

DEATH OF POPE
Flag to fly at half-mast tomorrow

UNB, Dhaka
Bangladesh will fly the national flag at half-mast tomorrow as a mark of respect to Pope John Paul II who died on Saturday.

Senior cabinet minister Kamal Ibne Yusuf will represent the government at the funeral of the Pontiff in Vatican City on April 8.

On behalf of the government, LGRD Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan will sign the condolence book at the Vatican Embassy in Dhaka, said Director General of External Publicity Wing Zahirul Haque.

Daily Star Third Inter Hall English debate begins tomorrow

DU CORRESPONDENT

A four-day 'The Daily Star Third Inter Hall English Debate Championship and First Inter University Public Speaking Competition-2005' will begin at the RC Majumder auditorium of Dhaka University (DU) tomorrow.

The Dhaka University Debating Society (DUDS) has organised the debate, sponsored by The Daily Star, with the slogan -- 'Where the mind is free and the spirit fearless'.

A total of 16 halls of Dhaka University will take part in the debate competition and more than 10 public and private universities will participate in the public speaking competition, said the organisers.

Prof AFM Yusuf Haider, pro-vice-chancellor of DU, will inaugurate the event as chief guest while Syed Fahim Munaim, managing editor of The Daily Star, and Dr Syed Manzoorul Islam, moderator of DUDS, will be present as special guests.

The concluding session will be held at the Teacher-Student Centre (TSC) auditorium on April 9, with Prof SMA Faiz, vice-chancellor of DU, as chief guest and Mahfuz Anam, editor of The Daily Star, and Prof AFM Yusuf Haider as special guests.

DUDS President Mehidy Hasan Tamim will preside over the inaugural and concluding sessions while General Secretary Abdur Rahim will conduct both the sessions.

AAG Naima resigns

UNB, Dhaka

Assistant Attorney General Naima Haider has tendered her resignation, official sources said yesterday.

In a letter to the Attorney General, Naima said she has taken the decision on "personal grounds". A deputy attorney general, requesting anonymity, said that she was "the best among 53 assistant attorneys general to protect government's interest".

Naima, daughter of former Chief Justice Badrul Haider Chowdhury, was appointed AAG by the non-party caretaker government in July, 2001.

'Keep fit, eat less cholesterol'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Everyone should keep fit and get as much exercises as possible with an eating habit of foods that contain less cholesterol, suggested Dr Beh Chor Khim, a renowned cardiologist.

He said this while speaking at a seminar titled "EBCT Early Detection and Prevention of Heart Disease", jointly organised by HeartScan Malaysia and HeartScan Bangladesh at a city hotel on Sunday.

Dr Khim, also the founder of HeartScan Malaysia, presented information on the new technologies being used for heart scanning, angiogram Electron Beam Angiogram (EBA).

Briefing on the advantages of the EBCT in heart scanning, he said Cholesterol is not an important factor for people without heart diseases but a very important for those with the disease.

HeartScan Malaysia initiated Electron Beam Computed Tomography (EBCT) while HeartScan Bangladesh is providing necessary information to facilitate the treatment of the heart patients in the country, the seminar informed.

State Minister for Health and Family Welfare Ministry Mizanur Rahman Sinha addressed the seminar while Advisor of HeartScan Bangladesh KM Joinal Abedin, Chief Executive Luthfur R Chowdhury, Dr Sufia Rahman and a good number of physicians were present among others.



Ayesha Khanam, general secretary of Bangladesh Mahila Parishad, speaks at a programme marking the 35th anniversary of the Parishad at the National Press Club in the city yesterday.

Govt must cut poverty to achieve MDGs

Speakers tell workshop

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh will have to intensify its efforts to reduce poverty by 2015 to achieve Millennium Development Goals (MDG) set by the United Nations, said the speakers at a workshop yesterday.

They said the country has already achieved MDG goal in primary education enrolment, but poverty alleviation still remains a difficult task.

The two-day workshop on 'Millennium Development Goals: Target 2015 and Bangladesh' was organised jointly by Democracywatch and Centre For Sustainable Development in collaboration with the British Council at the Cirdap auditorium in the city.

Speaking at the workshop, East West University Professor AK

Enamul Haque said Bangladesh has done well in some sectors including primary education enrolment and lowering child mortality rate compared to other developing countries.

He said at present about 38 percent of the country's population are living below the poverty line, and Bangladesh will have to reduce the poverty to half of the existing level to achieve MDG goals.

Regarding Poverty Reduction Strategic Paper (PRSP), Prof Haque said the five-year plan is much better than the PRSP in terms of setting the goals. Jai Jai Din Editor Shafiq Rehman said apart from MDG, Bangladesh needs to have its own goal to achieve development.

"At first, problems of the country will have to be identified properly,

and then we have to work to solve those problems," he added.

"We have achieved some success in different fields, and we could have achieved more successes if our politicians were visionary," Rehman said.

He said lowering the birth rate should be the main focus of the government as high population rate is an impediment to any development efforts.

Rehman said poverty reduction would not be a difficult if the government and non-government organisations take concerted efforts.

The workshop was also addressed by Dr M Aminul Islam, sustainable development advisor of the UNDP, Sabira Yasmin of planning commission, and journalist Mahfuzullah.

'30 lakh children deprived of primary edn'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Thirty lakh children are still deprived of primary education although the enrolment has increased 30.8 percent since 1991, speakers at a workshop said yesterday.

The government has allocated 15 percent of the national budget for education and about 180 lakh children attend 78,000 primary schools across the country, said Syed Jaglul Pasha, joint programme director, PEDP-II, Directorate of Primary Education.

"But still there is a threat as the repetition and dropout rate across the country is 33 percent," he

added. Representatives from government and non-government organisations and donors discussed the Second Primary Education Development Programme (PEDP-II) at the workshop.

The objectives of the PEDP-II are to ensure access to primary schools and to improve the quality of primary education, which will contribute to the 'Education for All' programme of the government.

The Campaign for Popular Education (Campe) organised the two-day workshop at LGED Bhaban.

The Gono Shahajjo Shangstha

(GSS), an NGO, presented its achievement in quality primary education aimed to match and encompass those in PEDP-II.

Director of Campe Rasheda K Chowdhury inaugurated the workshop while Chairman of PEDP-II consortium Robin Ruggles, Senior Social Sector Specialist of ADB Brajesh Panth, GSS Executive Director Mahmud Hasan and former chief of GSS education programme Shamsi Ara Hasan were also present.

The participants will place recommendations at the workshop today to make the PEDP-II more effective.

2 hotel employees shot

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Hoodlums shot and injured two employees of a residential hotel in the city yesterday.

They were rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital where they are undergoing treatment.

A gang of five hoodlums went to the hotel at around 8:00am, and inquired about Alamgir from Wahid. "I told them that I did not know where the manager slept last night," Wahid told The Daily Star.

"I could hardly finish my reply when one of them shot in my left leg," he added. Alamgir told this correspondent that as he opened the door hearing the knock, an unidentified youth shot him in his hip.

They could not give any clue to the attack.

Qulkhwani of Zahiruddin Khan held

BSS, Dhaka

Qulkhwani of former minister and renowned industrialist AM Zahiruddin Khan was held at his residence in the city yesterday.

Agriculture Minister MK Anwar, Science and Information and Communication Technology Minister Dr Abdul Moyeen Khan, former ministers LK Siddiki, Barrister Anisul Islam Mahmud, chairman of the Privatisation Commission Enam Ahmed Chowdhury, former state minister Abul Hasan Chowdhury and Dr Kamal Hossain, among others, attended the qualkhwani.

CCC ELECTION AL, alliance candidates collect nomination papers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Chittagong City Corporation (CCC) election has got a new momentum with the collection of nomination papers by two major candidates for mayoral post on Sunday and yesterday.

Local leaders of BNP-led four-party alliance collected the nomination paper on behalf of their candidate Mir Mohammad Nasir Uddin yesterday, a day after the collection of nomination paper by Awami League candidate ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury.

Two other persons also collected nomination papers yesterday to vie for the mayoral post raising the total number of contestants to 20.

Besides, seven nomination papers for reserved commissioner posts and 29 nomination papers for general ward commissioner posts were collected.

With these, the number of nomination papers collected for reserved and general posts now stands at 62 and 386 respectively, said sources at deputy election commission office.

The nomination papers will have to be submitted to the authorities concerned on April 11 as per the election schedule.

Meanwhile, Mohiuddin Chowdhury has gone to Makka to perform Omrah.

'Education can protect women from discrimination'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Women as a dynamic core of the society have the potential to bring change to the fate of the poorest people, speakers at a roundtable said yesterday.

Women are not a different species, they are a part of an equal world, said Indian High Commissioner Veena Sikri, adding that education is the key factor that can protect women from discrimination.

The Bangladesh Enterprise Institute (BEI) and Junior Chamber International (JCI) Bangladesh, a body of young professionals, jointly organised the discussion on 'Women as agents of change in the community: Opportunities and challenges' in the city.

"Women must think themselves as individuals and not as women," said Baroness Shreela Flatner, a member of the British House of Lords, as chief guest.

As entrepreneurs, women suffer two setbacks: lack of their own confidence to venture into new initiatives and society's lack of confidence in women's ability, said JCI members Anika Ali and Laila F Rahim in their keynote presentation.

Women, who constitute 49 percent of the country's population, account for 8 to 12 percent of household earners and earn about 9 to 14 percent of household income, they said.

Patriarchal mindset, religious inhibitions and an unsafe social milieu seriously restrict women's potentials to contribute to social development, they added.

They also called on the Bangladesh Bank to undertake a loan scheme to facilitate women entrepreneurs in the areas of small business, retail trade, cottage industries and agriculture.

Women entrepreneurs have an immense prospect in fusion handicrafts, interior design, fabrics, fine

arts, jewellery, antiques, cane and copperware, they said.

Norwegian Ambassador Aud Lise Norheim, Khushi Kabir of Nijera Kori, JCI President Safina Rahman and Lopa Rahman of BEI also spoke at the discussion, chaired by BEI President Farooq Sobhan.

Skop factory strike today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Sramik Karmachari Oikya Parishad (Skop) today enforces a 48-hour strike in mills and factories from 6:00am demanding declaration of minimum national wage and stopping de-regularisation of state-run mills and factories.

The Skop, a platform of 16 labourers and employees organisations, announced the strike on February 27 in protest at the government's slackness in implementing an agreement.

The Skop and the labour ministry signed the agreement on January 8 last year.

It asked the government during signing the agreement to fix the minimum national wage at Tk 2,500.

"We were given assurance that the agreement would be implemented in four months. But we've got nothing even after 14 months," Skop Coordinator Wazedul Islam Khan yesterday told The Daily Star.

The Parishad on March 30 held a meeting with State Minister for Labour and Employment Amanullah Aman.

The minister said the implementation was underway but did not give any clear assurance, Wazed said.

The other demands of the Skop include reopening of all closed mills and factories and introducing a democratic labour law.

Hasina meets Ramos, Corazon

UNB, Dhaka

Opposition Leader Sheikh Hasina separately met Corazon Aquino and Fidel Ramos, two former presidents of the Philippines, in Manila yesterday and discussed global issues of poverty alleviation, democracy and peace.

Hasina, now in the Philippines capital to attend a meeting of senior advisory council of Association of Asian Parliaments for Peace (AAP), said abject poverty spreads terrorism, deprives children of education and reduces the life expectancy of people.

Despite resource constraints, the former prime minister said Bangladesh has made remarkable progress in alleviating poverty through microcredit scheme. She proposed to form a poverty alleviation fund to combat poverty in the countries facing resource constraints.

During the meeting with Fidel Ramos, she lauded the activities of

Ramos Peace and Development Foundation in improving the condition of the poor and establishing peace.

Both the former presidents praised Sheikh Hasina for her contribution to establishing democracy and peace. They particularly mentioned promotion of democracy and human rights as well as signing of the CHT peace accord during the 5-year Awami League rule led by Hasina.

Correction

Sri Lankan High Commissioner Gaminis S Munasinghe received a donation cheque for tsunami-affected people of his country at a simple ceremony in the city on Sunday. But in a photo caption published in The Daily Star yesterday his name was inadvertently mentioned as 'Warmas Hasan Saputra'.

KIDNAP BID Cop, brother remanded

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The traffic sergeant and his brother arrested on charges of attempting to abduct a businessman on the Supreme Court premises on Sunday were remanded for one day yesterday.

Sergeant Mahfuzur Rahman and his brother Mahubur Rahman were hauled before the Court of Chief Metropolitan Magistrate, Dhaka with a three-day remand prayer.

The investigation officer (IO) of the case told the court the sergeant had brandished his government pistol in their attempt to kidnap Ahsanullah Chowdhury when lawyers and onlookers held the brothers.

They need to be questioned to identify their two associates, who had accompanied them but fled, the IO added.

Meantime, Ramna police are probing whether Ahsanullah had taken Tk 50,000 from Mahub, as claimed by the latter, to supply him electronic goods.

"We're trying to nab Akhter Hossain who brokered the deal between Mahub and Ahsanullah. Once we have him, we'll know the truth," said the officer-in-charge of Ramna Police Station.

The OC added that Ahsanullah was arrested in 1994 following a cheating case filed against him. The complainant, Selim Ahmed, a wholesale rice and sugar trader of Lalbagh, accused him of taking Tk 2.25 lakh from him under the pseudonym of Ram Lal Desai. Police also pressed charges against Ahsanullah and his associate.

"Seeing him on TV yesterday, I went straight to Ramna Police Station to inform them about him," Selim told The Daily Star over phone yesterday. Posing as an Indian business-

man, Ahsanullah took the sum for supplying him sugar but ultimately grabbed the money, he added.

Police after primary investigation said Ahsanullah, a resident of Lal Mohan Shah Street in Sutrapur, has no source of income to run the families of his two wives.

The OC said they are investigating whether it was really an abduction attempt and the sergeant pointed his gun at Ahsanullah's head.

A police constable on patrol on Sunday however said, "I saw the sergeant brandishing his pistol at the man."

Punishment to cop demanded

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Ain O Salish Kendra (ASK), a human rights organisation, yesterday expressed concern over a police sergeant's attempt to kidnap a businessman on the Supreme Court premises.

It also demanded exemplary punishment to the police sergeant and other persons involved in the abduction bid.

If the police sergeant are not given exemplary punishment, people will lose their confidence in the law enforcement agencies, said ASK Executive Director Sultana Kamal in a statement.

On Sunday, a sergeant of Gulshan zone traffic police along with his brother and two other accomplices tried to kidnap a businessman at gunpoint on the court premises.



Sramik Karmachari Oikya Parishad (Skop) took out a procession at Muktangan yesterday in support of its 48-hour strike.

DHAKA TODAY

Boishakhi fair

The inaugural ceremony of Boishakhi fair, organised by Jatia Mahila Sangstha on the occasion of Bengali New Year 1412, will be held with Women and Children Affairs Minister Khurshid Zahan Haque as chief guest. Venue: JMS Complex. Time: From 10.00am to 8.00pm till April 14.

with Law Minister Moudud Ahmed as chief guest. Venue: National Press Club. Time: 3.00pm.

Discussion

A discussion on 'Bangabandhu and independence of Bangladesh' will be held. Venue: National Press Club. Time: 4.00pm.

Matir Moira

An internationally acclaimed film titled 'Matir Moira' (The Clay Bird) by Tareque Masud will be screened. Venue: British Council Auditorium, Fuller Road. Time: 4.45pm.

Muldhara discussion

Weekly discussion meeting of Muldhara, a forum of writers, journalists and artists, will be held. Venue: House-15, Road-7, Dhanmondi. Time: 6.30pm.

Film show

Satyajit Ray Film Society in association with Rush Film Society has organised a session of Contemporary Asian Film Session. Under the programme, three films will be screened. These are 'Swing my swing high, my darling' by U-Wei Bin Hajsjaari of Malaysia, 'August Sun' by Prasanna Vithanage of Sri Lanka, and 'Travellers and Magician' by Khyentse Norbu of Bhutan. Venue: World Literacy Centre, Bangla Motor. Time: 3.00pm, 5.00pm and 7.30pm.

Closing ceremony

The closing ceremony of the weeklong tribal cultural festival will be held. Venue: National Art Gallery, Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy, Segun Bagicha. Time: 6.30pm.

Rotary Dhaka

Weekly meeting of the Rotary Club of Dhaka will be held. Venue: Sonargaon Hotel. Time: 5.30pm.

Rotary Sonargaon

Weekly meeting of the Rotary Club of Sonargaon Dhaka will be held. Venue: Dhaka Club. Time: 5.30pm.

AL meeting

A meeting of the central working committee of Bangladesh Awami League will be held. Venue: Dhanmondi office of the party chief. Time: 10.30am.

Award giving ceremony

Bangla Academy organises a function to award Kabir Chowdhury Shishu Sahitya Award 2004. Venue: Seminar room of the academy. Time: 4.00pm.

Health seminar

A national seminar on World Health Day Theme 'Make every mother and child count' will be held. Venue: Sasakawa Auditorium, ICDDR,B, Mohakhali. Time: 9.00am.

MMC seminar

Mass-line Media Centre organises a seminar on the security of journalists

Annual conference

The annual conference of the Association of Bangladesh Water and Power Engineers will be held with Water Resources Minister Hafiz Uddin Ahmed as chief guest. Venue: Institution of Engineers' Auditorium, Ramna. Time: 11.00am.

Blood donation

Northern University in association with Quantum Foundation organises a voluntary blood donation camp to mark the World Health Day. Venue: Sarmosjid Road, Dhanmondi. Time: 10.00am.

WEATHER TODAY

Thundershowers likely

UNB, Dhaka

Rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty or squally wind is likely at places over Rajshahi division and one or two places over Khulna, Barisal, Dhaka, Sylhet and Chittagong divisions till 6.00pm today.

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

Highest temperature 36.0 degree Celsius was recorded yesterday at Rangamati and lowest 17.8 degree Celsius at Dinajpur.

The sun sets in the capital at 6:16pm today and rises at 17.8am tomorrow.

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

Table with 4 columns: City/Town, Temperature in Celsius (Max/Min), Humidity in percentage (Morning/Evening). Rows include Dhaka, Chittagong, Rajshahi, Khulna, Barisal, Sylhet, Cox's Bazar.