



Leader of the Opposition in Parliament and Awami League President Sheikh Hasina offers prayers after placing wreaths at the coffins of 15 army officers killed in a plane crash in Benin, at the Jatiya Eidgah Maidan in the city yesterday.

BDR-BSF meet begins in Delhi Jan 6

Cross-border firing, smuggling to figure high

RAFIQ HASAN

Cross-border firing, human trafficking, smuggling, push-in and push-out attempts and border disputes will dominate the discussion between the chiefs of Bangladesh and Indian border security forces next week.

The high level discussions between the border security forces of two neighbours will begin in New Delhi on January 6.

Director General of Bangladesh Rifle (BDR) Major General Jahangir Alam Chowdhury and Chief of Border Security Force (BSF) of India Ajoy Raj Sharma will led their respective sides, sources said.

The Bangladesh delegation is scheduled to leave Dhaka on January 5 and return home on January 10.

Cross-border crimes like human trafficking, smuggling and

firing are commonplace along over 4,000-km border between Bangladesh and India.

Tensions also flare up along the border when India tries to push-in a large number of Bengali-speaking people into Bangladesh.

In February last, tensions ran high for several weeks in the bordering areas in Lalmonirhat

1532 more held

UNB, Dhaka

Police arrested a total of 1,532 people, including one listed criminal, during their countrywide drive in last 24 hours till 6am yesterday.

During the drive, they recovered five firearms and three bullets and filed three cases against eight people under the Arms Act, says a police headquarters press release.

Panchagarh, Kurigram, and Jessore as BSF tried to push in Bengali-speaking people into Bangladesh.

Around 200 people were stranded on no-man's land along Kurigram border during that time.

The attempts, however, were foiled in the face of strong resistance by the BDR.

Last year saw a decline in the incidents of killing of innocent Bangladeshis by the BSF following a high level discussion that took place in Dhaka in March. The number of deaths came down to around 40 from 80 in 2002.

The sources said smuggling and human trafficking would also decline significantly if such talks take place regularly.

RU introduces two new departments

RU CORRESPONDENT

Two new departments have been introduced at Rajshahi University (RU).

These are- Material Science in the science faculty and Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Science in agriculture faculty.

There will be 15 seats in each department under 2003-04 academic session.

A decision to this effect was taken at the education committee meeting on Wednesday with Vice-Chancellor Prof Faisul Islam Faruki in the chair.

The admission-seekers for the subjects should have a total 6 GPA and 1100 marks in traditional system.

Khaleda declares 2004 as 'Child Literature Year'

10th Dhaka Book Fair opens

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday called upon the people to make book reading a habit to develop their intellects and use their acquired knowledge in nation-building activities.

"Book is not only a source of knowledge, but also a medium of pleasure and it can save us from various social crises preventing degradation of moral values," Khaleda Zia said this while she was inaugurating the 10th Dhaka Book Fair at the Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre here yesterday afternoon.

The theme of this year's book fair, being held on the premises of the conference centre, is "Books for Better Life".

She said the rising trend of book sale and purchase would help give the publication industry a boost, casting a positive impact on the economy.

"If we can remove our limita-

tions of knowledge by reading books, our resource constraint will soon disappear and we'll be able to make Bangladesh a prosperous country," she said.

Declaring the year 2004 as 'Child Literature Year', the Prime Minister urged all to present books to their children at every moment of their success and joy.

Khaleda Zia also urged all to make the first day of the New Year memorable by presenting books to their children and appreciate their achievements in schools and other institutions by giving them books.

The prime minister asked the writers and publishers to always write and publish books worthy for children and youths.

"More and more books should be written and published for children to grow their interest in reading books," Khaleda Zia said adding that every addiction has its adverse effect, but addiction to book reading has no harm, it rather has a lot of benefits.

She said the writers and publishers could make the book fair attractive by providing good books and the readers could make it a successful one by purchasing books for themselves and their beloved ones.

State Minister for Cultural Affairs Begum Selima Rahman, Director of National Book Centre poet Mahmud Shafiq and Mesbahuddin Ahmed also addressed the function.

Later, the prime minister went round some bookstalls of the fair and bought some books for herself.

Some 110 bookstalls, including four from abroad, have been set up at the 15-day fair, which will remain open from 2pm to 9pm everyday, except holidays. It will remain open from 11am to 9pm on the holidays.

Earlier, Prime Minister Khaleda Zia distributed prizes among the winners of various competitions, including essay writing and extempore speech making arranged on the occasion of the Library Year 2003.



Birth anniversary of Shawkat Osman today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Today is the 87th birth anniversary of eminent litterateur Shawkat Osman.

Author of about 90 books, he has won many awards, including Bangla Academy award, Ekushey Padak and Independence Day award, for his contribution to Bangla literature.

Among the novels, 'Kritadaser Hasi' and 'Jananai' earned him widespread accolades.

Shawkat Osman died on May 14 in 1998.

To mark his birth anniversary, a discussion will be held on the Liberation War Museum premises at Segun Bagicha in the city at 5.00pm today.

Family planning service resumes after 5 years

UNB, Dhaka

Family planning service resumed yesterday across the country under a separate administrative set-up after five years and a half.

Field workers will again visit door to door and give advice on family planning and mother and child healthcare.

In fact, counselling service on family planning and health care came to a halt with the initiating of Health and Population Sector Program in 1998.

On the occasion, a discussion was held at National Museum yesterday to raise awareness about family planning and mother and child healthcare.

Health and Family Welfare Minister Dr Khandaker Musharraf Hossain attended the meeting as chief guest organised by Family Planning Department.

The minister said acceptance rate of family planning method has to be increased to 62 per cent and the total fertility rate to be reduced at 2.9 percent by 2006 to overcome the existing stagnation.

Musharraf directed the field workers to work more sincerely than before for achieving the desired

Gias Kamal, Gazi elected BFUJ president, secy gen

Gias Kamal Chowdhury and Ruhul Amin Gazi have been elected president and secretary general of the Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalists (BFUJ) for 2004-2005, says a press release.

Other office-bearers of the executive committee are Zakir Hossain and Fakir Shawkat (vice-presidents); Rezaul Karim Razu, Shaheen Chowdhury and Kazim Reza (assistant secretaries general); Nurul Amin Rokon (treasurer); Md Modabber Hossain (organising secretary); Abul Hossain Khan Mohon (publicity secretary); and Mizanur Rahman Tota, Helal Humayun, Mohsin Ali Razu, Syed Shahjahan, Qamar Farid, Mostofa Tariq Al Banna and Asaduzzaman Asad (members).

The newly elected members took over the charge at a ceremony on Sunday, with Gias Kamal Chowdhury in the chair.

SAARC Jamboree begins in Kaliakoir Jan 5

UNB, Gazipur

An eight-day SAARC Jamboree begins at the Scouts camp in Kaliakoir upazila on January 5.

President Iajuddin Ahmed will inaugurate the national event where about 12,000 scouts and officials of SAARC countries are expected to attend.

To make the Jamboree successful, local administration has been busy arranging necessary residential accommodation, pure water supply, sanitation, uninterrupted power supply, telecommunication

and other facilities for the participants.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia is expected to attend the concluding function on January 12.

Official sources said several teams led by Additional Deputy Commissioner (General) Mohammad Kafiluddin have been working in collaboration with concerned departments to ensure these facilities.

A huge number of tents have already been set up at the venue, they added.



PHOTO: STAR

Students of Dhaka University gather in front of the Teacher-Student Centre at midnight on Wednesday to celebrate the New Year 2004.

Kids Festival begins in Ctg

CU CORRESPONDENT

A two-day festival titled 'Star Ship Juice Kids Festival and Mina Bazar' began at the Shishu academy premises in the port city yesterday with a call to make the environment more favourable for the children.

Commerce Minister Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury inaugurated the festival as chief guest at 4.00pm.

Former president of Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industry Farid Uddin Ahmed, Managing Director of the Oriental Bank Ltd CM Kyes Sami, and General Secretary of the Chittagong Press Club Kalim Sarwer were present at the function as special guests.

Later, a photography exhibition was held there. The exhibition was followed by a cultural function.

Today's programme will begin with a debate competition and recitation at 9.00am.

The concluding ceremony will be held at 5.00pm.

Noted columnist and politician Nurul Islam BSc will attend it as chief guest.

'Dristy', a cultural organisation, has organised the festival.