



Sufia Kamal's anniversary of birth tomorrow

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The 94th birth anniversary of poetess Sufia Kamal will be celebrated tomorrow.

Born in a renowned family in Barisal, Sufia Kamal dedicated her life to women's liberation, and actively participated in all political, social and cultural movements.

Different organisations have chalked out elaborate programmes to celebrate the day in a befitting manner.

Bangladesh Mahila Parishad organises a memorial discussion at Cirdap Auditorium at 4:00pm.

Parishad General Secretary Ayesha Khanam will preside over the programme.

The organisers and participants will perform national anthem and recite poems of Sufia Kamal to pay tributes to the poet.

World Refugee Day tomorrow

UNB, Dhaka

The World Refugee Day will be observed in Bangladesh as also across the globe tomorrow, upholding the cause of some 17 million refugees and internally displaced persons worldwide at present.

A special UN General Assembly Resolution, unanimously adopted on December 4 in 2000, designated 20 June as World Refugee Day in solidarity with the Africa Refugee Day.

This year the theme of the day is 'Courage'.

"It takes courage to be a refugee. Courage not to give up hope and to make the most of the hand has been dealt. Courage to start a new life against daunting odds, eventually to become contributing and enriching members of society once more," says a UN release explaining the theme.

In a message on the occasion, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Antonio Guterres said, "While every refugee's story is different and their anguish personal, they all share a common thread of uncommon courage-the courage not only to survive but to persevere and rebuild their shattered life."

To observe the day, UNHCR office in Bangladesh has mapped out an elaborate programme in Dhaka and Cox's Bazar. These include the publication and distribution of promotional items and materials on refugees' rights, press briefing, film show and reception. UNHCR representative in Bangladesh Christopher Beng Cha Lee will be distributing school bags, T-shirts and pens among Bihar children in camps in the capital.

'Milk revolution can boost economy'

BSS, Dhaka

LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan yesterday said economic development of the country can be achieved through milk revolution.

"Milk revolution can play an important role in creating job opportunities and at the same time save foreign exchange," he said at the 28th general meeting of the Milk Vita in the city.

Presided over by milk union President Abdur Razzak, the function was also addressed by Secretary-in-charge of the Rural Development and Cooperatives Division M Hedayetul Islam Chowdhury and Registrar of the Cooperatives Directorate Sheikh Altaf Ali.

Referring to the government support to the milk production sector, the minister said the last BNP government had taken a number of far-sighted decision for the development of the milk sector.

"The decisions included waiving of the Milk Vita's accumulated interest of Tk 21 crore in 1993-94 fiscal. The government has also provided Tk 15.50 crore for setting up a powdered milk plant and other modern equipment," he said.

Mannan Bhuiyan said the present government has also provided Tk 24.25 crore collateral-free loan for two projects of Milk Vita and Tk 23.39 crore as equity for setting up a condensed milk plant, cane making plant, mineral water bottling plant and chilling plant.

NATIONAL EYE CARE PLAN LAUNCHED

'1.5 lakh go blind every yr'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

About 1.5 lakh people become blind in the country every year, said Health Minister Khandaker Mosharrar Hossain yesterday at the launching ceremony of National Eye Care Plan.

At present, some 7.5 lakh people, including 40,000 children, have been suffering from blindness, he said.

However, 80 percent of the blindness, caused by cataract, is curable through a simple surgery at a very low cost, the minister said while launching the Eye Care Plan at Bangladesh College of Physicians and Surgeons (BCPS) in the city.

The health ministry and Bangladesh National Council for the Blind (BNCB) in cooperation with the Sight Savers Int. and Orbis Int. organised the event.

The Bangladesh National Eye

Care Plan aims at eliminating avoidable blindness from the country by 2020 in line with the global campaign 'Vision 2020-the Right to Sight' adopted by the WHO in 1999 and accepted as an agenda at its 56th session in 2003.

Formulated jointly by the BNCB and the international NGOs, the plan was formally adopted by the government in May 2005, said the minister.

It attaches priority to major eye problems such as cataract, childhood blindness, refraction and low vision and recognises the need for focussed services with cornea, retina and glaucoma.

Collective efforts of the government and the NGOs can help the country achieve the goal of eliminating blindness by 2020, the minister said, adding that 6.6 percent of the national budget for 2005-06 fiscal has been allocated for the health sector.

Blindness of 12,000 children, out of 40,000, can be cured with a very simple surgery, said BNCB Vice-Chairman Prof MA Matin MP.

Country representative of the Sight Savers Dr Enamul Kabir said that blindness is not just a health issue, it is rather a social problem and it has to be addressed with a social campaign.

He called on the government to allocate adequate funds for simple cataract surgery.

Country director of Orbis Dr Khairul Islam said simple public health interventions like immunisation, vitamin 'A' supplementation and early stage breast-feeding can significantly prevent blindness.

Director General of Health Services Dr Md Abdur Rahman Khan and BNCB Member Secretary Prof Syed Maruf Ali also spoke at the launching ceremony, chaired the health Secretary AFM Sarwar Kamal.

New army chief calls on president, PM

BDNEWS, Dhaka

Newly appointed Chief of Army Staff Lieutenant General Moeen U Ahmed yesterday paid a courtesy call on President and Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces Iajuddin Ahmed and Prime Minister Khaleda Zia separately.

The army chief called on the president at Bangabhaban and the prime minister at her office.

Both of them felicitated the new army chief and wished him all success in discharging his responsibilities, said an ISPR press release.

Earlier in the morning, Lt Gen. Moeen U Ahmed visited the Shikha Anirban (the Eternal Flame) at Dhaka Cantonment and signed the visitor's book.

An army contingent presented a Guard of Honour to the new army chief. General Moeen took salute and inspected the guard.



The National Teacher-Employee Front stages a token hunger strike at Muktangan in the city yesterday to press for its various demands, including a 10 percent increase in salary.

'Science edn, research most neglected areas in budget'

STAR REPORT

Science education and research remains one of the most neglected areas in the proposed budget for FY 2005-06.

Academics and researchers have expressed concern over the level of fund for this sector.

Although a Tk 226 crore allocation is a 40 percent increase over the last year, it is too little to meet the development goals of the country, they said.

The information technology (IT) and education sectors have received the largest share of the budget amounting to Tk 9,686 crore.

"We can't emerge as a developed nation without scientific research, and the government has to understand this reality," said Muhammad Ibrahim, founder and director of the Centre for Mass Education in Science, a grassroots non-governmental organisation that promotes science.

Jamilur Reza Chowdhury, vice-chancellor of Brac University, said the budget reflects "government's negligence to science."

This year's science budget is likely to be used to fund research on pesticide residues, oceanography and nuclear medicine involving radioactive molecules to diagnose and treat diseases, said an official at the Ministry of Science and Information Communication Technology.

He said the ministry would introduce several initiatives to boost information and communication technology (ICT) including a one-year higher education course and an internship programme for recent ICT graduates.

A high-tech IT park has also been planned, he added. The government also announced in the budget a 10 percent tax on income generated by the software sector which had been tax-free since 2002.

Leaders of the software industry have urged the government, which has declared ICT a key sector in national development, to withdraw the tax.

"The decision is going to affect adversely the growth of the software industry which is still at an early stage in Bangladesh," said Sarwar Alam, president of Bangladesh Association of Software and Information Services.

32 ICFM begins June 28

BSS, Dhaka

Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan will leave here for Sana, North Yemen on June 27 to attend the 32nd Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers (ICFM) beginning June 28.

During his stay in Yemen, he is expected to hold bilateral meetings on the sidelines of the conference with his counterparts from other OIC member countries attending the conference.

He is expected to return home on July 2.

Obituary

BSS, Faridpur

Advocate Gour Chandra Bala, a former provincial minister of erstwhile Pakistan, died of a cardiac arrest at his Jheeluit residence here yesterday at the age of 78.

He left behind his wife, three sons, two daughters and a host of relatives, friends and admirers to mourn his death.

Gour Bala was a leader of Hindu Tafsil Federation and elected MLA (Member of Legislative Assembly) as a Juktafront candidate in 1954 and became a provincial minister.

In 1970, he was elected MPA on Awami League ticket and actively took part in the War of Liberation in 1971.

He was also a member of Bangladesh constitution formulation committee.

Food and Disaster Management Minister Chowdhury Kamal Ibn Yusuf expressed his shock at the death of Advocate Gour Bala.

8 killed, 53 injured in road accidents

UNB, Tangail

Road accidents in Tangail and Noakhali left eight people dead and 53 others injured.

A report from Gazipur adds, two people were killed and 30 others injured when a covered van collided with a bus on Dhaka-Mymensingh Road near Masterbari in Sadar upazila yesterday.

The identities of the dead, aged between 26 and 30, could not be known immediately. Most victims are believed to be passengers of the bus.

Witnesses said the accident occurred at about 6:30pm when the Dhaka-bound van hit the bus, com-

ing from opposite direction, leaving the two men dead on the spot and injured 30 others.

Of the injured, five were shifted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital in critical condition while the rest were treated at district general hospital.

Three riders were killed as a truck and a bus hit their motorbike while crossing Jatrickhola in Basail upazila in Tangail at about 10:00pm on Friday.

The truck and bus managed to flee leaving three motor riders dead and the motorbike damaged on the middle of the road.

In another accident, a passenger of a bus was killed and 20 others were injured when two buses col-

lided at Nagar Jolpie near the town on Tangail-Dhaka Road at about 3:00pm yesterday. The injured were admitted to Tangail General Hospital.

A report from Noakhali said two people were killed and three others injured when a maxi cab rrammed an auto-rickshaw on Chatarpaiyabazar Road in Sadar upazila on Friday.

Sahabuddin, 26, died on way to hospital and auto-rickshaw driver Shajahan, 24, succumbed to his injuries in the hospital hours after admission.



Prof Akhter Imam speaks at a discussion marking the third death anniversary of Dr Neelima Ibrahim, an eminent academic and writer, in the city yesterday.

Cellphone sets worth Tk 1.5 crore seized

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Customs officials seized 2,592 cellphone sets worth around Tk 1.5 crore at Zia International Airport (ZIA) in the last two days.

On information that a huge quantity of cellphone sets will be smuggled into, the customs officials had beefed up security measures.

They checked the luggage of a

Biman Bangladesh Airlines flight No. BG 085 landed at the ZIA from Singapore at 12:55pm on Friday and seized 712 cellphone sets worth Tk 50 lakh from a black bag.

Customs officials in a raid in the ZIA canopy yesterday seized another 1,880 cellphone sets worth around Tk 1 crore from a bag brought in by an Emirates flight landed from Dubai on Friday night.

'Dr Neelima will always remain as an inspiration to women'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a discussion yesterday paid tribute to the memory of Dr Neelima Ibrahim, an eminent academic and writer, saying that she will always remain as an inspiration to women trying to establish their rights.

A champion of women's rights, Dr Neelima brought the women's rights movement to the forefront through her leadership, they said.

Bangladesh Mahila Samity organised the discussion at the Neelima Ibrahim auditorium in the city to mark her third death anniversary. She was also the president of Mahila Samity.

Dr Neelima always believed that women's rights will not be established until they become self-reliant, said Sahara Khatun, general secretary of the Mahila Samity.

Bazlur Rahman, editor of the daily Sangbad, said she also stressed the need for men's participation in the movement to protect the rights of women.

Prof Latifa Akand said Neelima Ibrahim made significant contribution to society, but she was not evaluated properly by the countrymen.

Professor Akhtar Imam, writer Makbula Monjur, Shamsunahar Siddique, Mahila Samity President Selina Khaleque and Vice-President Sitara Ahsanullah also spoke.



Thundershowers likely

UNB, Dhaka

Rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty wind is likely at a few places over Dhaka, Rajshahi, Chittagong and Sylhet divisions and at one or two places over Khulna and Barisal divisions till 6:00pm today.

Moderately heavy falls are also likely at places, Met Office said. It said mild heat wave sweeping over Khulna division and the regions of Rajshahi and Pabna may continue.

Day temperature may rise slightly over Khulna and Rajshahi divisions and remain nearly unchanged elsewhere over the country. Highest temperature 38.7 degree Celsius was recorded yesterday at Jessore and lowest 23.3 degree Celsius at Sathkhira.

The sun sets in the capital at 6:48pm today and rises at 5:11am 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)

Rab nabs 5 abductors, rescues 2

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) on Friday rescued two men abducted on Wednesday and arrested five abductors in Uttara in the capital.

On information, members of Rab-1 raided an Uttara house at about 4:00pm and rescued Rokonzaman Ripon of Sreepur in Gazipur and Mosaddeq Hossen Manik of Gafargaon in Mymensingh.

They also arrested abductors Kamruzzaman alias Kamrul, an absconding convict, Saiful Islam Khan, Md Yusuf Ali, Bachchu and Md Shafiqul Islam, all hailed from Mymensingh, said a Rab press release.

The Rab seized two hockey sticks, one cellphone set and four passports from them.

Earlier on June 13, the abductors took Ripon's father Anwar Hossain to the house to talk business and confined him there, demanding ransom or land documents.

Ruhul Amin, arrestee Kamruzzaman's brother, informed Ripon, who visited the house the next day and promised the abductors the documents.

Ripon and Mosaddeq returned with the documents to be confined by the abductors, who released Anwar to bring ransom for their release. They had threatened Anwar to kill them if he did not bring the ransom by Sunday.

SC adjourns hearing on reserved seat

BDNEWS, Dhaka

The Supreme Court (SC) yesterday adjourned for 10 days the hearing of a petition filed against the High Court (HC) order discharging three writ petitions that challenged some provisions of the 14th amendment to the constitution regarding election to 45 reserved seats for women in the Jatiya Sangsad.

After hearing the civil miscellaneous petition (CMP) filed by some human rights organisations seeking stay on the High Court order, the full bench of the Appellate Division comprising Chief Justice Syed JR Mudassar Husain and five other judges passed the order.

The Appellate Division also asked the petitioners to file the leave to appeal in this regard.

On May 30, the High Court discharged three writ petitions

filed by a number of human rights organisations and political leaders, challenging the validity of the concerned provisions of the 14th amendment to the constitution.

The petitioners, on June 6, filed the CMP in the Appellate Division against the High Court order.

The parliament passed a law on November 29 last year regarding election to 45 reserved seats for women in the Jatiya Sangsad in proportion with the number of elected lawmakers of the political parties.

On December 8, the government issued a gazette notification on the law.

Dr M Zahir, Barrister Afzal Hossain and advocate Foyez Ahmed moved the petition while Attorney General AJ Mohammad Ali and Additional Attorney General Abdur Rezzak Khan stood for the government.



IRRI publication

International Rice Research Institute (IRRI), Dhaka office organises the publication ceremony of a book titled 'Innovations in Rural Extension: Case Studies from Bangladesh.' Venue: Cirdap Auditorium, Tophkana Road. Time: 10:00am.

Workshop

Bangladesh Agricultural Research Council and International Service for the Acquisition of Agri-Biotech Applications jointly organise a workshop on 'Biotech Issues and Risk Communications.' Venue: Brac Centre Inn, Mohakhali. Time: 9:00am.

Discussion

Rehab organises a discussion on the 'Role and responsibilities of the private sector in urbanisation and environment development.' Venue: Hotel Sheraton. Time: 7:30pm.

Prize giving ceremony

The prize giving ceremony of an essay competition, organised jointly by the daily Amar Desh and Al-Quran Academy London, will be held with Law Minister Moudud Ahmed as chief guest. Venue: VIP Lounge of the National Press Club. Time: 4:00pm.

Roundtable

Save Environment Movement organises a roundtable on 'Our duty in ensuring safe navigation' with ASM Shajhahan, former advisor to the caretaker government, as chief guest. Venue: Conference Room of the National Press Club. Time: 10:00am.

Ahsania Mission

In observance of the international day on prevention of drug abuse and trafficking, Dhaka Ahsania Mission organises a cultural programme. Venue: Shishu Academy Auditorium. Time: 3:00pm.

Publication ceremony

The publication ceremony of a book titled 'Tribal peoples, Nationalism and Human Rights Challenge: The Adivasis of Bangladesh' will be held. Venue: YWCA Auditorium, Iqbal Road, Mohammadpur. Time: 10:00am.

Musical evening

Bengal Foundation organises an evening of instrumental music. Venue: Bengal Shilpalaya, Gulshan-2. Time: 7:00pm.

Film show

American Film Society will screen an American film titled 'Outbreak.' Venue: Academy Auditorium, 21/C Jigatola. Time: 6:30pm.

Meeting

A meeting of the executive committee of Rajshahi University Old Students Association will be held. Venue: 5/5 Block-C, Lalmitia. Time: 5:30pm.

Drama

The Natya Teertha, a theatre group, will stage a drama titled 'Kamala Sundari.' Venue: Experimental Theatre Hall of Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy, Segun Bagicha.

Criminal gunned down in Mirpur

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Unidentified assailants yesterday gunned down a contractor and convicted criminal in Mirpur in the capital.

Saidul Islam Chowdhury alias Ripon, 48, who used to supply food to the National Zoo, was walking in front of his house in Mirpur-1.

"He was having a morning walk after saying Fazr prayers when four to five men opened fire on him at around 6:00am," Ripon's brother Hamidul Islam told reporters.

The assailants shot Ripon in his head, shoulders, stomach and left leg and left him dead on the spot. He had been convicted of a criminal charge and served out his prison term last year.

Mirpur police said he was a charge-sheeted accused in the former ward commissioner Saidur Rahman Newton and Piston Ahmad murder cases. Several other murder cases were filed against Ripon, who had contested and lost the last Dhaka City Corporation election, the police added.

Hamidul denied his brother's involvement in criminal activities, saying he was falsely implicated in those cases.

"He had rivalry with a number of people for the food supplying contract that might have led to the killing," he said. Newton's party men or Pistol's relatives might have killed Ripon for previous enmity, he added.

DU signs MoU with Microsoft

DU CORRESPONDENT

Institute of Information Technology (IIT) of Dhaka University (DU) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Microsoft Bangladesh Limited recently.

DU Treasurer Prof Syed Rashidul Hasan and Microsoft Bangladesh Country Manager Feroz Mahmud signed the MoU on behalf of the respective organisations.

Vice Chancellor Prof SMA Faiz, Pro-VC Prof AFM Yusuf Haider, IIT Director Prof AKM Maqbulur Rahman and KM Imran Al-Amin, education programme manager of Microsoft, deans, chairmen and directors of different faculties, departments and institutes of DU were present on the occasion.

Under the MoU, the Microsoft will provide complimentary subscriptions of Microsoft Developer Network Academic Alliance Programme and teaching resources for the IIT.

Workshop on crop production begins

UNB, Dhaka

A three-day progress review workshop on implementation programme of action plan on pulses, oilseed and spices crop production began at the Bangladesh Agriculture Research Council (BARC) auditorium in the city yesterday.

BARC Executive Chairman Dr M Nurul Alam inaugurated the workshop as chief guest with its member director (P&E) Anwar Iqbal was in the chair.

BADC Chairman Mokhlesur Rahman was present as special guest.

DAE Director General Ibrahim Khalil and BARI Director General MASattar also spoke.

A total of 150 participants from DAE, BADC and NARS institutes are taking part in the workshop.