



Different non-government organisations jointly took out a colourful procession at Manik Mia Avenue in the city yesterday to mark the World Population Day.

## Fresh initiative to set up 17 small power plants

BSS, Dhaka

The government has taken a fresh initiative to allow installation of small power plants with 20 to 30 megawatt capacity, reviving an earlier decision in view of the growing demand for electricity, energy ministry officials said.

According to the decision, power entrepreneurs will be given permission to install 17 small power plants in different parts of the country to provide electricity to the national powergrid.

"Initially, we planned to install 12 such plants in different places -- Chittagong Port, Boro Aulia of Chittagong, Feni, Choumohoni, Comilla, Tangail, Habiganj, Bogra, Rajshahi, Naogaon and Moulivibazar," said an official.

He said the process is underway to make a list of the entrepreneurs who intend to install the plants.

Against the backdrop of acute power crisis in mid 1990s, the then

government decided to quickly open up the power generation to private sector when several foreign and joint venture companies installed 100 to 110 mw plants called "independent power plants" or IPPs.

The state-owned Power Development Board has been paying the IPPs in dollars under a decision which later was criticised because of massive draining out of foreign currency due to gradual devaluation of taka.

But in line with a recent government decision, the new plants would be paid in Bangladesh currency while only Bangladeshi entrepreneurs will be allowed to install the plants, the officials said.

Under an earlier plan taken during the previous government, the Rural Electrification Board (REB) was to purchase electricity from proposed 10 small power plants with 10 mw capacity each.

The initiative, however, was stalled after three of the plants were installed at Ashulia, Comilla and Narsingdi.

State Minister for Power Iqbal Hassan Mahmud said recently that the fresh initiative was also a bit different from the earlier decision. Under the new initiative, PDB would buy the power directly from the plants for the national grid.

So far, 118 enterprises took the enlistment forms for setting up the power plants although only four to five of them have experience in the power sector, said an official.

"Some of them, however, are working on developing partnerships with the experienced ones," he added.

Currently, 23 power plants, including the IPPs, are in operation with 61 units having a total of 4710mw capacity. But due to the dilapidated conditions of many of the state-owned plants, the production does not exceed 3600 mw while the demand for power is nearly 4,000 mw.

PM to hand over cheques among youth bodies tomorrow

BSS, Dhaka

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia is expected to hand over cheques of grant among youth organisations for the fiscal 2003-04 at a function at Osmani Memorial Hall in the city tomorrow.

The cheques amounting to Tk 70 lakh will be distributed among 676 youth organisations from the Youth Welfare Fund, said a press release of the Ministry of Youth and Sports.

State Minister for Youth and Sports Md Fazlur Rahman will preside over the function.

In last fiscal, Tk 48 lakh was distributed among 458 youth organisations.

## 'Relaunch family planning programmes'

UNB, Dhaka

Speakers at a discussion meeting in the city yesterday warned that the population boom in the country was ticking away like a time bomb.

They also stressed the urgency of relaunching the family planning programmes abandoned since 1999 and providing access of the people at the grassroots level to health and education services in order to empower them for improving their living conditions.

The speakers said this at the discussion organised by Life, a non-government development organisation, at its Dhannomandi office to mark the World Population Day.

Home to one of the most densely populated areas of the world with about 2,400 persons per square mile, Bangladesh, at the current population growth rate, would witness the birth of over 2.6 million babies by the end of the year 2004, he said.

## Hundreds of Pak women fall victim to 'honour killing'

REUTERS, Islamabad

Pakistani doctors Amnat and Ghulam Mustafa are on the run, in fear of their lives, for falling in love and getting married.

Hundreds of women fall victim to so-called "honour killing" by male relatives every year in deeply conservative, rural Pakistan for marrying without their families' consent, thereby being deemed to have brought disgrace on their family.

Amnat fears she would meet the same fate if she returned to her home in Sindh province in the south of the country.

"My brothers have threatened to kill me and my husband," 44-year-old Amnat told Reuters in a recent interview in the capital, Islamabad.

"There is no guarantee for my life if I go home," the visibly shaken woman said as her husband, Ghulam Mustafa, looked on.

"The main condition of my brothers is that I should get a divorce from my husband if I want to go home but I will never do that."

The couple's predicament highlights a major dilemma faced by Pakistan in reconciling centuries-old tribal traditions with modern-day values as President Pervez Musharraf tries to project the country as a moderate, progressive Muslim nation.

"More than 4,000 people, the major-

Kalyan O Unnayan Samity took part in the discussion.

Life advisor Amanullah Khan in his keynote address said that despite the much-trumpeted success of population control policies claimed by the government, which had been more publicity than real achievement, the situation on the ground had not changed much.

He said the rate of population growth remained more or less static at around 2 per cent or slightly lower over the last decade as the government was unable to reduce it to the desired level. "This together with the increased life expectancy has made the problem worse," he added.

Home to one of the most densely populated areas of the world with about 2,400 persons per square mile, Bangladesh, at the current population growth rate, would witness the birth of over 2.6 million babies by the end of the year 2004, he said.

He also called for a review of controversial Islamic laws which rights activists say are discriminatory against women.

But human rights groups say crime against women goes on despite the president's calls.

"There is no change in the trend," said Kamila Hyat, a spokeswoman for the private Human Rights Commission of Pakistan.

"The government has been saying for long that it is doing something. But nothing actually has happened on the ground," she said.

Rights activists say few of those responsible for honour killings are brought to justice, with police often reluctant to intervene in family matters.

Those who are arrested are often freed after families reach settlements, usually brokered by tribal elders.

In Amnat's home province of Sindh, where such murders are known as Karo Kari (black man, black woman), rights groups say 398 people, including 243 women, were victims of honour killings in 2002.

Mustafa said his wife's family had been harassing his family ever since. They kidnapped and tortured two of his women relatives for more than two weeks and attacked and wounded his nephew to avenge the marriage, he said.

"At least 35 of my relatives have left Sindh in fear of their lives," he said.

NO CHANGE IN TREND

Musharraf, a key ally in the U.S.-led war on terror, has in recent months become more forceful in urging the government to take stringent steps to curb crimes against women.

"We want them to lay hands on influential people and feuds who incite such crimes. There are many Amnats who are facing similar tragedies," he said.

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## Nat'l Hajj Policy soon

BSS, Dhaka

The government will soon announce the National Hajj Policy 2005 with provisions of various facilities for the pilgrims.

The work for preparing a draft on it has already been completed. However, the pilgrims will face no difficulty in performing Hajj, an official handout said here yesterday.

State Minister for Religious Affairs Mosharrif Hossain Shahjahan on Saturday said the government was committed to solve all problems in the Hajj-related affairs.

Addressing a pilgrims' reunion at Eastern Circuit Community centre

in the city, he said the pilgrims would be provided accommodation near the Makkah Al-Muazzama so that they could perform their Hajj perfectly and say their five-time prayers in the Masjid-ul-Haaram.

Measures will also be undertaken to ensure flawless management with due facilities for the pilgrims both in Bangladesh and Saudi Arabia during the Hajj, the handout said.

Shahjahan described the reunion of pilgrims as an important event and said exchange of pleasantries as well as views and experiences among them would help a lot to remove any problem or difficulty in the Hajj-related affairs.

## 'Kidney dialysis centres to be opened at div hospitals'

BSS, Dhaka

Health and Family Welfare Minister Dr Khandakar Mosharrif Hossain yesterday told the Jatiya Sangsad that the government plans to open kidney dialysis centres in the divisional hospitals.

Replying to a question from Mohammad Arifjuddin Sarkar (Nilphamari-4), he said that the rural health centres in the country would be developed into health and family welfare centres by 2004-05 fiscal. He added that a list of the rural health centres was being made.

government level at Dhaka Medical College Hospital, PG Hospital and National Institute of Kidney Diseases and Urology. Besides, there are six private kidney dialysis centres.

Replying to another question from Jatiya Party member Mohammad Golam Habib Dulal, he said that the rural health centres in the country would be developed into health and family welfare centres by 2004-05 fiscal.

The minister said that there are at present kidney dialysis units at the

## Allowance for elderly people raised to Tk 165

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Monthly allowance for the senior citizens has been raised to Tk 165 per person in this fiscal from Tk 150 in the last fiscal, said Social Welfare Minister Ali Ahsan Mujahid yesterday.

At the same time, the age limit of

the beneficiaries has been raised to 65 from 57.

About two lakh more elderly people will be added to the scheme this fiscal, the minister said at a press conference.

Quoting the Population Census of 2001 by Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS), he said the country

now has a total of 80.49 lakh elderly people and his ministry has selected 12 lakh, half of them are women, for the allowance.

The minister, however, admitted that the money given to each person is not enough.

This money is a token of support for the elderly, he added.

The minister said his ministry has allocated Tk 237.60 crore for the monthly allowance this fiscal.

Those who are physically and mentally-challenged and suffering prolonged illnesses will be given priority during the distribution of money.

## DHAKA TODAY

### Inauguration

Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers & Exporters Association (BGMEA), in collaboration with Unipa, organises a rally to mark the World Population Day.

Venue: Hotel Sheraton, Time: 9.30am.

### Exhibition

The opening ceremony of a two-day exhibition titled 'Communication fair: Women rights materials', organised jointly by British Council and Yuktika, will be held.

Venue: British Council, 5 Fuller Road, Time: 9.30am.

The exhibition will remain open from 10.00am to 7.00pm daily.

### IUBAT talk

International University of Business, Agriculture and Technology (IUBAT) will hold a talk on 'Canadian Management Education'.

Venue: IUBAT premises, Dhanmondi, Time: 10.30am.

### Prize giving ceremony

The annual prize giving ceremony of Dhaka Central Girls High School will be held with State Minister for Education ANM Ehsanul Haq Milon as chief guest.

Venue: Laxmi Bazar, Gulshan, Time: 12.00 noon.

### DCC meeting

Dhaka City Corporation organises an opinion sharing meeting on the evaluation of existing tax system.

Venue: Mohanagar Natyamancha, Gulshan, Time: 12.00 noon.

### WEATHER TODAY

#### Rise in temperature likely

UNB, Dhaka

Light to moderate rain or thundershower accompanied by temporary gusty wind is likely at many places over Rajshahi, Sylhet and Chittagong divisions and at a few places over Dhaka, Khulna and Barisal divisions till 6.00pm today.

Moderately heavy to heavy falls is likely at places over Rajshahi, Sylhet and Chittagong a division during the period.

Day temperature may rise slightly over Dhaka, Khulna and Barisal divisions and remained nearly unchanged elsewhere over the country.

Met office said the temperature will remain stable over the country.

Highest temperature 33.9 degree Celsius was recorded yesterday at Ishwardi and the lowest 23.3 degree Celsius at Sylhet.

The sun sets in the capital at 6:49pm today and rises at 5:19am tomorrow.

Highest and lowest temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

City/Town Temperature in Celsius

	Max	Min	Morning	Evening
Dhaka	33.3	26.5	80	92
Chittagong	25.8	24.5	93	92
Rajshahi	33.3	24.8	86	82
Khulna	32.6	26.9	80	74
Barisal	33.4	26.5	86	89
Sylhet	25.8	23.3	95	96
Cox's Bazar	27.8	25.0	96	93

