

Govt firm to work for welfare of FFs

PM tells Dr Sitara

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday reassured her government's commitment to working towards welfare of the freedom fighters.

Dr Captain (Retd) Sitara Begum, Bir Protik, who is leading a medical mission of expatriate physicians from the United States, called on the prime minister at her office yesterday.

The 11-member team, including Sitara's husband Dr Abidur Rahman, is now in Bangladesh with a "Cardiac Care Mission" to apprise local doctors of the latest medical

developments.

They are imparting training to the doctors of National Institute of Cardiovascular Diseases and exchanging information regarding latest medical developments in the western world.

They have also provided medical equipment worth about Tk one crore.

Khaleda hoped that the Bangladesh expatriates from other parts of the world would follow the example.

She also recalled with appreciation the role of Dr Sitara in the War of Liberation.

JCD factions clash at DU: 2 injured

DU CORRESPONDENT

At least two activists of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) of Sir F Rahman Hall unit of Dhaka University were injured in factional fighting in presence of a minister at a meeting yesterday.

The fighting broke out when the State Minister for Energy and Mineral Resources AKM Mosharraf Hossain was attending the council of the hall committee at about 8:00pm.

The attacking group ransacked the stage and threw bricks at other

group attending the meeting leading to a battle for a couple of minutes.

The attackers charged Vice-president Sultan Salauddin Tuku, also the convenor of the council preparation committee, and Joint Secretary Selimuzzaman Selim of JCD Central Committee, with nepotism in forming the committee before the council.

Police and Rab members however brought the situation under control and the meeting was continuing till filing of this report at 9:00pm.



Karmojibi Nari President Shirin Akhtar speaks at a press conference at the National Press Club in the city yesterday. On her left is director Mahmuda Imam.

PHASE-OUT OF MFA

Security fund for garment workers demanded

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Karmojibi Nari, a non-government organisation, yesterday demanded security fund for garment workers who are likely to lose their jobs with the phase out of multi fiber arrangement (MFA) this month.

At a press conference at the National Press Club, leaders of the organisation also demanded of the government to announce a detailed plan for the rehabilitation of garment workers likely to be retrenched.

The speakers said allocation of Tk 20 crore by the government for the training and employment of garment workers was not sufficient.

They also urged the government to identify the garment industries that are supposed to be shut down and make a list of the workers that might be retrenched.

Shirin Akhtar, president of Karmojibi Nari, said the garment industries should have national regulations and exit policy so that around 18 lakh garment workers do not face any uncertain situation and he or she could be paid for at least three months.

"The garment workers are much vulnerable as they are yet to have the

right to form trade union. Strengthening the movement for trade union is essential for garment workers, and the political parties should come forward to help attain this right," she said, adding that otherwise the women workers who gained their dignity in the society through employment would be the sufferers.

Rokeya Rafiq Baby, executive director of Karmojibi Nari, said there are many women garment workers who still don't know what a dreadful situation they are going to face in the next year, and mass campaign is needed to prepare them to meet the challenge.

She said her organisation has taken up a programme in this regard from March 19 to December and around one lakh workers have so far taken part in it.

Karmojibi Nari would announce its next programme after holding a rally at Muktangan tomorrow.

1,371 more held

UNB, Dhaka

Police arrested 1,371 people on various charges from different parts of the country in the last 24 hours till 6:00am yesterday.



Gonotantik Olkya Jote stages a demonstration in front of the Anti-Corruption Commission head office in the city yesterday demanding steps to make the Commission effective.

Dev hampered in absence of strong local govt

Experts tell int'l workshop

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Development is hampered in absence of strong local government, said the experts at an international workshop yesterday.

They called for effective local bodies which could take the government to the people and help establish democracy.

The two-day international workshop on 'Decentralisation for efficient urban management in Bangladesh' was organised with a view to prepare a set of proposals for government consideration to reform municipal authorities.

LGRD and Co-operatives Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan formally inaugurated the workshop organised by Local Government Initiative (LGI) ARD in collaboration with the Times Research Foundation (TRF) of Kolkata at Sheraton hotel in the city.

He said the workshop would give the government an opportunity to discuss the proposals for its decentralisation and urban management.

The minister said only a strong

local government could ensure the active participation of local people in the development activities at the grassroots level.

"Around 30 million people representing about 25 percent of the total population of the country are now living in urban areas. This number is increasing sharply due to migration from rural to urban areas creating huge pressure on urban infrastructure," he said.

It is very difficult to provide pure drinking water, sanitation and other civic amenities to all city dwellers with limited resources, he added.

Mannan hoped that the workshop would discuss the strength as well as weakness of various steps taken by the government in the field of urbanisation.

Former finance and planning minister AMA, Muhiht, termed the Bangladesh government most centralised in the world.

"We have many local bodies including six city corporations, 289 municipalities, and 4000 union parishads, but these are tremendously

handicapped by the government," he added.

Muhiht said, "If the authorities of Sylhet City Corporation wants to set up a bridge, they will have to come to Dhaka for permission."

He said there is no need of Wasa and Rajkut to develop the capital. Their job could be done by giving necessary authority and autonomy to Dhaka City Corporation.

City Mayor Sadek Hossain said decentralisation is a global agenda for efficient management and administration.

"In fact, good governance cannot be thought of without a well-built and decentralised local government," he added.

Director of Economic Growth of USAID/India Rebecca Black delivered the welcome address at the inaugural session addressed by Khulha City Mayor Sheikh Tayebur Rahman, Rajm Kapoor of TRF-India, and Dr Zarina Rahman Khan of Local Government Initiative.

President assents to 5 bills

UNB, Dhaka

President Iajuddin Ahmed yesterday assented to five bills passed in the 14th session of the 8th Parliament.

The bills are: The Registration (Amendment) Bill, 2004; The Transfer of Property (Amendment) Bill, 2004; The Specific Relief (Amendment) Bill, 2004; The Limitation (Amendment) Bill, 2004; and The Birth and Death Registration Bill, 2004.

Zia Film City to open for shooting soon

BSS, Dhaka

The Film Development Corporation (FDC) has decided to open Zia Film City (ZFC) at Kabirpur soon for shooting of film, drama and ad films at a limited level.

The managing director of FDC directed the project director to procure necessary furniture for makeup rooms there, an official source said yesterday.

'Address minority rights issue in regional context'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The issue of minority rights has to be addressed in the South Asian regional context instead of looking at it in Bangladesh context alone, speakers said at a seminar yesterday.

Looking at the issue in the context of any particular country will not provide the full perspective of minority repression and human rights violations, they observed.

The Organisation to Safeguard Human Rights arranged the seminar on 'Protection of minority rights in the South Asian sub-continent' at the National Press Club.

The issue of human rights is critical not only for Bangladesh, but also for the welfare of all the countries in the region, said former vice-chancellor of Dhaka University Prof Emajuddin Ahmed as special guest.

"All the countries in the South Asian region must raise their voices in the same manner and proportion whenever an incident of human rights violation takes place," he said.

Although Bangladesh has a tradition of communal harmony, Prof Ahmed said, there is no denial of the fact that there are some cases of minority rights infringements.

In the wake of communal massacre in the Indian state of Gujarat and

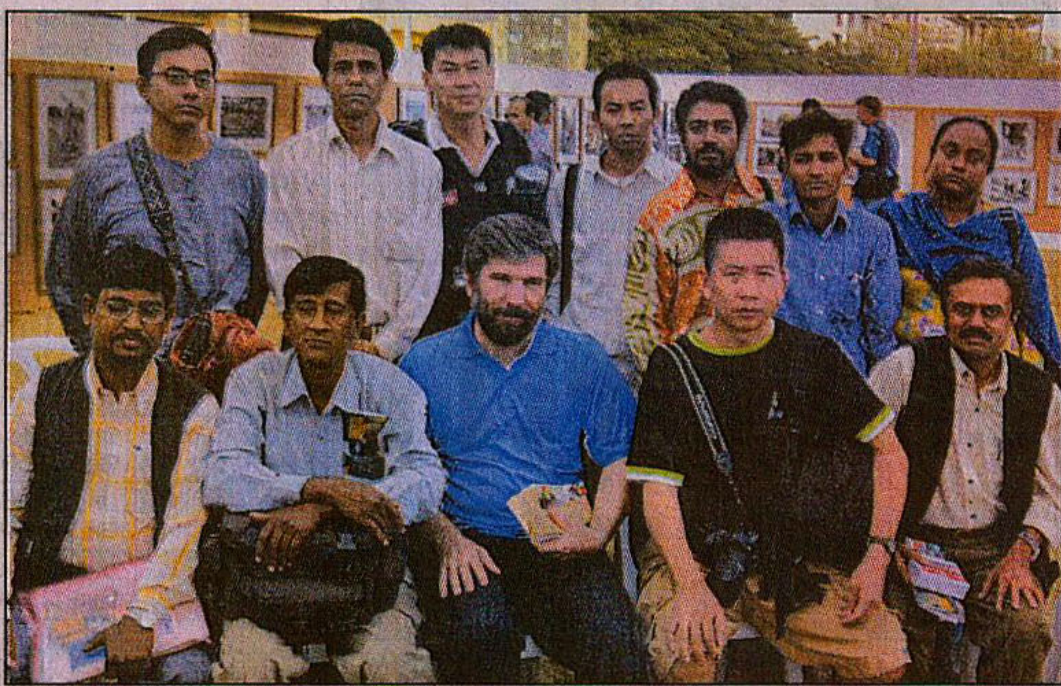
recent inhuman atrocities on the Muslims in Thailand, the hue and cry was not raised in the same proportion as seen in case of minority repression in Bangladesh, said Advocate Badruddin Ahmed.

Justice Abdul Bari Sarker, Advocate Jahangir Alam Khan and special correspondent of the daily Inqilab Mobaidur Rahman also spoke at the seminar presided over by Organisation's Chairman Advocate Abu Salek.

Geological Society executives

A 21-member executive committee of Bangladesh Geological Society was elected with Prof. Monirul Haque and Prodeeep Kumar Sen Gupta as president and general secretary, says a press release.

Other office-bearers are vice-presidents- Dr. AHM Shamsuddin, Dr. S Shamsuddin Ahmed, Md. Lutfur Rahman Chowdhury; Joint Secretary- Kazi Shafiqul Hossain; Treasurer- Sirajul Islam Khan; Office Secretary- Sirajul Islam Khan; Cultural Secretary- Arpan Kumar Mitra and Publicity and International Secretary- Munir Hossain.



Participants of a photography exhibition titled 'Little Asia' pose for photograph after 'meet the press' programme at the Abahani ground, the exhibition venue, in the city yesterday. 'Little Asia' is one of the exhibitions of Chobi Mela-III.

Internet adds new dimension to trafficking of women, children

MAHBUBA ZANNAT

Internet appears to have added a new dimension to trafficking of women and children in Bangladesh. Traffickers now abuse Internet at times to commit the crime. It is however going on a very limited scale, sources said.

"Internet is now also used as a medium and an easy way of trafficking in Bangladesh. The traffickers use the women and girls as sex workers in brothels, theatres and cinemas or private houses," said Prof Ishrat Shamim, president of the Centre for Women and Children Studies (CWCS).

Traffickers and their accomplices use Internet to exchange information on where to go and how to collect women and girls for prostitution, contact clients, and exchange pornographic images and videos, said the CWCS, a non-governmental

organisation (NGO).

Till now women of upper and upper middle class mainly have access to Internet, and traffickers using it target them. It is surprising that sometimes educated women also fall in their trap, it pointed out.

Police estimate that more than 15 thousand women and children are trafficked out of Bangladesh every year. It is however not known how many are trafficked with the help of Internet, they said.

Over the last decade, around two lakh Bangladeshi women and girls were lured with false promises and sold to sex industry in Pakistan, India and Middle East countries.

Women's rights leader Sigma Huda said poverty is not the main reason behind trafficking of women and children. Rather, drug, arms and sex trades lead to trafficking across the world, she added.

"In Bangladesh, about 50 percent of trafficking takes place through 28 districts adjacent to Bangladesh-India border. But all trafficked women and children are not sent abroad. Trafficking also takes place within the country," said the Action Against Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation of Children, another NGO.

Experts however say it is difficult

to collect data on how many are trafficked what way. Even a large number of the victims are trafficked using family visas, and the use of Internet for trafficking is quite new in Bangladesh.

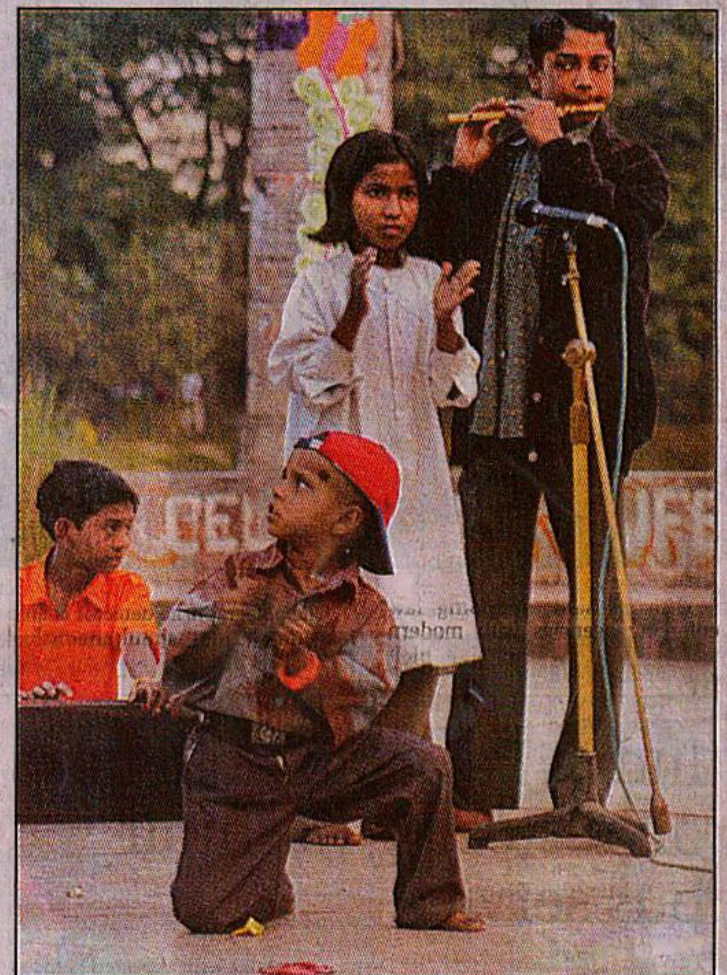
The government is aware of the problem of trafficking and has taken various steps to combat it. Moreover, NGOs are working to contain this crime, sources mentioned.

Use of Internet for trafficking in Bangladesh is however very limited. So, the government or NGOs are yet to take up the issue seriously, Ishrat Shamim said.

Ferdous Ara Begum, additional secretary of Women and Children Affairs Ministry, said they have not yet received any allegation of trafficking with the help of Internet. It is known that Internet is sometimes used for pornography. But trafficking and pornography are not the same, she pointed out.

"Access to Internet is very limited in our country, and I think only the educated and privileged can use it. So, chances of their being wronged are quite slim," Ferdous said.

NGOs sometimes give information not based on facts, she thought.



Children perform at a folk festival at the open stage beside the Dhanmondi lake yesterday. Ichchhe Shishu Media in association with the Save the Children (Sweden-Denmark) organised the festival.

Obituary

UNB, Dhaka

Valiant freedom fighter Adv ATM Monjurul Haque died in Netrakona town on Monday night at the age of 49.

He left behind his wife, two sons and one daughter to mourn his death.

Awami League President and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Sheikh Hasina expressed her deep shock at the death of Monjurul Haque.

In a condolence message, she prayed for peace of the departed soul and conveyed sympathy to the members of the bereaved family.

Walimonnesa

Walimonnesa, mother of Weekly Probsi Editor Shikhar Humayun Kabir, died at her New Chashara residence in Narayanganj on Monday at the age of 70, says a press release.

She left behind her three sons and four daughters.

She was laid to rest at her village home Madhyanganar. Her quikhwani will be held at her Narayanganj residence on Thursday.

Jubeda Khatun

Jubeda Khatun, mother of Principal Mia Md Maniruzzaman of Bishreshtha Munsir Abdur Rauf Rifles College, died on Friday at her son's residence at Pilkhana in the city, says a press release.

She left behind her three sons and two daughters.

She was buried at her family graveyard in Voapur under Tangal district.

Death anniversary



Today is the second death anniversary of Jannatun Nahar Mithun, eldest daughter of Abdul Badio, says a press release.

On the occasion, a milad mahfil will be held at her father's residence at House No-3, Road No-7, Nobodoi Housing, Mohammedpur in the city after Magrib prayers.

Relatives, friends and admirers have been requested to attend the mahfil and pray for the departed soul.



Cloudy sky likely

UNB, Dhaka

Weather is likely to remain mainly dry with partly cloudy sky over the country till 6:00pm today.

Light to moderate fog is likely to occur at places over the country during early morning, met office said predicting that night temperature might remain nearly unchanged during the period.

Highest temperature 31.2 degree Celsius was recorded yesterday at Cox's Bazar and lowest 12.2 degree Celsius at Srimongol.

The sun sets in the capital at 5:12pm today and rises at 6:30am 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	29.4	16.6	74	62
Chittagong	30.7	17.0	67	58
Rajshahi	28.0	15.0	67	51
Khulna	28.5	16.0	74	72
Barisal	29.4	15.0	92	94
Sylhet	29.5	18.0	62	62
Cox's Bazar	31.2	18.4	61	70

DHAKA TODAY

French film festival

Zahir Raihan Film Society, in collaboration with Alliance Francaise, will screen three films titled 'Shoot the Pianiste' (1960) by Francois Truffaut, 'Cleopatra from 5 to 7' (1962) by Agnes Varda, and 'The Little Soldier' (1963) by Jean-Luc Godard. Venue: Alliance Francaise, 26 Mirpur Road. Time: 4:30pm, 6:00pm and 7:30pm.

Asian film week

As part of the Asian Film Week, Dhaka Film Society will screen three films titled 'The Colour of Paradise' (1999) by Majid Majidi of Iran, 'Taste of Cherry' (1997) and 'The Wind Will Carry Us' (1999) by Abbas Kiarostami of Iran. Venue: Literature Centre, 14 Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue. Time: 3:00pm, 4:45pm and 6:30pm.

Children's film festival

Under 'The Children's Showcase' programme, Bangladesh Federation of Film Societies will screen four films titled 'Lotus Lantern' of China, 'Story for Human' of Bangladesh, 'Bombay Bomb' of India and 'Base Ball Boys' of China. Venue: Bangladesh Shishu Academy Auditorium. Time: 10:00am, 12:00noon, 3:45pm and 5:30pm.

BLISS seminar

The inaugural session of a two-day regional seminar on 'Vision of Saarc in the third decade', organised by Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies, will be held with Foreign Minister M. Morshed Khan as chief guest. Venue: Institute's auditorium, 1/46 Old Elephant Road.

Saarc seminar

Saarc Agricultural Information Centre organises a seminar on 'Empowering the Farmers with Information'. Venue: Barc conference room, Farmgate. Time: 10:00am.

Discussion

Saarc Diploma Engineers Forum organises a discussion to mark the

Saarc Charter Day. Venue: IDEB Bhaban, Kakrail. Time: 3:00pm.

Healthcare seminar

A seminar on Malaysian Healthcare Services will be held. Venue: Sonargaon Hotel. Time: 9:30am.

Inauguration

The inauguration of China Yachua Electric Company (BD) Ltd will be held with Fisheries and Livestock Minister Abdullah Al Noman as chief guest. Venue: Mohanagar Natya Mancha, Gulistan. Time: 11:30am.

Launching ceremony

The launching ceremony of Thai Choice will be held with Thai Ambassador Pithak Prombubpha as chief guest. Venue: Gulshan Agora. Time: 10:00am.

DHAKA TOMORROW

French film festival

Zahir Raihan Film Society, in collaboration with Alliance Francaise, will screen two films made by Jacques Rivette. The films are 'Paris Belongs to Us' (1960), and 'The Nun' (1966). Venue: Alliance Francaise, 26 Mirpur Road. Time: 4:30pm and 6:45pm.

Launching ceremony

Unicef flagship report titled 'The State of the World's Children' will be launched. Venue: National Press Club. Time: 10:30am.

Discussion

Disasters Foundation will hold a discussion on 'Ensuring the implementation of the acid laws and the promotion of social awareness'. Venue: Cirdap Auditorium, Tophkhana Road. Time: 9:00am.