

## 54 houses gutted in Bandarban

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bandarban

About 54 houses were gutted in a devastating fire at Lach Se village of Rupashipara union under Lama upazila yesterday.

Police said the fire originated from a kitchen at about 11.00am and soon

engulfed the surrounding houses damaging properties worth about Tk30 lakh.

The victims said they could not extinguish the fire due to lack of water.

They were living under the open sky and got no relief till filing of this report at afternoon.

## Brac presents Social Harmony Project

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Brac, a leading non-governmental organisation, has taken up a project to unite children of different parts of the globe through cultural exchanges for a better world.

The Social Harmony Project was presented at a function at the Brac Centre auditorium in Dhaka on Sunday. Fashion designer Bibi Russell was present at the function.

The first cultural exchange programme will start next month, with a group of Cuban children joining it.

According to sources, 14 children from Havana are scheduled to arrive at Dhaka on April 17. They will take part in a number of theatrical workshops with Bangladeshi children and share their ideas and experiences.

They will also perform at a cultural programme at the Osmani Memorial Auditorium.

Later, a group of Bangladeshi children will also visit Cuba. On the way, they will perform in London and share views with the British children.

## Chehlum

Chehlum of AMM Harun-Ur-Rashid, former vice-president of IFIC Bank Ltd, will be held at his Uttara residence after Asr prayers today.

Rashid, 62, breathed his last on January 28 due to respiratory failure in Dhaka. He was buried at Mirpur Martyred Intellectuals' Graveyard.

Friends and relatives have been requested to attend the chehlum and pray for salvation of the departed soul.

After his graduation from Dhaka University, Harun-ur-Rashid started his banking career in 1968.

He served the IFIC Bank for two decades in various capacities and retired on January 4.

## Eye camp at Chatkhil Mar 7

Bashir Ullah Trust Charitable Hospital organises a three-day eye camp at Maulanar Bazar of Nishchintapur village under Chatkhil upazila in Noakhali from March 7, says a press release.

Cataract patients will be provided with lens and medicines free of cost at the camp.



Newly elected executive council members of the Asiatic Society led by its chairman Prof. Emazuddin Ahmed at Bangabhaban in the city yesterday.

## Tk 10,000cr programme to improve health sector

### Saifur tells dermatological convention

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

A ten-thousand crore taka programme has been taken up by the government for the improvement of health sector by the year 2006.

This was stated by Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman while addressing the opening session of the 2-day national convention of Bangladesh Dermatological Society at Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical College auditorium yesterday.

He said the government would take necessary steps to start the proposed Dermatology Institute at Mirpur.

Saifur said the government has started post-graduate courses in five medical colleges

which could be converted into universities in future.

Steps are being taken for the appointment of doctors in vacant posts in government hospitals, he added.

The finance minister urged the physicians to work sincerely with a view to improving the standard of service in the health sector.

Referring to the establishment of Community Clinics in rural areas during the past Awami League government, he said it was totally a wrong decision.

Posting of medical officers in those clinics in the remote areas of the country was almost impossible, he added.

The inaugural function was also addressed by State Minister for Health Mizanur Rahman Sinha, Chairman of Bangladesh Institute of Dermatology Prof. Hasan Mohammad Khan, Principal of Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical College Prof. Rezaul Karim, Secretary General of Dermatology Society Dr. Md Akram Ullah Shikder, Prof. Dr. Mujibul Haque, Director of Osmani Medical College Hospital Brigadier General Ismail Hossain, Central Vice-President of BMA Dr. Shamimur Rahman and Dr. Md Siraj Uddin.

President of Dermatological Society Prof. AZM Maidul Islam chaired the opening session.

## Asiatic Society team calls on president

UNB, Dhaka

President Iajuddin Ahmed has assured Asiatic Society of his personal cooperation in introducing a special scholarship for researchers and gearing up its creative activities.

The assurance came when newly elected executive council members of the Society met the president at Bangabhaban yesterday. Society chairman Prof. Dr. Emazuddin Ahmed led the delegation.

The president advised members of the society to take initiatives to regularly publish PhD theses prepared in different universities every year.

Iajuddin congratulated the newly elected executive committee members and expressed satisfaction over their activities.

They handed over a CD copy of Bangladesh to the president and apprised him of the progress of a big project, titled "Bangladesh Flora and Fauna", says an official release.

## Obituary

Prof. Harun-ur-Rasheed, former teacher of Foucherhat Cadet College, died on March 3 at the Bangladesh Medical College & Hospital in the city at the age of 68, says a press release.

His wife Prof. Zia-un-Nahar is a teacher of Political Science Department of Chittagong University.

Prof. Rasheed was born in Gazi family at village Rajarchar in Barisal district.

## SCC commissioner on police remand

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

A ward commissioner of Sylhet City Corporation (SCC) and district convenor of Awami Jubo League along with two others were taken on a two-day remand from the magistrate's court yesterday.

Ward Commissioner Jagadish Das, Prodip Modak and Tipu Das were arrested on Wednesday in connection with a mugging incident that took place at the city's Pathantola area.

Owner of Mourmita Confectionary Karimullah Helal lodged a case with the Sylhet Kotwali Police Station against six

persons including Jagadish Das, Iran Miah, Sajjad, Ripon, Prodip Kumar Modak and Tipu Das alleging that the miscreants snatched away Tk 5 and a half lakhs from him at gunpoint at about 12.30pm when he was going to a bank from his house.

Meanwhile, president of ward number 8 unit of JCD Afsar has given a confessional statement under section 164 stating that Iran Miah and Tipu Das proposed him to join them in the mugging on the previous day, but he refused.

Afsar has been made a prosecution witness in the case.



## No change in temperature likely

UNB, Dhaka

Weather is likely to remain dry over the country till 6pm today.

Day temperature may remain nearly unchanged over the country during the period, Met Office said.

Highest temperature 33.6 degree Celsius was recorded yesterday at Cox's Bazar and the lowest 11.3 degree at Srimongal.

The sun sets in the capital at 6.04 pm today and rises at 6:16 am 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	31.0	16.3	35	29
Chittagong	32.0	18.0	57	58
Rajshahi	31.5	13.3	64	38
Khulna	32.0	15.5	57	43



Children pose with fashion designer Bibi Russell at the presentation of Social Harmony Project at the Brac Centre auditorium in the city recently.

## DHAKA TODAY

**Musical evening**  
The first solo musical evening by Bishwajit Roy will be held. Venue: Liberation War Museum premises. Segun Bagicha. Time: 6.00pm.

**Film show**  
Academy Film Society will screen two American films titled 'My Tutor' (1982) and 'Sleepless in Seattle' (1993). Venue: Society auditorium, 21/C Jigatola. Time: 3.30pm and 6.30pm.

**Movie show**  
Bishwasahitya Kendra will screen a film titled 'The Circle' directed by Jafar Panahi. Venue: Bishwasahitya Kendra auditorium. Time: 5.00pm.

**Lecture**  
Bengal Foundation organises a lecture demonstration on classical music by Kumarprasad Mukhopadhyay of India. Venue: Bengal Shilpalay, Dhanmondi. Time: 11.00am.

**Seminar**  
The College of General Practitioners of Bangladesh (BCGP) organises a seminar on 'Reproductive health and family planning'. Venue: BCGP lecture auditorium, 215/A, Outer Circular Road, Moghbazar. Time: 9.00am.

**Rally**  
Revolutionary Unity Front organises a rally to protest the attack on Humayun Azad, prominent writer and professor of Dhaka University. Venue: Muktangan.

Ramna. Time: 3.30pm.

**Meeting**  
A meeting of the executive committee of Management Net will be held. Venue: 262/F, Elephant Road. Time: 6.00pm.

## DHAKA TOMORROW

**Painting exhibition**  
The inaugural ceremony of a solo painting exhibition titled 'Abohoman' by noted artist Qaium Chowdhury will be held with Justice Mohammad Habibur Rahman as chief guest. Venue: Bengal Shilpalay, Dhanmondi. Time: 7.00pm.

**Film show**  
Academy Film Society will screen an American film titled 'Rules of Engagement' (2000). Venue: Society auditorium, 21/C Jigatola. Time: 6.30pm.

**Foundation laying ceremony**  
The foundation stone laying ceremony of Azimpur Section of Vigarunnisa Noon School and College will be held with Prime Minister Khaleda Zia as chief guest. Venue: 101, Peelkhana, Azimpur. Time: 2.30pm.

**Award giving ceremony**  
The award giving ceremony of Shilu Abed Karushipa Award 2004, organised by National Crafts Council of Bangladesh, will be held. Venue: BRAC Centre auditorium, Mohakhali. Time: 6.30pm.

## Saifur slams high rate on borrowers

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distributed that as credits among the poor charging high rates of interest.

He informed the House that a cabinet committee was working on the issue and the government would create its own micro credit funds to force the NGOs to cut their interest rates.

Responding to another query, the finance ministers said the main thrust of the government's economic development endeavours was on eliminating poverty and it had already prepared a three-year Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (IPRSP).

Referring to the United Nations Millennium Development Goals that called for halving poverty by 2015, Saifur said Bangladesh's national planning was envisaged to achieve a pro-poor economic growth, poverty reduction, women's emancipation, social and

economic security for the poor and establishment of good governance and participatory approaches in all spheres.

The minister informed the House that till February 28 of the current fiscal year (FY), Bangladesh received US\$ 397.45 million from Asian Development Bank and US\$ 9.61 million from Islamic Development Bank for various development works. In the current FY, the World Bank has so far approved US\$ 150-million credit for Bangladesh, he added.

He presented a list showing annual rates of GDP growth and inflation and levels of foreign exchange reserve from FY1972-73 to FY2002-03.

According to the presentation, during the last three decades, Bangladesh posted the highest GDP growth of 9.59 percent in FY1973-74 and the lowest of (-) 4.09 percent in FY1974-75. The GDP growth in the last FY (2002-03) was 5.33 percent.

The list showed the inflation to shoot up to 67.17 percent in FY1974-75 while a negative inflation was recorded at (-) 8.36 percent in FY1975-76. The inflation in the last financial year was 4.38 percent.

The finance minister showed the country's foreign exchange reserve posting a gradual increase year-by-year to reach at US\$ 2,470 million in FY2002-03 from US\$ 173 million in FY1972-73.

## Body recovered

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Police yesterday recovered body of a teenage girl from a ditch from near an abandoned circuit house at Bara under Sonadanga thana.

Police said the unidentified girl was strangled after gang rape.

Police recovered a pair of gold earrings and a hair clip from beside the body.