



Members of Shishu Sangathan Oikya Jote render songs at a cultural function at the Central Shaheed Minar in the city yesterday. Sammilita Sangskritik Jote organised the programme on the occasion of Amar Ekushey.

18 promoted as secretaries

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government in a move to fill up the vacuum at the highest posts in the civil administration yesterday elevated 18 additional secretaries to the post of full-fledged secretary, an official notification said.

Of them, 15 were earlier posted as acting secretaries in different ministries and divisions and will continue in their respective ministries and divisions as secretary.

Posting of three others—secretary of Public Service Commission, chairman of Bangladesh Forest Industries Development Corporation and Nurul Amin of the Ministry of Industries were not yet given.

Against the backdrop of most of the ministries and divisions being run by additional secretaries, the Superior Selection Board (SSB), the highest authority to select officials for promotion, nominated names of 60 additional secretaries for elevation to the post of fully-fledged secretary, sources said.

The Prime Minister's Office (PMO) after scrutiny recommended promotion of the 18 additional secretaries. After the prime minister's approval, the Ministry of Establishment issued notification with final approval of the president.

PMO sources said that more additional secretaries will be promoted to the post of secretary soon, adding that the government will also promote a good number of officials to the posts of joint secretary and deputy secretary.

The SSB has already finalised lists of officials who have fulfilled the necessary criteria for promotion to the post of deputy

secretary and joint secretary.

The newly promoted secretaries are: Acting Secretary of the Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation Division Abul Kashem, Secretary to the President Abu Solaiman Chowdhury, Acting Secretary to the Parliament Secretariat Dr Mohammad Omar Faruq Khan, Acting Secretary of Power Division Nazrul Islam, Acting Secretary of Local Government Division AHM Abul Qasem, Acting Secretary of the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education AKM Shamsuddin, Acting Secretary of the Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism Akhter Hossain, Acting Member of the Planning Commission Ali Imam Majumder, Acting Secretary of the Ministry of Establishment Safar Raj Hossain, Acting Secretary of the Economic Relations Division Ismail Zabiullah, Acting Secretary of the Ministry of Science and Information and Communication Technology Lutfar Rahman Talukder, Acting Secretary of the Ministry of Cultural Affairs Kazi Abul Kashem, Acting Secretary of the Ministry of Shipping Rafiqul Islam, Acting Secretary of the Ministry of Commerce Siddiqur Rahman Chowdhury, Acting Secretary of the Ministry of Labour and Employment Shafiqul Islam, Acting Secretary of the Public Service Commission Dr Abul Kashem Mahbubul Alam, Acting Chairman of Bangladesh Forest Industries Development Corporation Suvas Chandra Roy and Additional Secretary of the Ministry of Industries Mohammad Nurul Amin.

Padatik Ekushey programme

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Padatik Natya Sangsad will hold a day-long cultural function on February 21 to mark the Amar Ekushey and International Mother Language Day.

Language Movement veteran Advocate Gaziul Haq will inaugurate the programme titled 'Padatik Ekushey Sangskritik Sammilan' at the Zainul Mancha at the Fine Art Institute at 10.00am.

Noted artistes will take part in various events such as dance, songs, recitation and drama.

CDA bulldozes 100 unauthorised structures in Ctg

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

The Chittagong Development Authority (CDA) bulldozed over one hundred unauthorised makeshift fruit shops, timber and grocery shops in Bahodderhat intersection area in the city during a daylong drive yesterday.

The drive was aimed at facilitating the CDA's intersection expansion project and easing traffic congestion. During the drive that started at 9AM CDA magistracy also removed over two hundred sign boards and banners of different schools, hospitals, shops and business establishments were also removed from Chandgaon Residential Area.

CDA Magistrate Begum Tahera Ferdous conducted the drive.

Govt to provide free books under Tk 400cr project

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday told parliament that the government would provide free books under a Tk 400 crore 'Reaching Out-of-School Children' programme.

Replying to a supplementary question from Moazzem Hossain Alal during the prime minister's question-answer hours, Khaleda said the unique programme was taken up to check dropout from primary schools and nearly 20 lakh children will benefit. The programme will run for next nine years.

Replying to Motiur Rahman Ranga's question, the prime minister said that free distribution of primary books among the students had begun timely in the last three

years.

She also said this year's book distribution programme began on December 31 and 6,63,81,813 books would be distributed under the programme.

The prime minister refuted the allegations that these books are being sold at an exorbitant price in remote areas of the country.

There is no provision for sale of these books and no agency concerned has received such reports that guardians are paying for the free books, she said.

Answering another question from Shahiduddin Chowdhury Anne, the prime minister said an stipend of Tk 100 for each poor child and Tk 125 for two children of a family are being provided as incentive to attend school.

Bill to discourage early marriage placed in JS

UNB, Dhaka

An amendment bill was introduced in the Jatiya Sangsad yesterday, seeking to make marriage registration compulsory and to discourage early marriage.

According to a provision of the bill, when a marriage will be solemnised by the nikah registrar himself, he must register the marriage at once. In case of a marriage solemnised by any person other than nikah registrar, the bridegroom must

report it to the nikah registrar concerned within 30 days.

Any person violating the provision shall be liable to be punished with imprisonment for a maximum two years or with a fine of Tk 3,000 or both.

Introducing the Muslim Marriages and Divorces (Registration) (Amendment) Bill, 2005, Law Minister Moudud Ahmed said marriages were being solemnised without registration because of loopholes in the existing law.

As such most of the marriage are early marriages and illegal, he added.

The existing law sets the minimum marriageable age at 18 for a girl and 21 for a man.

Moudud said that in absence of marriage registration, women face various forms of harassment in realising their lawful benefits in case of divorce.

He said the proposed law would ensure accountability of the bridegrooms and the nikah registrars for marriage registration as well as check early marriage.

The bill has been sent to the parliamentary standing committee on the law ministry for further scrutiny.

DU Kha unit admission test now on Mar 18

DU CORRESPONDENT

The admission test under 'Kha' unit (arts group) of Dhaka University will now be held on March 18 instead of tomorrow.

The admission committee of DU revised the schedule at an emergency meeting yesterday, with Arts Faculty Dean Prof Sadrul Amin in the chair.

The date was changed because of a student strike called by six opposition-backed student organisations.

Prof Amin told The Daily Star that it was not possible for them to make seat plans and take other preparations for the test due to today's student strike.

And the following three Fridays are booked for other admission tests — Kha unit test on February 25, Ka unit test on March 4 and National University's admission test on March 11, he added.

The National University's admission test was scheduled for February 25 but it has been rescheduled for March 11, sources said.



Prime Minister Khaleda Zia gives away a certificate to a participant of 25th Air Staff course at the graduation ceremony at the Defence Services Command and Staff College at Mirpur in the city yesterday.

PRIMARY EDUCATION

One-third children drop out

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least one-third of the children, enrolled in primary education, dropped out before completing the five-year compulsory education, experts at a seminar said yesterday.

The seminar on achieving the goals of Education for All (Efa) was organised by Dhaka Ahsania Mission (Dam) in the city.

"Nearly 4.5 million children can never attain primary education," said Mohammad Rafiqul Hasan, a Dam researcher, while presenting the findings of a study on 'Barriers to Schooling'.

Poverty, lack of parent's motivation and other physical barriers are some of the potential hindrances to having cent percent enrollment and completion of primary education, he said in the study conducted at several villages of Netrokona and Bauaniabandh Tin-

shed Colony on the bank of the river Turag.

Ensuring quality education is badly needed to decrease the rate of drop out, he added.

While one-third of the children are dropped out, another one-third remain illiterate though they continue their enrollment, said Dr Manzoor Ahmed of Brac University.

Besides, there is no mechanism to assess the quality of education for the rest of the children, he said.

"Every two out of three children remain unskilled in terms of receiving quality primary education," Dr Ahmed said, adding, "It's a syndrome of poverty and disadvantage."

He said teachers often fail to compassionately address those

children who come to school despite various disadvantages like hunger, absence of congenial environment at home, lack of proper health and parents' inability.

The poor parents should be exempted from bearing the financial burden for the schooling of their children and assured of a meaningful benefit of sending their children to school instead of taking them to work, he added.

Former vice-chancellor of Jahangirnagar University Dr Kazi Saleh Ahmed and Deputy Director of primary education directorate Md Abdul Mannan Miah also spoke at the seminar presided over by Dam President Kazi Rafiqul Alam.

Death anniversary



press release.

He was also a president of Madaripur Press Club.

Qurankhwani, milad mahfil and distribution of food among the destitute have been arranged at his home at Madaripur and at Bajanpara village in Naria, Shariatpur.

Similar programmes will also be held at his eldest son's house at North Circular Road in Dhaka.

Begum Aziran Nesa



today, says a press release.

Mohammad Akmal Hossain, former director general of Export Promotion Bureau, and Maj. Gen. (Retd.) Mohammad Anwar Hossain, Bir Pratik, former ambassador of Bangladesh to Morocco, are her sons.

Relatives and admirers have been requested to attend the milad and pray for the salvation of the departed soul.



Participants at a discussion on 'Politics of conflicts: Role of leadership' held at the Osmani Memorial auditorium in the city yesterday on the occasion of 21st death anniversary of Bangabir General MAG Osmani.



Dhaka University Debating Society forms a human chain in front of the TSC on the university campus yesterday protesting the Monday's bomb attack on a friendly debate competition.

WEATHER TODAY

Rain likely

UNB, Dhaka

Rain or thundershower accompanied by temporary gusty wind is likely at one or two places over Rajshahi and Sylhet divisions and the regions of Jessore, Kushtia, Tangail and Mymensingh in the next 24 hours till 6.00pm today.

Weather is likely to remain mainly dry with partly cloudy sky elsewhere during the period, the Met Office said, adding that night temperature may remain nearly unchanged.

Yesterday's highest temperature of 32.8 degree Celsius was recorded at Sathkira and the lowest of 14.2 degrees at Dinajpur.

The sun sets in the capital at 5:55pm today and rises at 6:30 am tomorrow.

The 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	30.4	21.4	80	61
Chittagong	29.0	22.0	80	75
Rajshahi	32.0	16.6	79	61
Khulna	31.4	21.8	85	70
Barisal	30.6	21.8	86	79
Sylhet	28.3	18.0	85	78
Cox's Bazar	29.0	21.6	79	80

24 shanties, 4 godowns gutted in Ctg

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Twenty-four thatched houses and four godowns were gutted in a fire in the city yesterday.

An earthen oven sparked off the fire at a slum, known as Ali Hossain Colony, at Kalamia Bazar in Bakolia at around 5.00am, sources said.

The loss was estimated at around Tk 3 lakh, sources said.

Get-together

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The annual get-together of the alumni of 1965-69 batch of Dhaka University will be held on March 18, says a press release.

Interested alumni have been requested to contact the following persons for details — Salehuddin Ahmed (phone: 9140246), Quazi Abdul Mannan (9892838), Sultana Rebu (9669124), Syed Saleheen Quadri (9893515), Jamil Ibrahim (8914448), Rais Khan (8919165) and Abdus Sattar Khan (8810073).

DHAKA TODAY

Art exhibition

The inaugural ceremony of an art exhibition by Liudmila Yakovleva, a Russian artist, will be held. Venue: Russian Cultural Centre, House-510, Road-7, Dhanmondi. Time: 5.30pm. The exhibition will remain open till February 23 from 11.00am to 7.00pm daily.

Poetry evening

Muldhara, a forum of writers, journalists and artists, organises an evening of poetry. Venue: House-15, Road-7, Dhanmondi. Time: 6.00pm.

Launching ceremony

The launching ceremony of a children's book on fairy tales by Hans Christian Anderson will be held. Venue: Writer's Corner, Amar Ekushey Book Fair, Bangla Academy. Time: 4.00pm.

Publication ceremony

The publication ceremony of two books titled 'Dristy Bhaze' and 'Inside Outside' by Sonia Khandaker, a Bangladeshi expatriate in Italy, will be held. Venue: National Press Club. Time: 3.30pm.

Discussion

Liberation War Museum will hold a discussion on 'Ekusher Chittrakola'. Venue: Museum premises, Segun Bagicha. Time: 4.00pm.

Parishad discussion

Bangabandhu Parishad will hold a discussion on 'Language movement, Bangalee national entity and independence'. Venue: National Press Club. Time: 4.00pm.

Shibir discussion

Bangladesh Lekhok Shibir organises a discussion on 'Imperialists' cultural

aggression and people's democratic movement'. Venue: 68/2, Purana Paltan. Time: 6.00pm.

Foundation discussion

Islamic Foundation Bangladesh will hold a discussion on '21st February and International Mother Language Day' with Post and Telecommunications Minister M Aminul Haque as chief guest. Venue: Foundation auditorium, Baitul Mukarram. Time: 10.00am.

AEB discussion

Association of Engineers, Bangladesh organises a discussion to protest successive hartal calls. Venue: Engineers Institution, Bangladesh. Time: 3.00pm.

BLAST seminar

Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust organises a seminar on the distribution of Khas land among the landless. Venue: Cirdap auditorium, Tophkana Road. Time: 2.00pm.

Lecture

Asiatic Society of Bangladesh organises Munshi Aftabuddin and Abdul Hafiz Trust Fund Lecture. Venue: Seminar room of the society, Old Secretariat Road. Time: 4.00pm.

Workshop

A two-day workshop on 'Promoting decent work in globalised economy-Bangladesh context', organised by Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies, will be inaugurated by State Minister for Labour and Employment Aman Ullah Aman as chief guest. Venue: Hotel Purbani.

Rotary meeting

Weekly meeting of the Rotary Club of Greater Dhaka will be held. Venue: Hotel Eastern Residence, Banani. Time: 6.00pm.