PHOTO: STAR

Leader of the Opposition in Parliament and Awami League President Sheikh Hasina discusses a point with her party general secretary Abdul Jalil at a meeting at Paltan Maidan in the city yesterday. AL organised the meeting to mark the historic Mujibnagar Day.

MUJIBNAGAR DAY OBSERVED

5 lawyers plan legal action against govt for violation of constitution

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Five eminent lawyers will take legal action against the government for disregarding the formal declaration of independence, which took place on April 10, 1971, and violating the constitution.

Ghatak Dalal Nirmul Committee announced the decision in this regard at a discussion in the city yesterday and formed a committee of five lawyers to initiate the legal action.

Justice KM Sobhan was made chairperson of the committee, whose other members are Barrister Shawkat Ali Khan, former president of the Supreme Court Bar Association, Barrister Amir-Ul Islam, author of the declaration of independence, Barrister Shafiq Ahmed, president of Gonotantrik Ainjibi Samity, and advocate Mahbubey Alam, president of the Supreme Court Bar Association.

Held at the WVA auditorium, the discussion on 'The declaration of independence, constitution and the spirit of the Liberation War' was organised to mark the 34th anniversary of the historical Mujibnagar Day.

At the discussion, journalist Shahrier Kabir, general secretary of the Nirmul Committee, read out the copy of the formal proclamation of independence.

The speakers said the anti-liberation forces are trying to distort the history of the Liberation War by claiming that late president Ziaur Rahman proclaimed independence on March 26 in 1971 although he proclaimed it on behalf of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman on March 27.

Prof Kabir Chowdhury said the prevailing situation in the country is 'unbearable'. Only toppling the alliance government will help get rid of such situation, he added.

Prof. Anisuzzaman said Ziaur Rahman himself admitted that the historical address by Bangabandhu on March 7 was the main inspiration for joining the war of independence.

Hossain Tawfiq Imam, secretary of the Mujibnagar government, sector commander colonel (Rted.) Abu Osman Chowdhury, Justice KM Sobhan, Barrister Shaifq Ahmed, Prof Ajoy Roy and Shirin Hossin Rimi, daughter of the first prime minister Tajuddin Ahmed, also spoke.

Self-sufficiency in medicine production soon: PM

Khaleda unveils plaque of essential drug project

UNB, *Bogra*

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday said lifesaving international standard drugs are now being produced in Bangladesh and the country is about to achieve self-sufficiency in production of medicines.

Unveiling the plaque of an essential medicine-producing project here, she said the Essential Drugs Company Limited (EDCL) is already supplying drugs to different international organisations and also exporting abroad.

"We have taken initiative to update the national drug policy suiting needs of the time to further expand the pharmaceutical industry," she said, adding that her government gave priority to developing medical sector as healthcare is the fundamental right of the people.

The National Drug Policy 2005 has been finalised as per recommendation of the eminent people and the experts related to this industry, she said. And the cabinet has already approved it, she added.

After implementation of the new policy, the industry will further expand and generate job opportunities in the country, Khaleda hoped.

Focusing on prospect of the domestic pharmaceutical industry the PM said as a least developed country, Bangladesh will get opportunity to produce patent medicines till 2016.

Referring to General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs (Gatt) rules that governs world trade, she said "From now on, we have to find out solutions through explaining the risks and feasible situation of pharmaceutical sector."

Initiative will have to be taken involving the officials concerned so that Gatt can not leave any negative impact on the domestic drug industry, she said.

The pharmaceutical industry owners will have to be more active in establishing the country in the world market as a successful drug producer and exporter, she said.

She said the government is giving preference to private initiatives in healthcare sector as it alone will not be able to do all the jobs.

"Medicare is one of the fundamental rights of the people and we are trying our best to protect the right of the people by making treatment easier and cheaper," said Khaleda.

She unveiled the plaque of the foundation stone of Cephalosporine project of the EDCL at Thanthania in the town yesterday. The lone public sector pharmaceutical company is implementing the Tk 25 crore project with its own fund.

Khaleda said that EDCL, which supplies medicines to different government hospitals and health centres free of cost, is playing an important role in health service of the country.

She said that the officials and employees of the company are doing a great and sacred duty. She reminded that their duty would be considered sacred if they worked with honesty and if not, it would be a big injustice.

Demand for medicine is increasing day by day and that's why the government has taken initiative to increase production of standard drugs side by side with the development of different sectors of the health service.

Thanking EDCL for converting the proposed penicillin- production project to the cephalosprorine one, she said that the demand for cephalosprorine medicine is increasing gradually as an improved and more effective alternative to penicillin.

On completion of the project, adequate cephalosprorine drugs will be produced here and the poor people will get it easily at different hospitals and health centres free of cost, she said.

The Prime Minister asked the officials concerned to complete the project immediately.

She also asked to supervise the project properly, maintain the standard of medicine and keep its production coast and price cheaper.

She said that post-graduation course has been extended to rear specialised physicians.

She said that EDCL is going to establish its 4th project in Khulna.

Earlier, Khaleda unveiled the plaque of foundation stone of the 31-bed Shajahanpur Health Complex constructed on five acres of land at a cost of Tk 7.08 crore.

PHOTO: STAR

A child speaks at a mock parliament session at the Biam auditorium in the city yesterday. Save The Children, Australia, in collaboration with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) organised the Child Parliament Session-2005.

GARMENTS FACTORY COLLAPSE

'Negligence led to tragedy'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The disaster at a Savar garments factory resulted from negligence, which left several hundred workers dead or injured, said human rights activists and women leaders at a press conference yesterday.

They demanded that the persons and the authorities responsible for the tragedy be brought to book immediately for their negligence.

They also called on the government to ensure compensation to the families of the victims of the collapsed nine-storey Spectrum Sweater Industries factory.

The tragedy is tantamount to a gruesome killing and is one of the worst disasters in the country, said advocate Sultana Kamal of Ain O Salish Kendra (ASK) while reading out a joint statement.

It is frustrating that the incident has not yet been identified as the result of an offence, she said, adding that there is not even anyone to ascertain the number of dead, injured and missing workers, while the authorities have failed to nab the factory owner.

The state managers procure bulletproof luxury cars and military hardware one after another, but don't bother about having necessary salvage equipment and technology in the event of natural or man-made disasters, she said.

The leaders called on the prime minister to instruct the authorities to take necessary measures and demanded to know what measures the industries ministry has taken in the wake of the tragedy.

They said that according to a law, each victim will be entitled to a compensation of Tk 7 lakh or more.

The leaders also called for making public the full list of the victims, a version of the chief inspector of factories regarding the collapsed building and planning and approval of the building as submitted to the cantonment board.

Dr Hameeda Hossain of ASK, Shirin Akhtar of Karmojibi Nari, Syeda Rizwana Hasan of Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers' Association, Salma Ali of Bangladesh National Women Lawyers' Association, Farida Akhtar of Ubinig, Asma Parvin of Oxfam Bangladesh, Masud Alam of Odhikar and Elina Khan of Bangladesh Society for the Enforcement of Human Rights attended the press conference held at the National Press Club.

Rokeya Rafiq of Sammilita Nari Samaj, Rashida Begum of Nijera Kori, Tareq Ali of Sammilita Samajik Andolon and Farida Yasmin of Bangladesh Legal Aid Trust were also present.

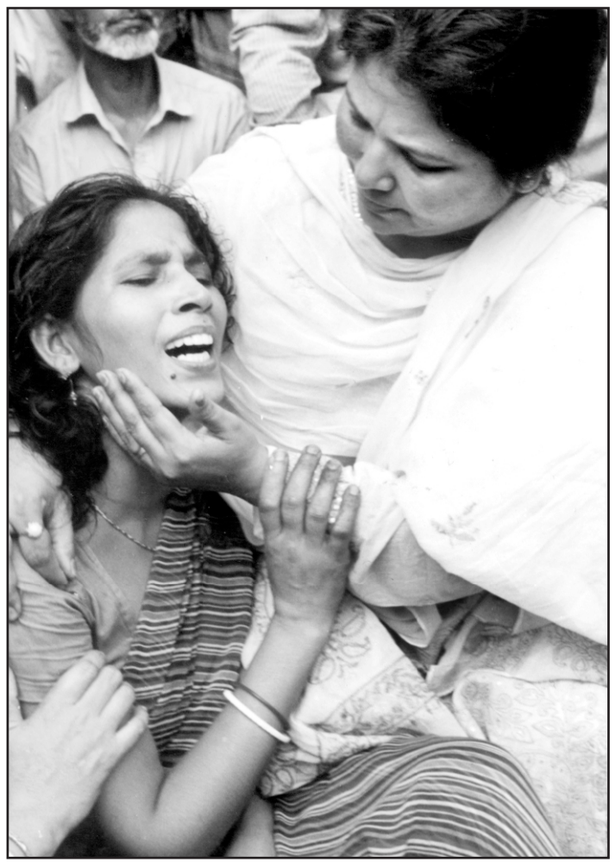

PHOTO: STAR

A relative tries to console the wife of Madhab Sarker as she wails in front of the emergency department at Mitford Hospital. Businessmen -- Madhab Sarker and his nephew Bhushon Sarker -- were shot dead inside their business house at Tantibazar in the old city by unidentified assailants yesterday.

BDB against unity with other party for mere change of govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Bikalpa Dhara Bangladesh (BDB) believes in the empowerment of people, it does not believe in power politics.

This was stated by Mahi B Chowdhury, organising secretary of the party, while addressing a public meeting on Ashuganj Railgate premises yesterday.

"The Awami League (AL) requested us to be united with it, but we said the BDB can be united with any party only to bring a positive change in the fate of the people, and not for mere change of the government," he said.

Mahi said his party wants to introduce a new trend of politics in the country through its "programme-based politics."

Neither the AL nor the BNP is willing to leave power even when they fail to lead the country, but the BDB does not believe in that policy, he said.

Mahi said, "Democracy within the party is a must to establish democracy in the country."

He said political parties in the last 34 years were busy only with meaningless debates and criticism of each other, rather than taking any specific programmes for the welfare of the people.

"Our policy is to run the country in cooperation with the civil society, because no party can do this great job only with their own talent," he added.

ATM Kamal, a central committee leader of BDB, said the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) is killing those criminals in 'crossfire' who were created by the BNP leaders to save their own faces.

BDB Office Secretary Major (Retd) Sheikh Nadir Ahmed, its Ashuganj upazila unit Convenor Md Zakaria Swapan and other central leaders also spoke at the public meeting.

Asian-African Summit begins in Jakarta Apr 22

UNB, *Dhaka*

The Asian-African Summit will be held in Jakarta on April 22-23.

Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan leaves Dhaka today to attend the summit.

He will also attend the Commemoration of Golden Jubilee of the Bandung Conference in Bandung on April 24.

He will represent Prime Minister Khaleda Zia at the summit and lead the Bangladesh delegation. The theme of the summit is "Reinvigorating the Bandung Spirit: Working Towards a New Asian African Strategic Partnership."

The Asian-African Conference, held 50 years ago in Bandung, addressed issues of world peace and cooperation, human rights and self-determination, and economic and cultural cooperation.

Concern over jute seed crisis

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Private Sector Consultative Board (PSCB) of the International Jute Study Group (IJSG) yesterday urged the governments of jute producing countries to take necessary steps to make jute seeds available in Bangladesh.

At a meeting held in the city yesterday, the PSCB officials expressed concern over the jute seed crisis and lack of trained manpower in the jute field.

PSCB Chairman Shams-ul-Haque chaired the meeting. IJSG Secretary General T Nanda Kumar was present at the meeting.

Purabi Basu wins Anannya Literary Award

Litterateur Purabi Basu has been selected for the Anannya Literary Award 1412, says a press release.

Her books included 'Purabi Basur Galpo', 'Bangalee', 'Ajanma Prabasi' Nari Tumi Nitya', Ekhano Gel Na Andhar' and 'Nari Bhabana'.

The award will be presented to Purabi Basu at a function marking the founding anniversary of the Anannya, a fortnightly magazine for women, in October. The award carries Tk 50,000 and a crest.

BUILDING COLLAPSE

US, UK express condolences

BSS, *Dhaka*

The United States and the United Kingdom have expressed condolences to the families of the garments workers who died in a nine-storey factory building collapse in Savar on April 11.

The United States is deeply saddened by the tragic loss of lives from the collapsed garment factory building, according to a message released by the US embassy yesterday.

"We extend our deepest condolences to the families and friends of the victims. While we understand that at least 55 people have died, we are encouraged that nearly 100 persons were rescued. We commend the Bangladeshi rescue workers for their commitment, determination and resourcefulness in responding to this disaster," it added.

British High Commissioner Anwar Choudhury sent a condolence message to Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan on April 12.

"I was saddened to hear of the collapse of the garment factory building in Savar and the loss of many lives. On behalf of the United Kingdom and the British High Commission, I would like to express my deepest condolence to the families of those dead and injured," the envoy said in the message.

DEATH OF MANINDRA

Customs staff on remand

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police yesterday took a customs employee to one-day remand on suspicion of his alleged involvement in the death of Manindra Chandra Das whose body was recovered from the rooftop of the customs office at the Zia International Airport on Saturday.

Earlier, police arrested Selim, a sweeper of the customs department, and sent him to the court with a remand prayer.

According to the autopsy report of Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH), Manindra committed suicide.

His younger brother Madhusudan Das received the body from the DMCH after the postmortem.

Manindra, 35, a fourth-class employee of the customs department, went missing after he came out of his civil aviation quarters on Tuesday morning. His body was found hanging from a satellite antenna on the roof of the customs building.

ERC gets shape by May

STAR REPORT

The country's energy watchdog is likely to get a shape by next month following the formation of a selection committee seeking recommendations for the top posts of the Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission (ERC).

The government has recently constituted a three-member selection committee headed by Prof Dr M Asaduzzaman, chairman of the University Grants Commission, to recommend a chairman and two members of the commission.

The committee has been asked to submit the report by May 18.

Other members of the committee are M Abdur Rouf, member of the Public Service Commission (PSC), and Prof M Nurul Islam of the Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (Buet).

On February 14, the Jatiya Sangsad passed the Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission (Amendment) Bill to resolve the problem over the appointment of chairman and members of the commission.

The decision to form the ERC came after the World Bank had sent a 'hot list' of about 50 pending issues, policies and projects to the government, asking it to implement those by June 30 at the latest.

Formation of the Energy Regulatory Commission was one of the components of the hot list.

The ERC would work as a watchdog to regulate the energy sector.

DHAKA TODAY

Workshop

The development studies department of Dhaka University organises a workshop titled 'Governance issues in Bangladesh: Search for research agenda.' Venue: Cirdap auditorium, Topkhana Road. Time: 10.00am.

Seminar

The South Asia Enterprise Development Facility organises a seminar on 'Apparel sourcing practices and the way forward for the Bangladesh knitwear sector' with Commerce Minister Altaf Hossain Chowdhury as chief guest. Venue: Hotel Sheraton. Time: 3.30pm.

Discussion

The Workers Party of Bangladesh will hold a discussion on 'International rivers and water problem: Nature of conflict and the way out.' Venue: National Press Club. Time: 10.00am.

Dialogue

The Development Organisation of the Rural Poor organises a dialogue on 'Health in newspapers-2004' with advisor of the former caretaker government ASM Shahjahan as chief guest. Venue: VIP Lounge of the National Press Club. Time: 11.00am.

Lecture

The Centre for Advanced Research in the Humanities of Dhaka University organises 'Professor Nurunnahar Begum Memorial Lecture' where noted journalist Faiz Ahmed will deliver a lecture on imperialism and communism. Venue: 434, Lecture Theatre. Time: 11.00am.

Memorial meeting

A meeting will be held in memory of Dr Golam Mohiuddin, former teacher of Buet and general secretary of the Institution of Engineers, Bangladesh. Venue: Institution of Engineers' auditorium, Ramna. Time: 6.00pm.

Inauguration

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia will inaugurate the Architecture Bhaban. Venue: Purta Bhaban premises, Segun Bagicha. Time: 12.00noon.

Founding anniversary

The second founding anniversary of the Students' Centre of Bangladesh will be held. Venue: DUCSU Cafeteria. Time: 4.00pm.

Hunger strike

The Bangladesh Government Development Project Employees Welfare Council will observe a token hunger strike in support of its five-point demand. Venue: Muktangon. Time: 11.00am.

Prize giving ceremony

The prize giving ceremony of the indoor games and cultural competition of the Leading University will be held. Venue: 83, Siddeswari Road.

DHAKA TOMORROW

Publication ceremony

The publication ceremony of a book titled 'Muktijuddher Mahanayak Taj Uddin Ahmed' by Badruddin Ahmed will be held. Venue: Poet Sufia Kamal Auditorium, National Museum, Shahbagh. Time: 4.00pm.

Meeting

A meeting of the Management Net will be held. Venue: 262/F, Elephant Road. Time: 7.00pm.

MIZAN MURDER

Sister cries for justice

DU CORRESPONDENT

A sister yesterday demanded immediate punishment to the culprits responsible for the killing of her brother who was killed at his Kafrul residence in the city on November 14, 2003.

At a press conference at the Crime Reporters' Association, Hasna Belal, younger sister of Mizanur Rahman Mizan, also sought security of her family as the alleged killers have been threatening them.

Hasna said as she and her husband have been handling the case, the killers have repeatedly asked them to withdraw the case or they would kill them.

She demanded immediate arrest of the killers including Mizan's wife Lutfun Nahar Baby, Mozammel Haque Mozam, and Mamun Patwari Mamun who are now absconding.

Baby, in a confessional statement to a magistrate, said Mamun, along with two others, killed her husband, Hasna told the press conference.

French Embassy "informed and following" arrest of journo

BDNEWS, *Dhaka*

French Embassy here in Dhaka said it is "informed" of the arrest of French journalist Monda Jerome and that it is "following" the proceedings.

"We are informed and we are following this," a French Embassy spokesperson told yesterday.

The French journalist along with his Indian guide was detained by the Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) at Satkhira's Bhomra check point Thursday night as he re-entered the country after staying illegally for 43 days in the Indian state of Uttar Pradesh. He did not have visa for India.

Monda Jerome was sent to the Dhaka Special Branch for interrogation and a case was filed in Satkhira.

1,348 more held

UNB, *Dhaka*

Police arrested 1,348 people on various charges from different parts of the country in the last 24 hours as of 6.00am yesterday.

During the period, they recovered three firearms, 14 bullets and six bombs and filed two cases against four people under the Arms Act, says a police headquarters press release.

WEATHER TODAY

Thundershowers likely

UNB, *Dhaka*

Rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty or squally wind is likely at one or two places over Rajshahi, Dhaka and Sylhet divisions and the regions of Jessore, Kushtia and Comilla till 6.00pm today.

Weather may remain mainly dry elsewhere over the country, Met office said, predicting nearly unchanged day temperature.

Highest temperature 37.0 degree Celsius was recorded yesterday at Rajshahi and lowest 19.3 degree Celsius at Mymensingh.

The sun sets in the capital at 6:21pm today and rises at 5:34am 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	35.2	27.0	75	67
Chittagong	33.0	25.5	78	73
Rajshahi	37.0	27.4	75	55
Khulna	35.0	27.2	87	81
Barisal	34.0	26.8	77	77
Sylhet	33.3	25.2	76	66
Cox's Bazar	32.8	25.0	72	75