For details, interested students may contact any branch of the Bank or Corporate Marketing Division, Head Office, Iqbal Centre, Banani. Tel: 9887581-4 Ext. 123 & 125. Mobile: 0174-010305.

Harris presents book to Khaleda

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister's Political Secretary Harris Chowdhury yesterday presented a book, titled "Agragotir Dui Bachhar", to Prime Minister Khaleda Zia at her office.

Department of Films and Publications (DFP) published the book under the supervision of Harris Chowdhury.

Concerned officials of DFP were present on the occasion.

Contraband goods worth Tk 13 lakh seized: 3 held

UNB, Dhaka

Coast Guard members seized illegal goods worth Tk 13 lakh from the coastal areas and arrested three people during the last fortnight till Tuesday.

The seized goods include 123 mts of urea fertilizer, 556 cft sundari, segun and other timbers, 293 cans of beer, 38 bottles of Ram, 30 bottles of Vodka, six cartons Benson cigarettes, six grams of heroin, 18,000 meters of current net and one pistol.

They also arrested one child trafficker and rescued two children from his clutches.

The seized current nets were burnt in front of local people and fisheries officials.

One burnt alive, 64 shops gutted in Pirojpur

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

One person was burnt alive and 64 shops were gutted in a fire that broke out at Mathbaria Muktioddha Market in Pirojpur district in the early hours of yesterday.

Abdur Rahman, a freedom fighter and night guard of the mar-

ket, died in the blaze that started shortly after midnight and engulfed the market and adjacent medicines shops.

Shops selling cloths, readymade garments, medicines, electronic goods and toiletries were reduced to ashes, causing an estimated loss of Tk four crore.

An electrical short circuit

sparked off the fire, witnesses said.

Abdur Rahman was trapped inside the market during the blaze. He was charred beyond recognition.

Fire fighters from Mathbaria, Vandaria, Jhalakati, and Pirojpur brought the blaze under control after a three-hour struggle with the help of the local people.

Freedom fighter Abdur Rahman

was a commander during the liberation war.

He was buried at his family graveyard at village Badura with state honour on Wednesday afternoon.

The local association of businessmen has declared a three-day mourning at Mathbaria from Thursday.

BDRCS to expand activities at arsenic-hit dists

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Red Crescent Society (BDRCS) will expand its activities in the arsenic-affected districts.

The BDRCS will also continue its social awareness campaign on HIV/AIDS in order to combat the diseases. BDRCS Chairman Major General (Retd) Z A Khan said at a press conference yesterday held at the National Press Club.

"The BDRCS has set up a confidential approach centre with a view to providing information and services to people regarding HIV/AIDS," he said.

The BRCS will also initiate activities to reduce road accidents and provide medical treatment to the people injured in road accidents, he added.

He said some unauthorised people and institutions were tarnishing image of the country by rampant use of the logo of the Red Crescent.

Referring to the foreign donation, he said "donation in the BDRCS has decreased as the donors are now spending their money on war against terrorism."

When asked about the relief

activities in the Monga-hit region, he said we did not send relief there because the government had not declared it as disaster area.

Major General (Rtd) Z. A. Khan briefed the journalists about last year's activities BDRCS.

The newly elected members Habibur Rahman Nantu, Rezaul Karim Razu, M.A Masud Bhuiyan, Kazi Asaduzzaman, Rezaul Karim Badsha and Dr. Shahidul Alam were present at the press briefing.

US embassy to remain closed today

UNB, Dhaka

US Embassy offices, including The American Centre, Information Resource Centre (IRC) and the Student Advising Center will remain closed today on the occasion of New Year's Day, says a press release.

Chinese photo exhibition in Ctg

UNB, Dhaka

A weeklong Chinese photo exhibition and film show will begin at Chittagong Art College in Chittagong on January 5.

Chinese Embassy in Bangladesh and Bangladesh-China People's Friendship Association are jointly organising

the programme.

Chinese Ambassador Chai Xi and association president Anwarul Amin will inaugurate the exhibition. Chittagong City Corporation Mayor A B M M o h i u d d i n Chowdhury will also attend as guest of honour.

The exhibition and the film show will remain open to all.



Dry weather to prevail

UNB, Dhaka

Dry weather will prevail over the country till 6pm today.

Light to moderate fog may occur over northwestern port, central part and the river basins of the country during the morning. Met offices said.

Mild cold wave may continue over the regions of Rajshahi, Ishurdi, Jessore, Kushtia and Srimongal.

Night temperature may remain nearly unchanged over the country.

Highest temperature 27.0 degree Celsius was recorded yesterday at Cox's Bazar and the lowest 9.2 degree at Ishurdi.

The sun sets in the capital at 5:23pm today and rises at 6:42am tomorrow.

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	20.1	13.6	93	83
Chittagong	25.4	13.2	80	63
Rajshahi	22.0	10.4	90	78
Khulna	22.5	12.5	94	82
Barisal	22.0	12.5	98	89
Sylhet	25.9	12.9	69	67



The annual prize giving ceremony of Bangladesh International School was held on the school premises in the city on Saturday. Prof. Bazlul Mobin Chowdhury, vice-chancellor of IUB, was present as chief guest.

Seminar held at Eastern University

A seminar on 'Agricultural Technology and Trade within the framework of WTO' was held at the Eastern University in the city on December 28, says a press release.

The seminar was organised under the monthly seminar session programme of the university.

Dr Zahurul Karim, ex-secretary and ex-chairman of BARC, was the keynote speaker.

He laid emphasis on acquiring the competence in the agricultural sector to face the challenges beyond 2005 when the WTO charter will come into effect.

Dr Karim also stressed the need for government's support in capacity building on phytosanitary requirements and bio-technology without which the country may face serious obstacles to have access in world market.

Presided over by Prof AK Fazlul H Shah, vice-chancellor of Eastern University, the seminar was attended by the faculty deans and advisors, faculty members and students.

1683 more held

UNB, Dhaka

Police arrested a total of 1,683 people, including two listed criminals, during its countrywide drive in last 24 hours till 6am yesterday.

During the drive, they recovered seven firearms and 37 bullets and filed five cases against nine people under the Arms Act.



Book fair

The inaugural ceremony of the 10th Dhaka Book Fair 2004 will be held, with Prime Minister Khaleda Zia as chief guest. Venue: Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre, Sher-e-Bangla Nagar. Time: 4.00pm. The exhibition will remain open till January 15.

Film show

The Academy Film Society will screen three films -- 'Kal Ho Naa Ho', 'The Order' and 'Boxing Helena'. Venue: 21/C Jigatola. Time: 3.30pm, 6.30pm and 8.30pm.

Protocol meeting on justice for women

A two-day protocol meeting of judges on 'Law, social control and justice for women' will begin, with Chief Justice KM Hasan as chief guest. The Khan Foundation organises the event. Venue: Sheraton Hotel. Time: 2.30pm.

Condolence meeting

The Ministry of Religious Affairs and the Islamic Foundation will hold a condolence meeting in memory of the army officers killed in an air crash recently. Venue: Islamic Foundation Auditorium. Time: 3.00pm.

Reception

The daily Barta Sarani will accord a reception to poet Al Mujahidi on the occasion of his 62nd birthday. Venue: Sangskriti Bikash Kendra auditorium, Panibagh. Time: 6.00pm.

Retired Police Officers Assoc AGM

The annual general meeting of the Bangladesh Retired Police Officers Welfare Association will be held, with IGP Shahudul Haque as chief guest. Venue: Police Telecom Auditorium, Razarbagh. Time: 10.00am.

Scientific seminar

A scientific seminar on 'Oral & Maxillofacial Surgery' will be held, with Prof. John Arvier, chairman of Joint Australia-Bangladesh Oral & Maxillofacial Surgery Project (Australian chapter) as the key speaker. Venue: Gono Bishwabidyalay auditorium. Time: 11.00am.

Seminar

A seminar on the 'Demand of the new century and the role of Ulamaye Karam', organised by Madrassah Darul Rashad, will be held. Venue: Islamic Foundation auditorium, Baitul Mokarram. Time: 9.00am.

Loknath Sebak Sangha

The Bangladesh Loknath Brahmachari Sebak Sangha will hold a conference of

its representatives. Venue: Loknath Brahmachari Ashram, Swamibagh. Time: 2.30pm.

Rotary Greater Dhaka

Regular weekly meeting of the Rotary Club of Greater Dhaka will be held, with Professor Dr Florus FJM Geraedts of the Netherlands as guest speaker. Venue: Hotel Eastern Residence, House # 14, Road # 27, Block # J, Banani. Time: 5.30pm.

Installation ceremony

The installation ceremony of the newly elected executive committee of Khulna Divisional Samity and a reception to noted personalities will be held, with Information Minister Tariqul Islam as chief guest. Venue: Shishu Academy. Time: 3.30pm.

Eid reunion

The Power Associates organises an Eid reunion and award ceremony, with State Minister for Finance and Planning Md Anwarul Kabir Talukder as chief guest. Venue: Mahanagar Natyamancha. Time: 3.30pm.

Meeting

A meeting of the executive committee of the Bangladesh Egg Producers Association will be held. Venue: 2/2 Tajmahal Road, Mohammadpur. Time: 4.00pm.



DU English Dept. alumni reunion

The English Department Alumni Society, University of Dhaka, will hold its annual Alumni Reunion. Venue: DU English department (From 10.30am to 8.00pm) and British Council (3.00pm to 8.00pm).

French film show

The Alliance Francaise will screen a film titled 'Jeane et le garcon formidable'. Venue: Alliance Francaise auditorium. Time: 10.30am and 6.00pm.

Protocol meeting on law

The concluding session of a protocol meeting of judges on 'Law, social control and justice for women' will be held, with Law Minister Moudud Ahmed as chief guest. The Khan Foundation organises the event. Venue: Democracy Auditorium, Momenbagh. Time: 4.00pm.

AGM & reunion

Bangladesh Lok Prashasan Samity will hold its annual general meeting and reunion. Venue: Ramna Restaurant, Ramna Park. Time: 4.30pm.